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**Session 18**

***God of Freedom,* Week 10a**

**Exodus 33-38**

**5-6 February 2024**

**Repetition of Familiar Material –** As we come to the closing chapters of Exodus, it can seem a bit wearying to read the same things over and over again, and we may wonder why God put in all the repetition. If we were to line up what the Israelites *were instructed to do* concerning building the Tabernacle with what they *actually did* *do,* we would find that it is exactly the same, detail for detail. In other words, they obeyed and followed God’s instructions to the letter. So why did Moses record all this detail so meticulously? Remember that Moses is going to be dealing with these people for many years to come, and he reminds them of what they had said three times when the Covenant was first presented to them: “All that the Lord has said, we will do.” There would be many instances when this stiff-necked people failed to follow through on that promise…but in this instance, they were completely and totally obedient. Perhaps Moses wanted to celebrate that fact and store it up for his own encouragement. And while we are very familiar with all these details,Moses’ original audience was hearing all these instructions for the first time. Timewise, it probably took about six months for all the work on the Tabernacle to be completed, which means it was only about nine months for everything that transpired from reaching Mount Sinai (chapter 19) to the end of the book (chapter 40).

**The Importance of Rest –** When Moses came down from Sinai for the seventh and final time, he assembled all the people and told them, “These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do.” But instead of immediately jumping into a description of the building project they are about to undertake, he talks about the Sabbath regulation! So the Lord, through Moses, is telling the people, “Even though the work I am giving you to do is the most worshipful, solemn, and important work you could ever take up, when the Sabbath day comes, you are not even to build a fire in your own personal fireplace!” It is clear that God is very serious about rest. You and I may hear this command as a negative thing: “you shall not do…” But remember that this generation of Israelites was a nation of slaves who had no concept of “rest,” and God is commanding this for their good. He loves them and is a far better Master than any they had ever experienced back in Egypt.

**A Changed Heart and Mindset –** It is amazing and delightful to see how willingly and eagerly the people brought their contributions, and to see the skilled work of many women mentioned along with that of the men. The Lord had told Moses that He wanted the bulk of the contributions to be voluntary, with the census tax the only mandatory one. They had donated their ornaments once before in an act of apostasy, but now they are humble and contrite, submissive to the Lord and eager to do His bidding.

**Too Good? –** In fact, so much was given, day after day after day, that the workmen from every one of the separate building projects came to Moses and said that the pile of contributions was getting so large

that it was interfering with their work! The amount given far exceeded what was needed, so the people actually had to be restrained from giving any more, i.e. they were restrained from doing *good!* This is amazing. All of us need to be restrained from doing evil. But there could be times when we, like the Israelites, need to be restrained from doing over-the-top good. What if we were known for being too charitable and too generous? Moses lists the grand tally of all the gold, silver and other items that was given, and it came to several *tons* of material that would be worth millions and *millions of dollars*. It was a good thing that there were over 600,000 men to carry the plunder from Egypt on the night they left!

**More on the “Mountain of God” and Insights from Chinese Pictographs**

Last week we noted some interesting references in Scripture to “the **mountain** of the house of the Lord.” This week I want to share some interesting parallel accounts regarding the **river** that flows from God’s throne. You are probably very familiar with this passage from Revelation:

*“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”* Revelation 22:1-20

Compare that with this statement about the Garden of Eden:

*“A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.”* Genesis 2:10

The authors of the book *God’s Promise to the Chinese* makes this connection between God’s mountain and the river that flows from His throne, when speaking about the ancient pictograph for “garden, field, or Garden of Eden”:

“At first glance 田appears to be a well-irrigated field, but in light of the Hebrew description that there was a river which divided into four rivers flowing out of Eden to water the garden, we may have another concept. According to this pictograph, the river originated in the very center, with streams flowing in four directions. **To give a force of flow to the rivers, its source must have been *elevated*, on a mountain…**[in other words] The garden encompasses God’s mountain, His ‘house’ or earthly dwelling place.” pages 32, 35

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Last of all, consider this excerpt from Psalm 36:

*“Your righteousness is like the* ***mountains*** *of God;*

*Your judgments are like the great deep;*

*man and beast you save, O Lord.*

*How precious is your steadfast love, O God!*

*The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.*

*They feast on the abundance of Your house,*

*and You give them drink from the* ***river*** *of Your delights.*

*For with You is the* ***fountain of life****;*

*in Your light do we see light.”*

Psalm 36:6-9