

THE ASSEMBLY AND DEDICATION OF THE TABERNACLE, THE CENTRE OF WORSHIP: EXPERIENCING THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD EXODUS 40:01–15

Introduction

Man is made to worship God. When man fails to worship God — fails to worship God in the right way — his soul becomes empty, void of purpose. Man’s soul begins to hunger and thirst after purpose, after meaning and significance. The only way a person’s soul can be filled and fruitful is to worship God in the right way. If there is any one message man needs to heed, it is the truth just stated: “The only way a person’s soul can be filled and fruitful is to worship God and to worship God in the right way.” This is the reason God gave the Tabernacle to Israel, so they could worship Him and He could dwell among them...

- filling them with the fullness of life
- guiding and protecting them as they journeyed to the promised land

But there was another reason why God gave the Tabernacle to Israel: He wanted the Tabernacle to be a picture, a shadow of Christ. He wanted us to look at the Tabernacle and seek out its fulfillment in Christ. God intended that the Tabernacle of Moses benefit not only the people of Moses’ day, but us as well. Now, even today, the lessons and symbolism of the Tabernacle speak to the hearts of believers. The ministry of Jesus Christ leaps from the Tabernacle, its priesthood, and all of its furnishings — leaps and causes us to focus our worship upon God. This is the subject of this final portion of Scripture from the book of Exodus. It is the great climax to one of the most exciting stories in all of Scripture: *The Assembly and Dedication of the Tabernacle, the Centre of Worship: Experiencing the Presence of the Lord*, 40:1-38.

- I. The instructions of the Lord (vv. 1-15).
- II. The obedience of Moses: he did everything God commanded (vv. 16-33).
- III. The response of the LORD (vv. 34-38).

Exodus 40:01–15 God’s Instructions Regarding the Tabernacle of Moses

There were the instructions of the Lord to assemble the Tabernacle and get everything ready for worship. The history of Israel peaked during this *momentous occasion*. For about four hundred years the Israelites had lived as slaves in Egypt (a symbol of the world). But they had come a long, long way in a short, short time. It had been only two years earlier that they had been enslaved and were crying out to God for relief in their

sufferings (see Exo. 2:23). And imagine this: it had been just one year earlier when God had delivered His people from the bondage of slavery with a mighty display of His awesome power. And what a year it had been for Israel. In the course of the year, Israel had been journeying through the wilderness and had experienced...

- God's miraculous guidance through the pillar of cloud, His guidance by day and by night (13:17-22)
 - God's pushing back the waters of the Red Sea (14:1-31)
 - God's chastisement as they complained, grumbled and murmured at the bitter waters of Marah (15:22-27)
 - God's provision of food as they grumbled and did not believe the Lord (16:1-36)
 - God's provision of water from the rock (17:1-7)
 - God's victory during the war with the Amalekites (17:8-16)
 - God's administration as He set their affairs in order (18:1-27)
 - God's challenge as He gave the law to Moses (19:1 -24:18)
 - God's pattern as He showed Moses the plans for the Tabernacle (25:1-31:18)
 - God's judgment as they rebelled against Him by making the golden calf (32:1-35)
 - God's mercy as Moses interceded for them (33:1-23)
 - God's renewal of His covenant with them (34:1-35)
 - God's call to build the Tabernacle, the worship centre (35:1-39:43)
1. Now, God told Moses to assemble the Tabernacle: on the first day of the first month of a brand new year (v. 2; see v. 17). All the experiences of the past year taught Israel one great truth: God is the God of *new beginnings*. A person can start all over again, have a brand new life through the power of God. Establishing the Tabernacle was no different. This new beginning would be a symbolic reminder to God's people of *new beginnings*. The same God who created the heavens and the earth is also the One who gave His people a brand new start — from slavery to freedom, from lawlessness to law, from a land of idolatry to a Tabernacle where God was to dwell with His people and receive their worship.
 2. Note that all the furnishings were now to be set in place. Note the order of these items:
 - 1) The Tabernacle itself, the Tent of Meeting (v. 2).
 - 2) The Ark of God, the Ark that contained the Testimony of God (the Ten Commandments) (v. 3).
 - 3) The curtain to shield the Ark (v. 3).
 - 4) The Table of Showbread and its utensils (v. 4).
 - 5) The Lamp stand and its lamps (v. 4).

- 6) The Gold Altar of Incense was to be put in front of the Ark of Testimony (v. 5).
 - 7) The curtain for the entrance to the Tabernacle (v. 5).
 - 8) The Altar of Burnt Offering was to be put in front of the entrance to the Tabernacle (v. 6).
 - 9) The Wash Basin was to be put between the Tent of Meeting and the Altar and then filled with water (v. 7).
 - 10) The Courtyard (v. 8).
 - 11) The curtain at the entrance to the Courtyard (v. 8).
3. God then gave Moses instructions on the dedication of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. Moses was instructed to anoint the Tabernacle and its furnishings: to make them holy, to set them apart for God (v. 9). Moses was also told to anoint the Altar of Burnt Offering and its utensils for the purpose of making them holy (v. 10). He was also instructed to anoint the Wash Basin and pedestal, consecrating them (v. 13).
 4. God then gave Moses instructions on the consecration of the priests. Moses was to bring the priests to the entrance of the Tabernacle and wash them with water (v. 12). After washing the priest, Moses was to dress the High Priest in sacred clothing and anoint and consecrate him (v. 13). God instructed Moses to bring in Aaron's sons and dress them in tunics, and then anoint them for service, just as he had anointed Aaron (vv. 14-15). The purpose for this instruction was to anoint the priesthood as an institution, as a permanent, lasting ministry down through all generations. Those who followed the original priests, Aaron and his sons, were to be set apart for service to God just as they were (v. 15).

Thought 1. Note three lessons gleaned from the instructions of God to set up the Tabernacle.

- 1) God is the God of *new beginnings*. The assembly of the Tabernacle shows us that God gave His people a brand new start. God had delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt (a symbol of the world) to this point in their lives, the point of freedom, the freedom to set up the Tabernacle of God and the freedom to worship God. Moreover, God had forgiven their terrible sin of the golden calf, the terrible sin of rejecting God and breaking His commandments. God had not rejected them but forgiven them. The proof of His forgiveness, proof that He had not rejected them, is seen in His instructions to build the Tabernacle. By instructing them to set up the Tabernacle, God was giving them a new beginning, a new start, a new life with Him.

God is the God of *new beginnings*. A person can start all over again, can have a brand new life through the power of God, through the Person who came to earth to dwell among us, the Son of God Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. When we receive Christ, we experience the power and the presence of the Lord.

Ezek 36:26 *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.*

John 1:12-13 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

John 3:3 *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

1 Pet 1:23 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

1 John 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.*

2) Every material thing we have should be dedicated to God, set apart for His purposes. Moses was told to anoint the Tabernacle and all its furnishings, to dedicate and consecrate everything to God. We too must dedicate and consecrate everything we have to God. If we cannot consecrate a material possession to God, then that item has become more important to us than God. What are the things that become so important to us, more important than God Himself? What are the things that cause such a struggle within our souls, that make us hesitate to set them apart for God? There is...

- money
- position
- business
- profession
- clothes
- property
- recreation
- music, movies
- cars
- houses
- hobbies
- televisions

On and on the list could go, but God's Word is clear: we must never allow our material possessions to rob us of our relationship with God. We must offer everything to God with open hands of submission and not clenched fists of greed. When we obey, we experience the presence of the Lord.

Mat 6:24 *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."*

Luke 9:25 *"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"*

1 Tim 6:9-10 *People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

2 Tim 3:1-2 *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy.*

3) We must dedicate and consecrate ourselves to God as well as our material possessions. Moses was told to anoint and consecrate the priests, Aaron and his sons. God demands that we also be set apart to His service, that we dedicate and consecrate ourselves to Him and His great cause. When we obey, we experience the presence of the Lord.

Luke 9:23-25 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

1 Cor 6:19-20 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

1 Tim 1:12 *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.*

Prov 23:26 *My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways. ■*