

The Craftsmen & The Courtyard

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[0 : 0 0] If we could turn back to the portion of scripture that we read, the book of Exodus chapter 36.

Exodus chapter 36 and if we just read verse 1. Exodus 36 at verse 1. Now this evening as you know we're continuing our study on the tabernacle.

And we're going to consider the purpose of the tabernacle and its importance for us as the Lord's people. Because everything we're going to look at, as we mentioned before, everything we're going to look at in relation to the tabernacle.

It points us forward and it directs our attention to Jesus Christ. Because as you know Jesus is the fulfilment. He is the fulfilment of all the types and shadows given to us in the Old Testament.

The Apostle John tells us that Jesus, he is the word. He's the word who became flesh and dwelt among us. He's the one who tabernacled among us so that we would behold his glory.

[1 : 3 3] The glory is of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And so the tabernacle in the Old Testament, it points us to Jesus, our tabernacle.

It points us to Jesus, our tabernacle. But as we mentioned last week, we're going to study the tabernacle and consider all the furniture and all its meaning.

And we're going to do it in the opposite order that it's presented to us in the Bible. Because you could say that the biblical order is theocentric. It's God-centred.

It begins with the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. And then the description of the furniture moves out to the outer court. But I'd like us to consider the tabernacle as sinners.

I'd like us to consider the tabernacle as sinners who are seeking God's presence and God's fellowship. And we do that by doing the opposite.

[2 : 3 1] We come through the outer gate and we go towards the Holy of Holies. But as I mentioned last week, when we look at the chapters in the book of Exodus, there's a lot of, you could say, repetition.

They're exactly the same. Because first of all, you have the instructions and then you have the implementation. The instructions are the instructions that Moses received to build the tabernacle and they're recorded for us in chapters 25 to 31.

But the implementation of these instructions, that doesn't take place until chapters 35 to 40. Now, the reason I mention the chapters with the instructions and then the implementation is because when you read them, they're almost identical.

But as we study the tabernacle, I'd like us to consider the chapters of implementation. I want us to look at the latter half of the book of Exodus because it's there that we see the whole structure being built and then coming together.

And what we see first of all is that it came together because of the craftsmen that the Lord put in place. The Lord used craftsmen to build the tabernacle.

[3 : 46] And then the first area that these craftsmen would have put in place would have been the courtyard. And so that's what we're going to look at this evening. We're going to study the craftsmen and the courtyard.

The craftsmen and the courtyard. So first of all, the craftsmen. If you look at chapter 35 and verse 30. We're told there in verse 30, So in order to design and build this instrument, intricate and detailed sanctuary, we read that the Lord appointed specific men for the task.

And you know, this is important because Moses, Moses may have been the spiritual leader of the people of Israel. And he may have received the instructions about the tabernacle.

He received it from the Lord on the top of Mount Sinai. But you know, the Lord didn't expect Moses to carry out all the tasks. The Lord didn't expect Moses to build the tabernacle by himself.

It wasn't the responsibility of Moses, who was the spiritual leader. It wasn't his responsibility to work out all the practical arrangements for the design and construction of the tabernacle.

[5 : 26] Because what we see here is that the Lord had selected and even gifted others who were to be involved. And in many ways, you look at it and you think, well, the same is true in the church today.

But the first thing we ought to notice about these craftsmen who are mentioned by name, Bezalel and Aholiab, What we ought to notice about them is that the Lord called them by name.

The Lord called them by name. Before the Lord used Bezalel and Aholiab for the design and construction of the tabernacle, we're told that the Lord called them to himself.

The Lord called them, we're told there in verse, you could say verse 30. See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel. The Lord called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

The Lord called them by name as lost sheep. And he brought them into the fold. And what's important here is that the Lord called these men individually and personally by name.

[6 : 35] And you know, is that not what Jesus does with his people when he calls them to himself? He calls us individually and personally by name. It's Jesus who says to us in the gospel, I am the good shepherd.

I know my own and my own know me. And why does Jesus say this? He says, the sheep hear his voice. They hear the shepherd's voice. And he calls his own sheep by name and he leads them out.

Jesus even says in John 10, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. So we see, first of all, the Lord called them by name.

And you know, that's the wonderful assurance that we have tonight as the Lord's people. The Lord has called you by name. The Lord has called you to himself.

He has effectually called you to himself. And he has called you individually, personally, by name. And you know, he's called you not only to be a saint, but he's also called you to be a servant.

[7 : 43] And he's called you just like Aholiab and Bezalel to serve as craftsmen and women in his sanctuary. But more than that, we're told that the Lord filled his craftsmen with the Spirit of God.

We're told in verse 30, The Lord has called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, son of Har, the tribe of Judah. And he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge and with all craftsmanship.

So these men, Bezalel and Aholiab, who were going to be carrying out the practical tasks of implementing all of the Lord's instructions, They were to use their God-given skill, intelligence, knowledge and craftsmanship to organize, to teach and even to construct the tabernacle of the Lord.

They were enabled to do all of it. And this is the thing. They were enabled to do all of it because they were filled with the Spirit of God. Which means that their work, although it was practical, it was a spiritual activity to the glory of God.

Their work, whether it was, as we read there, whether it was designing, cutting, carving, engraving, embroidering, yarning, twining or weaving. It was all a spiritual activity to the glory of God.

[9 : 04] Because these craftsmen, they had been called by name. They had been filled with the Spirit of God. And they were then to use their God-given skills, knowledge and wisdom for the work, witness and worship of the Lord.

You know, my friend, Bezalel and Aholiab and the many others who were there, they were saved to serve. They were called to be saints and they were called to be servants.

They were saved to serve. And is that what the Christian life is all about? We're saved to serve. We're called by name. We're filled with the Spirit of God.

And because of that, we're to use our God-given skills, intelligence, knowledge and even craftsmanship. And we're to use it all for the work, witness and worship of the Lord.

And whatever practical things we do in the Church of Jesus Christ, we have to always see that they are spiritual activities to the glory of God. Whatever practical things, whether it's hoovering the floor of the Church, or cleaning the toilets, or maintaining the Church building, or moving chairs, or moving tables, baking for fellowships, making tea and coffee, even doing the dishes.

[10 : 20] These may be practical things in nature, but they're all spiritual activities. They're all spiritual activities for the work, witness and worship of the Lord.

Even the deacon's court. Many people don't think this, but the deacon's court is a spiritual activity. And it should always be viewed as a spiritual activity.

Because it's for the work, witness and worship of the Lord. But you know, this is important because, you know, what comes across so clearly here is that just like the Lord required the materials used for the tabernacle, He required that they would be of the finest quality.

What we see here is that the Lord took steps to ensure that the work done with these materials would be to the highest standard. The Lord required the best because nothing but the best would do.

And you know, there certainly wasn't an it'll do attitude towards the work, witness and worship of the Lord. Because, well, we should never have an it'll do attitude towards the work, witness and worship of the Lord.

[11 : 36] We should never come to the things of the Lord and the things of His church and say, Oh, well, it'll do. My friend, the Lord deserves the best. The Lord requires the best.

Because nothing but the best will do. And in order to achieve the best, the Lord sought to use the best craftsmen. Now, I'm sure that we're all familiar with the phrase, Every man to his trade.

I'm sure we're all familiar with that. Every man to his trade. And it's a phrase that emphasises that we should only work within our own sphere of training or expertise. We shouldn't try and do something that we're not skilled to do.

Because when we, well, speaking personally, when I try and do something that I'm not trained or skilled to do, like plumbing or painting, I develop an it'll do attitude.

I give it a go. And even though it's not the best, I say, Oh, well, it'll do. It'll do me. But you know, what's interesting is that the phrase, Every man to his trade, it's actually based upon the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7.

[12 : 45] Something I didn't know. Because in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is teaching about the importance of living your Christian life. And he's talking about living your Christian life with the personality and skills and ability that the Lord has given to you.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7, Let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is my rule, he says, in all the churches.

So what Paul was saying was, He didn't want Christians trying to do something that they couldn't. And he didn't want Christians trying to be something that they weren't. But Paul encourages us as Christians to seek to live out our Christian life and use our God-given personality, our God-given skills, our God-given ability, and we're to use it all for the work, witness, and worship of the Lord.

Why are we to use it all? Because the Lord requires the best. Because nothing but the best will do. And so my friend, we should never have an it-ll-do attitude towards the things of God.

We might have it in our own home, but not when it comes to his home, and to his house, and to his sanctuary. We should never have an it-ll-do attitude towards the things of God.

[14 : 07] Because like Bezalel and Aholiab, we all have personalities, we all have skills, we all have abilities that we can use for the glory of God.

And we're to do everything, as Paul teaches. We're to do everything as unto the Lord. Even Jesus says, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto me.

And you know, we see that even by the response of the people. Because following the description of the craftsmen, what we see is the contributions of the Israelites.

They start giving to the work, witness, and worship of the Lord. Last week, we saw that they had given to the golden calf. And, but here, after the golden calf incident, we see that they're providing, they're providing the materials for the tabernacle.

And these materials, they were voluntary gifts. They were to be this free will offering to the Lord, given as an act of worship. And they were giving to the point that Moses had to tell them, to stop giving.

[15 : 21] We see that in verse 3 of chapter 36. They received from Moses all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him free will offerings every morning, so that all the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task that he was doing, and said to Moses, the people bring much more than enough for doing the work of the Lord that the Lord has commanded us to do.

So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work and more.

You know, the free will offerings of the people, it provided more than enough materials for the craftsmen to design and build the tabernacle. And you know, it was in response to this, these verses, that the late Professor John L. Mackay, he writes in his commentary on the book of Exodus, he says, You know, reminder of the need, not just to dedicate our wealth to the Lord, but also to dedicate ourselves.

You know, my friend, everything we do, we are to do it as unto the Lord, just like these craftsmen. They did it as unto the Lord. And so we've considered the craftsmen whom the Lord put in place to build the tabernacle.

But the first area these craftsmen would have put together would have been the courtyard. That's what we see secondly, the courtyard. So the craftsmen and the courtyard.

[17 : 12] We jump into chapter 38, and then we'll read at verse 9. And he made the court, for the south side, the hangings of the court were of fine twine linen, a hundred cubits.

Their twenty pillars, and their twenty bases, were of bronze. But the hooks of the silver, and their fillets, were of silver. And for the north side, there were hangings of a hundred cubits.

Their twenty pillars, twenty bases, were of bronze. But the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, were of silver. And for the west side, were hangings of fifty cubits. Their ten pillars, and their ten bases.

The hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, were of silver. And for the front to the east, fifty cubits. You know, as we study the tabernacle, and all the detailed instructions that were implemented, what we'll notice, as we go through this, is that the Lord was very specific.

The Lord gave specific instructions, that the tabernacle had to be built in a specific shape, according to specific measurements, using specific materials.

[18 : 26] Nothing was to be done according to the desire, or design, of man. And you know, we'll see this again and again, as we consider all the different furniture of the tabernacle. The Lord was specific.

Everything had to be done according to the word of the Lord. Nothing was to be done according to the desire, or even the design, of man. Everything was to be done for the work, witness, and worship of the Lord.

And you know, my friend, that's why the Lord has given to us his word. Because as the catechism reminds us so clearly, the word of God is the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Therefore, to divert from the word of God and follow the desire or even the design of man will only leave us liable to error. And so everything we do for the Lord, whatever we do for the work, witness, or worship of the Lord, it must be in accordance with the teaching of the Bible.

Whether it's what we preach, whether it's the way we worship, whether it's the way we govern our church, or even our character, conduct, and conversation as Christians, it all must be done according to the word of God.

[19 : 48] You know, my friend, when it comes to the work, witness, and worship of the Lord, we see here that the Lord is specific. The Lord is specific. And we certainly see that with the tabernacle because the Lord was specific even with the courtyard.

Even with the courtyard. We're told that the perimeter area around the courtyard was to be a specific size. The north side, which is this side, and the south sides, they were to be a hundred cubits long.

Now a cubit, the length of a cubit was usually measured from your elbow to the tip of your middle finger. And on average, that's about 45 centimetres.

And so the north side, the north side and the south sides, they would have been about 45 metres. And then the west side, which was the back, and then the east side, which was the front, they were to be 50 cubits in length, which was half of that, which would be about 22 and a half metres long.

You know, when you think about it, the tabernacle, the size of the tabernacle courtyard was about half a football pitch, or you could say four tennis courts.

[21 : 04] But you know, it's not only the size of the perimeter that was specific. The number of pillars that were to be along the perimeter was also specific. Because on the longer north and south sides, there were to be 20 pillars with bronze bases that went into the sand, and they also had silver tops.

On the shorter west and east sides, there were to be 10 pillars with bronze bases and silver tops. And apart from the outer gate, which we see at the front, hanging all the way around the perimeter of the tabernacle was to be this white cloth made of fine linen.

And this fine linen cloth was hung, as we're told, by silver hooks and fillets. And the fillets, they were just silver poles. And what this white perimeter around the tabernacle courtyard, what it served as, as you can see, was a barrier.

It was a fence that prevented someone unlawfully approaching and entering into the presence of a holy God. The tabernacle perimeter, it was a distinct line of demarcation.

It was a line of separation between sinful mankind and his holy God. And in many ways, the message which the tabernacle perimeter proclaimed to the people was that there should always be a distinction.

[22 : 34] There should always be a distinction and a separation between what is holy and what is unholy. And even for us, there should always be a distinction between the church and the world.

Because, you know, my friend, as the Lord's people, we are the ecclesia. We are the church. We are those who have been called out.

We are those, as we said earlier, we've been called by name. We've been called out of darkness. We've been called into the marvellous light of the gospel. We've been called out of Adam.

We've been called into Christ. We are in union with Christ. And because of that, we're to live our lives distinct and separate from the world around us.

Now, of course, we're to be in the world, but not of the world. And as I've said to you many times before, separation is not isolation. It's contact without contamination.

[23 : 34] Separation is not isolation. It's contact without contamination. But you know what the gospel of Jesus Christ does is it creates a line of separation.

It creates a distinct barrier which says we can't approach God without a sacrifice. We can only come. We can only come to God in and through the person of Jesus Christ.

And you know, even when you look at the Lord's table, that's why we have a cloth of fine linen marking off the perimeter of the Lord's table. And that perimeter, that fence, it's there to remind everyone present of what the gospel says.

Because the gospel makes a clear separation from those who are in Christ and those who are still out of Christ. But more than that, that fence should always remind everyone present that everyone present is making a profession.

those outside the perimeter are professing I will not have this man to rule over me. Those inside the perimeter are professing we are professing we are professing that by God's grace and help our character conduct and conversation seeks to be Christ-like.

[24 : 59] But you know this white cloth made of fine linen that went all the way round the tabernacle, it would have stood out in contrast to all the tents that would have surrounded the tabernacle.

You'll remember that the Israelites, they had this tabernacle because they were travelling towards the promised land. They were all living in tents. No one was living in a house. They were all pilgrims who were on a move.

They were on the move moving towards the promised land. They didn't have a permanent dwelling. That's why the tabernacle was portable. But when the Israelites, when they set up camp, as it were, they would always pitch their tents around the tabernacle perimeter.

And they would pitch their tents in their particular tribes. You can read about that in Numbers chapter 2, where we're given details as to where each tribe from Israel would camp around the perimeter of the tabernacle.

And it even tells us how they marched when they moved the tabernacle. They all moved in their tribes. But what's interesting is that when the Israelites set up camp, there would have been hundreds of thousands of tents surrounding the tabernacle.

[26 : 15] There would have been hundreds of thousands of tents and then the tabernacle in the midst of them. There would have been this, and looking at it, there would have been this great contrast because you would see this white perimeter of the tabernacle and then it would have this backdrop of black tents.

There would be this white perimeter of the tabernacle and this backdrop of black tents because they were all made from black goat's hair. And you know, it's a beautiful image of Jesus, our tabernacle.

Because our Jesus, as you know, he was full of perfect knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. He was pure and spotless, as we were singing in Psalm 51, white as snow.

And yet he came to dwell among us. He came to tabernacle in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. My friend, Jesus tabernacled among us.

Why? As Sandy said in his prayer, that though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

[27 : 30] Our Jesus tabernacled among us in order to make a people for himself, who would one day be like himself, and presented faultless before his glory with exceeding joy.

That's a beautiful picture. Jesus, this pure, spotless lamb of God, dwelling among sinful people. But you know, with this white perimeter of fine linen cloth surrounding the tabernacle, a sinner couldn't approach God any other way except through the outer gate.

Because if they approached from the north side or the south side or even the west side, the message that was proclaimed was not this way, not this way, not this way.

And the perimeter, they would have to walk around the whole perimeter all the way around until they came to the east side of the courtyard to the outer gate. And we mentioned last week that the reason the outer gate was on the east side of the courtyard was because the garden of Eden was the first tabernacle.

When mankind fell into any state of sin and misery, breaking fellowship with the Lord, the Lord drove Adam and Eve out of the garden at the gate in the east.

[28 : 48] And so in order for a sinner to have forgiveness and experience fellowship with God, you could only do so by entering the tabernacle courtyard with a sacrifice through the outer gate in the east.

And you know, is that not what Jesus, our tabernacle, says to us in the gospel? He says there's only one way to know forgiveness of sins and fellowship with God. Jesus says, and he proclaims to us in the gospel, I am the way, the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. Jesus doesn't say I am our way. He says I am the way, the truth, the life.

There's no other way to come. And so Jesus tells us in the gospel, strive to enter through the narrow gate because it's the narrow gate that leads to life and few there be that find it.

my friend, Jesus, our tabernacle, says to us clearly, I am the door or I am the gate. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.

[29 : 59] And that was the promise of the tabernacle, that if you wanted forgiveness from God and if you wanted fellowship with God, then you must come God's specific way.

You can't come according to your desires and your design. you must come according to God's desire and God's design. That's the only way to experience forgiveness of sin and fellowship with God.

You must come God's way. But you know, we must always remember who were coming before. Because we're told in verse 18, the screen for the gate of the court was embroidered with needlework in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen.

the colours in the outer gate were to be blue, purple and scarlet. They're all royal colours. And these, we'll look at that more in a few weeks time.

But these colours, they're to remind us, they're to remind the approaching sinner, that the one whom they're seeking forgiveness from and fellowship with is a king.

[31 : 05] He's Jesus, our king. He's the king of kings. And he's the lord of lords. And as Psalm 96 reminds us, we're going to sing it in a moment.

Psalm 96 says that in order to enter through the gate into the courts of the king, you have to bring a sacrifice with you. You must bring a sacrifice with you.

Because as a sinner, when you enter through the outer gate, into the courtyard, the first place that you come to, within the tabernacle perimeter, is the altar of sacrifice.

You must bring an offering with you. That's the message that the tabernacle gives. If you want to enter through, you must bring a sacrifice with you.

If you want forgiveness of sins and fellowship with God, you must bring a sacrifice with you. And God willing, next week, we'll consider the altar of sacrifice and its significance and importance for us.

[32 : 10] But this evening, we've looked at the craftsmen and the courtyard, and the time has gone. But I want us to see, I want us always to remember, this is pointing us forward, pointing us and directing our attention to Jesus, our tabernacle.

He is the word who became flesh and tabernacled among us. And my longing is that as we look at this, we will behold his glory. We'll see the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Heavenly Father, we give thanks to thee for the revelation of thy Son, that thou hast given to us, Lord, even through the images and the portrayal of the tabernacle.

We thank thee, Lord, that we're able to see Jesus in it. And Lord, that we would truly behold his glory. And that we would even come to this study saying like Moses of old, Lord, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.

That we would see the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. That we would see Jesus on every page and see that he's speaking to us.

[33 : 28] That he's reminding us of his faithfulness. He's assuring us of his love. He's, O Lord, reminding us day by day that he has committed to us. And that he promises never to leave and never to forsake.

Lord, encourage us then. Strengthen us, we pray, in our faith. That we would keep walking with thee, ever looking to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith.

Bless us together, we ask. Go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to bring our time to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 96 in the Sing Psalms version.

Psalm 96. It's on page 126. Psalm 96a. We'll sing Psalm's version.

We're singing from the beginning down to the verse mark 9. We'll sing a new song to the Lord. Sing praises to his name and his salvation day by day.

[34 : 34] Let all the earth proclaim. And then from verse 7. All nations to the Lord ascribe the glory that is due. Glory and strength ascribe to God and praise his name anew.

Enter his courts with joy and bring an offering with you. Worship the Lord and holy fear. All earth before him. Bow. Psalm 96. Psalm 96 from the beginning down to the verse mark 9.

To God's praise. O sing a new song to the Lord.

Sing praises to his name and his salvation day by day.

Let all the earth proclaim. Let all the earth proclaim. His glory and his mighty deeds to every land declare.

[35 : 48] How great and awesome is the Lord. With him no cause compare.

For other gods are wood and stone.

The Lord made heaven's height. All power and majesty are his.

He dwells in glorious light. All nations to the Lord ascribe the glory that is due.

Glory and strength ascribe to God and praise his name anew.

[37 : 08] Enter his courts with joy and bring an offering.

with you. Worship the Lord in holy fear.

All earth before him bow. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen. Thank you. Thank you. You forward.

Welcome. Thanks. Wow. Thank you. Everybody ■■■■. Bye bye. Bye bye. Just do that help. Bibles. Wonderful, goodbye. Boom. Our■aga party.