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**Session 11**

***God of Freedom, Week 6b***

**Exodus 26:1-37 *and* 30:1-10**

**27-28 November 2023**

**The Tabernacle as a Whole –** As we read the passage in Exodus for this week, we saw that there were four layers in the curtains covering the Tabernacle and that the four layers were in a particular order. The first (innermost) layer was composed of fine linen embroidered with blue, purple and scarlet yarns. This was the kind of fabric that would have been used for royalty. Those particular colors of dyes were the most expensive. Blue symbolized deity, while scarlet and purple were colors worn by royalty. The yarn was used to weave a design of cherubim all around the perimeter of the Tabernacle. Recall that cherubim guarded the way to the tree of life to prevent Adam and Eve from reaching it (to their destruction); the woven pictures of cherubim were a reminder that the way to God was still guarded. The next layer of curtains was made of goat’s hair, the third was of rams’ skins, and the outermost one was made of goats’ skins. So the Tabernacle probably didn’t look very impressive to those viewing it from the outside. But it was designed so that the nearer a person got to the center of it, the richer the furnishings and the textiles became. This is a beautiful reminder of the prophetic description of Christ found in Isaiah 53:2b, ***“He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him.”*** Jesus is truly the veiled representation of the glory of God.

**Many Parts Joined as One Building –** There were repeated instructions about creating rings and clasps to join the curtain panels together to form one unit, i.e. one Tabernacle formed of many curtains. This reminds us of how the church functions today. It, too, is composed of many parts—many people—who have varying roles to play but who form one church and one body of Christ. The “many parts, one building” concept is also a reminder of the words of Revelation which tell us that there will be people from every kindred, nation, and tongue in Heaven.

**The Veil –** The veil was made of a single curtain which again contained embroidered pictures of cherubim, guarding the way to the presence of God in the Holy of Holies. By the time of Christ’s crucifixion, this veil had been replaced by a curtain in the temple—a curtain that was at least 40’ high! It would have been a massive amount of fabric to be torn in two. Note that there was no *entrance* in the veil: the High Priest would have had to either lift it or slide in from the side to perform his yearly duty! It truly represented the complete and total separation of sinful man from God. There was no way inside…until the One who IS the Way made a way for us through the sacrifice of His body and blood. Once again the prophet Isaiah expresses this thought so beautifully: *“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or His ear dull that it cannot hear; but* ***your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,*** *and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.”* Isaiah 59:1-2

**The Torn Curtain –** Note that once the curtain is torn, it is torn for good. The way to God is now always open to us through the work of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ, so we can approach the throne of God with *confidence* at any time, knowing that He will hear us and help us in our time of need. We have blessed access to our God!

**The Altar of Incense –** It sounds strange to us to think of a table having “horns”, but there is a reason that both the altar of incense and the brazen altar had a horn carved at each corner. Jen will discuss more about this in next week’s material, but for now she explained that **horns are symbolic of power**. The many-horned beasts described in Daniel and Revelation, for example, represent people or governments with great power and authority. As its name suggests, the purpose of this small altar was to burn incense. And as we find elsewhere in Scripture, incense is symbolic of our prayers rising to the Lord as a fragrant offering. Jen explained that **in the** **trinitarian model of prayer** (i.e. meaning that all three persons of the Godhead are involved in the process), **we pray *to* the Father, *through* the Son, *by* the Holy Spirit.** In other words, God the Father *hears* our prayers because they come through the Son who is *mediating* for us and as the Holy Spirit *prompts* us to pray. So when Jesus is teaching His disciples how to pray, He begins His prayer with, “Our Father in Heaven…”

**A Tent in the Wilderness –** It is interesting that God chooses a tent when He comes to dwell among His people. Peter picks up on this idea when he refers to his body as a tent. 2 Peter 1:12-15 says, “…I think it right, as long as I am in **this body**, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of **my body** will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.” The Greek word translated “body” in these verses actually means “tent”. So the Word became flesh and “tabernacled” among us, and yet we too become tabernacles of the presence of God. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 instructs us, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit? You are not your own; you are bought with a price. Therefore honor God in your body.”

**Conclusion –** We as followers of Christ are little mini tabernacles sojourning in the wilderness of this world. We are to let our lampstand, our light, shine continuously so that we can display to others around us in a very tangible way the truth of who God is. So as long as you are in your tent, see to it that you tend it well, and that when people see you coming, they know that the Lord is in you.

***Parallels to Peter***

*As mentioned in the second paragraph from the end, Peter speaks of his body as a tent in which he dwells temporarily, while sojourning in this present world.*