

What's the Message? – Lesson 28

This week our study looks at building the Ark of the Covenant, and what that means for us.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. We pray that God will use our study today to increase our understanding of why God calls us to work in His kingdom and equips us for the task assigned. Amen.

Last time, as we considered God's ancient law . . . the Ten Commandments, we saw the theme of obedience repeated. It was a theme that we set forth in our earlier studies in Genesis, and is a theme that will be seen throughout the entire Bible. Today we want to dig into several chapters of Exodus that people often ignore because they contain a lot of tedious detail.

I am talking about chapters 25 through 31, and 35 through 39. A quick glance makes the typical reader to question why in the world is all this step-by-step detail in the Bible in the first place? Beginning with the Ark of the Covenant, we have every aspect of its construction and decoration, its size and what it is to be made of.

This is followed by similar instructions about a table, dishes for incense and bread, a lampstand, the tabernacle and its curtains and frames and clasps. Then there is the mercy seat and the altar; everything with its placement and spacing. Every item is spelled out in utmost detail. This is followed by specific instructions on the garments that Aaron and the priests were to wear, and how they were to be anointed for their office.

Then in chapters 35 through 39, we are given the names of two men to whom God had given special talents of craftsmanship . . . men that He was calling by name to be the leaders in the actual workmanship. And Moses told the people what God had commanded: that they should give an offering to the Lord.

The offering was to include all the materials that would be needed in the construction of the tabernacle . . . gold, silver and bronze; blue and purple and scarlet material; fine linen; goat's hair, tanned ramskins and goatskins; acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and fragrant incense; plus semi-precious stones to be set in the breastplate that Aaron would wear. And we read in chapter 36 that the people responded with such enthusiasm that the workmen had to say: stop, you have given us much more than we need.

And there, Teacher, is a highly condensed summary of what is written in these chapters of Exodus. But, is it just a bunch of details, or is there a message in all this that is meaningful for our lives today?

Yes, and there is much more here than we have time to discuss. But I want to make a couple of points. First, there is the calling to this work, this mission. We read in chapter 31, beginning with verse 1: The Lord said to Moses, “See, I have called by name Bezalel . . . of the tribe of Judah; and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship . . . and behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab . . . of the tribe of Dan; . . .and I have given to all able men ability that they may make all that I have commanded you. Here is a clear example of God calling us into His work, and equipping us to do that which He intends.

Second, God had a purpose, and He supplied not only the men to do the job, but equipped them and motivated them to do the finest work possible.

Likewise, He motivated the people of Israel to give freely of the materials they had acquired in Egypt, to the point of overflowing and giving much more than was needed.

Now, let’s tie those two things together. Does God call us today to work in His vineyard, as Jesus so often chose to call it? And does He equip those workers who respond faithfully and provide them with the skills needed to do the job? Of course. Then the question becomes, do we then respond with a willing heart and dedicate the skills God has given us, to be used for His purposes?

Or do we beg off, deny our gifts and abilities, and withhold them from God? And when an offering is requested, do we respond begrudgingly and keep it to a minimum, or do we respond cheerfully with enthusiasm for the Lord’s work? These chapters give us a model example, for the situation the Israelites faced those thousands of years ago is not really different from situations we must deal with today.

Next time we shall take another look at one of the best known stories in the Old Testament . . . that of the Golden Calf.

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