

Exodus Chapter 25 - John Karmelich

When I made the decision to teach Exodus I knew I had to deal with the fact the last 15 chapters of this book are (for most part) about constructing a portable worship structure. The Israelites will be carrying this thing with them for the next 40 years! It weighed tons. Yes it can be taken apart, but they still had to deal with it as they traveled. I pondered why does God want us to know all these construction details about this thing? If God's God, He could easily "snap His fingers" and say, "Here's My worship center, deal with it!" Instead, we'll see in the next 13 of the final 15 chapters of this book just what they had to build, the materials needed, the furnishings and every detail of what their priests were required to wear when they worked inside there. What makes it stranger is it's repeated. We get a bunch of chapters on how it's to be built, then it's repeated in detail to show the obedience of making it to His specifications.

To state the obvious, our churches don't have to be modeled based on this structure. Yes the details do point to Jesus in amazing ways. We'll get into all of that. The first question I ponder is why does God want us to know all of these details? After all, He could have just said, "Everybody pitch in, make Me something that would be impressive and then lug it around the desert with you!" Obviously, all of the details are important and tie to what Jesus did for us. Remember that the New Testament clearly states, "The volume of the book is written of Me". (Referring to Jesus, from Hebrews 10:7).

OK enough "beating around the bush". The answer to me is based on the fact God created us to glorify Him with our lives. Therefore instead of just saying, "Think about Me as you go through your lives", I would argue that God gives us stuff to do to help us keep Him front and center in our lives. That's why He wants us to read our bibles daily and gather with other believers not only to worship Him but so we can encourage each other to grow in our love for Him. Among the things God can do for us, is give us projects to focus on Him. Ever notice that men are fascinated by building projects? When a new high-rise is going up, is it men or women who peak through the fencing to watch? When someone living in our neighborhood is building something, ever notice other men go to watch? Just saying God is aware of our nature. So having the Israelites build this tabernacle as opposed to just "dropping it in their face" is a way to get people thinking about Him. Of course we don't do building projects daily for God, but I would argue that organizing people to work together to make a difference for God is a way to focus on Him! Think of say, all the church projects that revolve around people getting together, in effect to give God the glory. I'm just saying as we study the details of this structure don't think that we must build the same thing. Just realize projects like this glorify Him. Yes the details point to Jesus. Again I'll get into all of that later in this book.

With all of that out of my system, let's talk about Chapter 25 itself. At this point in the story, Moses is now alone with God on Mt. Sinai (in the desert northeast of Egypt). The rest of the Israelites have left the scene so the text focuses on the two of them! I like the joke that the one thing missing in the movie "The 10 Commandments" is when Moses returned to the Israelites after receiving the commandments. He should have had a big roll of blueprints under his arm, as in effect that is what God gave him when they spent all that time alone on the mountain top! I pondered if Moses had writing material with him?

The first thing God gives Moses is what I call the "shopping list". If you've ever cooked by following a recipe, it often begins with a list of ingredients that one must get to make the recipe. God tells Moses to require the Israelites to give them all the things on the list, as let's be honest, there isn't a lot of stores in the wilderness. Most of the things on the list came from stuff they were given when they left Egypt. By having the Israelites involved in the "shopping list" it got everyone involved in the building project. It includes various kinds of metal, cloth building materials and animal skins.

The first thing on the construction list is what is considered the most holy object, called "the ark of the covenant". In essence, it is a box with no lid. It's about the size of a footlocker. The exact dimensions are specified. What's a bit strange is the dimensions are in "halves". It would be like saying to make it 2.5 meters (or feet) by 1.5 meters by 1.5 meters. Lots of theories on the halves: Obviously builders do like exact measures to work with. My personal theory of the "halves" is it represents imperfection. All I mean is all of us fall short of being perfect thus the size of the most holy thing has "halves". It was to be made of a desert wood that's practically mosquito proof and covered with gold on both sides! Back to construction: Four rings were to be made at the bottom so poles covered with gold can be used to carry it as they went. Think of it as "bearing God on our shoulders" as we go through life.

The next piece of construction was the lid. This was one of three things made that were pure gold. I'm fascinated by the fact the width and length were specified but not the height. Obviously it's made as to fit the box but the lid represents God's mercy as God's law was placed in the box. It indicates to me the fact that there's no limit (height) to God's mercy as He "covers the box" by forgiving our sins!

The next object of pure gold were statues of two cherubim that faced each other. The only mention of cherubim before this was of all places from the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:4.) Cherubim (plural) are angelic creatures who guarded the only entrance to Eden after Adam and Eve were kicked out. When I study that aspect of the Garden of Eden, story I always considered it overkill! It represents the fact that to "return to paradise" is through God Himself! In the book of Ezekiel (10) the cherubim are described as having four faces each, (a great study BTW) with wings. Here in Exodus cherubim statues are to be on top of the lid facing towards each other. The book of Hebrews says that all of this construction is a model of what's in Heaven. (Hebrews Chapter 9). I have this view that when Jesus is in heaven on His throne He'll be seated on top of that mercy seat between the cherubim. Yes I could be wrong, but it's a logical guess given the importance of all of this!

The next construction job is a box to hold 12 flat loaves of bread on top of. Like the Ark, it's made of wood with gold covering inside and outside. It also has four holes at the basin to be carried. This is the second thing described after the ark. It tells how much He cares about providing for our daily needs to survive. The text mentions that the inside this box is to be used to store tools needed for the sacrifices. (I'll get to all of that in the next lesson.)

The last thing this chapter covers is in effect, "How do we light up a dark room?" Therefore, the third thing built is a solid gold lampstand with seven oil spouts. We'll get the fact someone (the priests) are needed to work the lamp and refill its oil. This chapter here focuses on the construction: The lamps are to resemble almond branches that bud (the first thing to bloom in Israel in the spring). The lamp's solid gold and the only source of light. It represents the spirit of God (e.g., Holy Spirit) as a light to what He desires for our lives. The fact it's listed after "the bread box" shows the importance of light as a symbol of God providing light to guide us closer to Him. Again it is made of pure gold and all one piece. The emphasis is on the fact it's one source of light with seven points of light indicates God's rest on the 7th day with our focus on Him on that day!

As I said in the beginning this lesson, this chapter is the first of many that deal with the construction of what they'll carry with them for forty years. Again God doesn't call us to build anything like this. What I believe the main reason this is here (for us) is to show us patterns of how to get our focus on Him. I'm sure God wants us to study these details as first of all they get our focus on God and what Jesus did for us! Second they remind us that doing projects for Him are ways to get our focus on Him. Obviously it

does not mean do "anything" with a God label on it. I'm just saying projects that get our focus on Him as well as make a difference for the kingdom is a good thing! That's enough for week 1 of this project!

If interested, there are two other links on this chapter. They are for a more detailed lesson that I wrote about 20 years ago. Of course, you're welcome to read that if you'd like. Either way, I'm grateful that you did read this! If you're new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again, John