

INSTRUCTIONS

Exodus 25:1-9; 31:1-6

Whatever we are doing, the job will be easier, done in less time, and hopefully better results if we have the correct plans, the right materials, enough time, the right tools, appropriate talent, knowledge, and relevant training.

As we explore the accounts of how God was working out His plan to bring salvation to the world, we have seen that He chose to work through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God had promised to make a great nation of Abraham's descendants and that process took centuries to allow them to multiply and grow in sufficient numbers to take possession of the land that was promised to Abraham.

At the appropriate time, God began to remind those descendants of the unfulfilled promises and to begin a new phase in the process that would eventually culminate in the coming of the Messiah. Some 400 years after the promise was given to Abraham, his descendants had grown into the millions. God initiated the next phase by revealing more of Himself to His chosen people who were in slavery in Egypt. In addition to the Israelites thinking of God as the divine being (Elohim) whom Abraham worshiped, He revealed Himself to them as YHWH which is said to mean "I am that I am." The miracles and the plagues that were done in conjunction with setting the Israelites free from slavery in Egypt were done so that the Egyptians would know that YHWH was the supreme divine being that was greater than the Egyptians and their gods. At the same time and by the same means the Israelites would know that YHWH was their God (Whom they associated with being the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). There is a great difference in knowing YHWH as "the God of the universe" and knowing Him as "your God of the universe."

The next step in the revelation was that YHWH would become known not only as the "I AM" (the essence of being or the self-existent One) but also as the God who delivered them from Egyptian slavery. In other words, He would be known as their "Savior." (At the same time, the Egyptians would come to know Him as the righteous "Judge" of those who reject Him.)

After the deliverance from Egypt, God brought them to Mount Sinai in Horeb. God proposed a conditional covenant to them and when Moses related this proposal to them, the people agreed to obey His voice and to keep His covenant. They apparently wanted to be a treasured possession of YHWH, to be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. This covenant was patterned like a marriage arrangement and the people prepared for the ceremony but at the time for the giving of the vows, they became fearful of the awesome display that accompanied the arrival of the "bridegroom" before the ceremony. As we saw in earlier chapters, Moses acted as an intermediary for the people during the ceremony in which God gave them the Ten Commandments and a discourse of specific ways to carry out the principles of these "ten words" in everyday life events. These principles would define the relationship requirements (with God and with humanity) expected of the people. Now, we see added to the unfolding identity of God the fact that YHWH is the One defining their behavior and holding them accountable. We would call that knowing Him as "Lord or Master."

Moses related these "ten words" and the statutes and judgments of these principles which some refer to as the "Book of the Covenant" to the people. These were accepted by the people and sacrifices were made and blood was applied to the altar and sprinkled on the people to ratify the covenant. This was followed by another trip up the mountain by Moses who was accompanied by the seventy elders and three other people for a meal in a setting part way up the

mountain. Some have suggested that this was equivalent to a “marriage supper” that was typically eaten after a marriage was ratified and signed in blood.

God then told Moses and Joshua to leave the others at the site of the meal and for them to go up higher to meet with God for forty days and forty nights. This was the time when God gave Moses the two tablets on which the ten words of the covenant were written.

Before the fall involving Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God would walk with them on a daily basis. This activity was a continuing reminder of their relationship with God and provided accessibility and accountability for Adam and Eve. Now, instead of walking with them, God intended to “dwell” with His people and that would imply that a suitable abode be provided for Him. We understand that dwelling place to be the Tabernacle that was to be in the camp of the Israelites as they moved toward the promised land and eventually was the function of the Temple later in their history.

The Task – 25:1-7

¹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution. ³ “This is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, ⁴ blue, purple and scarlet *material*, fine linen, goat *hair*, ⁵ rams’ skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, ⁶ oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, ⁷ onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece. Exodus 25:1-7 (NASB95)

After leaving Aaron and the elders who participated in the meal following the ratification of the covenant, Moses and Joshua went up higher into the mountain and nothing happened during the next six days. On the seventh day God called for Moses to come into the midst of the cloud. (No mention is made of what Joshua did.) Apparently, Aaron, Abihu, Nadab, and the elders left the area and went down to the base of the mountain even though they were told to remain there. During this fifth trip up the mountain, Moses (and Joshua) were there for forty days.

In addition to the two stone tablets with the ten words of the covenant, God provided details regarding the dwelling that was to be provided so that He could be with His people. Every person was invited to have a part in this dwelling that was to be prepared for YHWH. Participation was not an obligation but was to be motivated and come from the hearts of the individuals. This same principle is consistently followed throughout the Scriptural record in both the Old and New Testaments. We find that David (400 years later) used this same voluntary basis when materials were collected that would be used in the preparation of the Temple that Solomon built.

The kinds of materials needed for this project included the basic structural parts such as wood and metals, covering materials such as cloth and leather (of all kinds), decorations to add to the beauty of the finished products such as precious metals and gems, and oils and fragrances used in various rituals.

How did this group of former slaves in just a few months after being set free have such things that could be useful in preparing a suitable dwelling place for God? Apparently, these things had been given to them in their former life by those who had enslaved them. The motivation for this transfer came from what God was doing in and to the Egyptians in preparation for the Israelites being freed from slavery. In addition to the principle that offerings to God should be spontaneous and voluntary, we also see that we give only what God has caused the world system to provide to us. David understood this as we can see in his prayer to God when materials were being assembled for the Temple. In 1 Chronicles 29:14 we see “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything

comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand.”

God's Presence – 25:8-9

⁸“Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. ⁹“According to all that I am going to show you, *as* the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct *it*. Exodus 25:8-9 (NASB95)

There are several significant things we should point out to help our understanding of this. This abode was to be made from valuable things that God had already provided to the people. The things were distinctive and had potential for specific uses to make the dwelling place functional and attractive. Some commentators have suggested there were symbolic significances in the metals, colors, and precious stones contributed. Example, might be that gold represents God's glory; silver, redemption; and bronze, judgment. There are not any proof texts that can be cited for this. However, the furnishings in the tabernacle (the altar, the laver, the table for the bread, the lamp stand, the incense altar, the ark of the covenant, and the veil) do have definite spiritual meanings that are addressed.

It was a “sanctuary” which means that it was to be a holy place. It was set apart and was not indiscriminately available for just anyone to enter the various parts. Only the priest could go into the holy place and only the high priest could enter the holiest place. This division of laity and clergy was apparently a result of the fearfulness of the people to come near to God before the ceremony to ratify the covenant. The Levites were apparently chosen to fulfill the priestly role because they stood with Moses following the rebellion of the people in breaking their vows by worshipping the golden calves while Moses was on the mountain for forty days.

This was a dwelling place for God to occupy. That is very obvious from the context of the passage. This is emphasized so that a comparison can be made with the New Testament passage that tells us about the dwelling place for God under the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, there was one central location that was to be positioned in the midst of the encampment of the people and there was a division or separation of the people from the very presence of God. Under the New Covenant there are many dwelling places rather than one central location. We understand that these “many dwelling places” where God dwells are individual Christians. Just as God came to dwell in the tabernacle, He comes to dwell or abide within each born-again child of God and receives each one unto Himself so that He and they are in the same place.

In the Old Testament, the people were to take the materials that they voluntarily contributed and prepare the actual physical structure and all the furnishing. This was to be done in a specific way. This way was the pattern of what God had shown Moses while he was on the mountain. In Hebrews chapter eight we learn that this pattern was “a copy and shadow” of what is in heaven. If we are looking at this in a parallel fashion with the information in the New Testament regarding the abiding place of God, we would logically assume that the dwelling place for God in each individual Christian must be prepared from what each person has brought and contributed and it is to be put together in the prescribed way so that it is like the heavenly reality. Who is capable of putting all of this together? Paul tells us in Philippians 2:13 “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Equipped – 31:1-6

¹Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³“I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *kinds of* craftsmanship, ⁴to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, ⁵and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all *kinds of* craftsmanship. ⁶“And behold, I Myself have

appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you: Exodus 31:1-6 (NASB95)

It is obvious from this passage that some people are gifted in what God has called them to do. As we noted earlier that it is God who is at work in us, we also realize that God is at work in the Body of Christ and works through people who are gifted in ways that benefit the Kingdom of God. We see this clearly as God specifically named some people whom He had equipped to provide leadership and skills as the people came together to carry out the work of preparing a place for God to dwell.

This should remind us of the passage in Ephesians chapter four where we read that God has set some in the church (apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc.) for the purpose of “equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry so that the Body of Christ is built up.” This should raise the question of “how have we been equipped for a particular work of the ministry of the church?”

The covenant that God had first proposed to the people was that all of them would be a nation of priests. This ideal was altered as the people “shrank back in fear” and as they literally broke that covenant before they received the tablets of stone upon which the ten words were recorded. A less-than-ideal agreement and arrangement were temporarily implemented and God did dwell among the people in a somewhat isolated or insulated situation. The ideal was to have the ten words engraved on the hearts of the people and there be no separation so that all of God’s people would be a royal priesthood and a holy nation. This is exactly what we have in Christ Jesus. We are the participants in the covenant that God had originally proposed to physical Israel and we are “the Israel of God” equipped to do His will and implement His kingdom in all the places that we occupy.