

The Weekly Word

April 11-17, 2016

Happy mid-week of April. May the Lord meet you in the reading of the Scriptures...
Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, April 11: Exodus 25- Exacting detail...

The value of the offering and exacting detail of the Ark caught my attention as I read this morning. God has been laying out the rules for His new people, but the detail ratchets up a number of notches when the Lord prescribes the construction of the sacred Ark.

I found myself pondering this observation...

My sense is that the detail has to do with the immensity, perfection and glory of God. Humanity's connection with God was of the utmost importance. And God being God could not be treated and worshipped in any old manner... everything connected with the Lord had to match God's prominence and perfection. These exacting directions mirror the perfection and honor of God.

The ark wasn't simply made out of acacia wood; it was to be overlaid with pure gold. It was costly. It was magnificent. It shone in brilliance, inside and out. Every detail communicated its importance.

I found myself thinking about the rings and poles, again overlaid with pure gold. I know the story; the poles are for carrying the Ark. No human hands are to touch the Ark after it is commissioned. Absolute respect and honor for the seat of God in the midst of His people!!!

And on the Ark cover stands two cherubim. Cherubim. Cherubim are angelic beings, they stand guard over Eden (Gen 3:24) and if Revelation 4:6-9 are cherubim, then they are constantly praising and glorifying God in heaven. These cherubim stand as protectors of the Ark even as their presence emphasizes the glory of God.

Our great God, THE God of all creation warrants an Ark with this detail and glory.

At this point I placed my head in my hands and was overwhelmed by the glory of God... the God of the Scriptures... The Father God, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit... three persons One God. Oh, the glory and the wonder of our God.

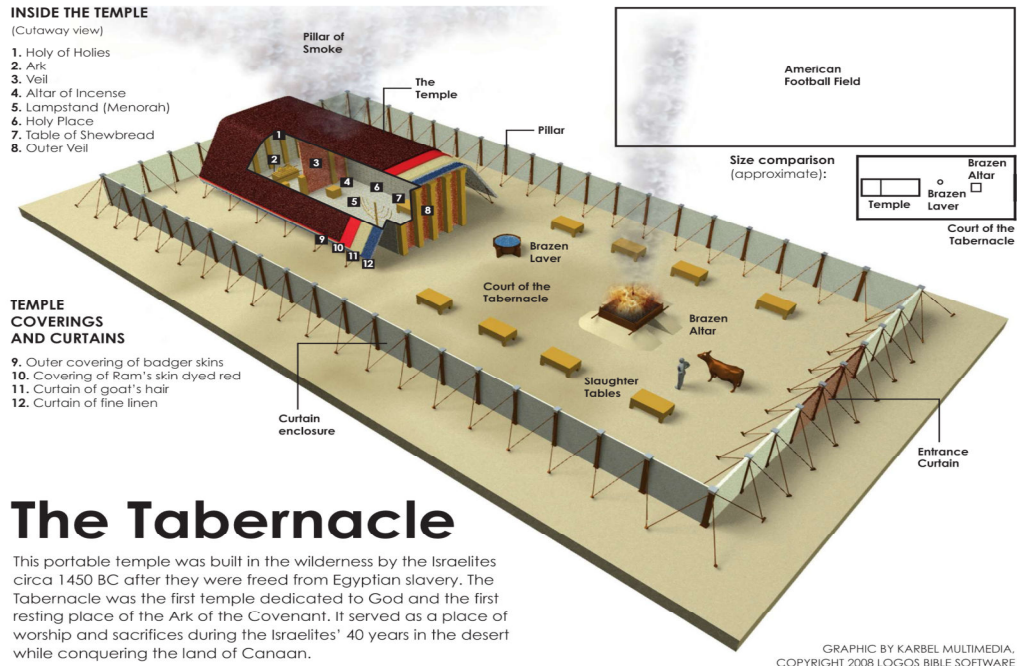
My ponderings morphed naturally into to praise...

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty who is and was and is to come.

God in the heavens. God over all. Matchless, invisible, the God only wise. Creator. Savior. Lord of Glory.

I fall and praise You, Lord God Almighty... I sing Your praises. I glory in Your name. To You all honor and glory belong. Amen and Amen.

Tuesday, April 12: Exodus 26- Playing my part...



The Tabernacle

This portable temple was built in the wilderness by the Israelites circa 1450 BC after they were freed from Egyptian slavery. The Tabernacle was the first temple dedicated to God and the first resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. It served as a place of worship and sacrifices during the Israelites' 40 years in the desert while conquering the land of Canaan.

The elaborate detail continues even for the tent in which the Ark of the Covenant will be placed.

I found myself wondering about how many people it took to make this movable tabernacle... carpenters, metal workers, tailors, people to shear the animals. Someone had to make the threads to stitch the cloth and others had to dye the cloth. People had to make the forges to forge the metal. Did they bring the tools for all this work or did someone have to make them? There was wood for the fires and the acacia wood for all the frames and parts; this had to be harvested. Were there people to clean up? And there were supporting crews who do the grunt work for the skilled people to do their work. Then there would need to be some oversight, people managing this or that portion of the work. This was a massive undertaking for people living in the unfamiliar dessert.

The work of God requires the people of God!

That's it... that was my 'God moment' this morning.

To be successful at the things or callings of God, the people of God have to pool resources and talents to make it happen. The NT writers refer to a body (see 1Corinthians 12) to explain how it works. Here in the dessert, at the base of Mt Sinai, a manufacturing image tells the same story.

Fast forward to today, it still takes the people of God to accomplish the work of God.

Am I playing my part in God's church? Are You? Think about it...

Oh, Lord, I lay my talents, gifts, time, resources at Your feet. Use me, as you desire, to be part of Your team and Your body to accomplish in this world the spreading of Your name across the globe so that every people, language, nation and tribe has the opportunity to put their faith in You. In Jesus' name and for the glory of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, I pray. Amen.

Wednesday, April 13: Exodus 27- Respecting God...

I confess that reading the details of building the tabernacle is growing wearisome for me. So after I read, I sat with the text before me and sought something from the account to ponder. The closing paragraph, and particularly the imagery of Aaron and sons keeping the lamp burning within the tent of meeting outside the Ark of Covenant, drew me in.

Why, I wondered was this so important?

Why must the lights be 'kept on' every night?

The text is silent about 'the why'... so I wondered and thought. What did this communicate? What did this say about God or the way we are to treat God and God's things?

Slowly the idea emerged... God is to be tended to day and night. God is never gone, and so His people are to keep the signs of life 'burning' before Him.

When a neighbor's house is dark, I think no one is home. When I go away, when neighbors go away, we leave lights on so the house looks 'lived in.' God's 'house' the tabernacle must look lived in, because it is. God is always present and we must treat it so.

Keeping the lights lit is a sign of respect, of honor, of importance...

How can I (we) show the Lord respect, honor and importance today?? This question startled me, but also challenged me. How do I?

My daily times in God's Word and prayer...

My weekly times of corporate worship, gathering with others who believe and saying by my presence, 'Lord, You are important to me.'

It is giving sacrificially to causes that honor the Lord; taking of what I have and giving it to the Lord's work; and honoring other people, treating them with the dignity that being made in the image of God deserves, even when their actions and words are far less that God's image in us deserves.

I guess it comes down to seeking to love neighbor and God... this is how we honor, respect and show the importance of the Lord.

Thank You, Lord, for this journey with You today. My musings surprise me since the reading didn't grab me at first. How wonderful You are, drawing me into a space that surprised me.

Lord, I pray that my life will show my respect for You, my honor of You and the importance You are in my life and for the world which You have made. Bless You, Lord, God. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, April 14: Exodus 28- Love God and neighbor...

The first thing I thought as I read the text was how did Israel have the ability to make all of this? Where did they get the tools to weave fabric, and spin yarn, even yarn of gold? What did they use to die the yarn? And what about the needles to sew or the tools to engrave stones? The two onyx stones of verse 9 had six names engraved on each. This requires either large stones or fine engraving work and since they were worn on the shoulders, my hunch is that it was fine engraving work.

After being amazed by all this, I was caught by some of the symbolism. For example, the design of the breastplate with the 12 stones representing the 12 sons of Israel worn over the priest's heart (29). Every time the priest enters to work before the Lord, he carried all Israel close to his heart as a constant reminder that he stands before the Lord on behalf of Israel. What a picture!

And then, there is the seal on the turban engraved with the words, HOLY TO THE LORD (36), worn on the forehead when ministering. This was a constant reminder to the priest of his sacred duty. Another incredible picture.

I thought how apt this symbolism is for me and all Christ-followers. Our lives, too, are to be lived HOLY TO THE LORD. We should keep all God's family near our heart as well... love the Lord Your God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

Lord, God, as I venture out into today, help me to keep these two truths in the forefront of my living so that my life might please you. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, April 15: Exodus 29- Blood everywhere...

As I read the ordination ritual all I could see was blood everywhere. I thought of the meticulously made priestly garments getting sprinkled with blood and oil. I thought of Aaron and his sons with their hands on an animal's head, and then the animal being slaughtered by having its neck cut... blood everywhere. Did more splatter on the ordination clothing? I tried to picture blood being put on ear lobes, thumbs and big toes. What was it like to feel the warm animal blood being ritually applied?

In our sanitized world every one of these images and rituals is completely foreign to me. I've never gutted an animal or had blood splattered on me except from my own injuries.

Beyond the acts themselves is the symbolism. Hand on the animal as it was slaughtered... killed for your sins. Your sins transferred to the animal who pays the price for you. And with this thought, I traveled millennia across time to Jesus hanging on the cross. Jesus, the son of God, taking on my sins and the sins of the world; bearing my sin (our sin) and paying the penalty I (we) deserve. *Without the shedding of blood*, the writer of Hebrews pens, *there is no forgiveness of sins* (Hebrews 9:22).

Today's reading is a graphic representation of the importance the shedding of blood is. And... Jesus shed his blood for me and you...

Jesus... his name is Jesus...

Jesus... his name is Jesus...

He is high and lifted up and all the world will know his name.

Jesus... his name is Jesus.

Oh, Jesus, I worship and adore You. Oh, Father, thank You for the pain of separation You endured to send Jesus to us for those 33 years and those 6 hours of agony and those days in the tomb. Thank You, Father. Thank You, Holy Spirit for opening my eyes to see the wonder of Jesus. He is high and lifted up and all the world will know His name.

May this be so and may my life help take Your name, Oh, God, throughout this world. Amen and Amen.

Saturday, April 16: Exodus 30- ...

I noticed that the last two items: the anointing oil and the incense, were only to be used in the service of the Lord. And anyone who made a similar product for any other use was to be cut off from the people. A very harsh punishment. Clearly the Lord is serious that these two products were exclusively for use at the Tabernacle and only for the expressed purposes that were directed!

God being God has the right to demand whatever He wants from us, no questions asked. These two products are used in most holy rituals of anointing and as a fragrance offering that is always before the Lord. They are exclusively used in the holy worship of God. No generics... it is the same recipe and no copying.

I thought about medications that have a copyright, no one is allowed to make a generic version for a legislated number of years. But with Tabernacle items it is a forever copyright, one God takes very seriously.

This is the same exclusivity that God expects of us with regard to worship of Him. The Lord expects that we will serve Him and Him alone.

God allows no room for other gods; the first commandment, *I am the Lord your God and you shall have no other gods before me* (Exodus 20:3, Deuteronomy 5:7).

God expects exclusive devotion to Him. As I move toward prayer, I sense a need to examine my life to see if I am inviting any other gods into my life. Am I trusting in anything, in addition to the Lord? Do I listen to any other voices when I make decisions, in addition to the Lord?... And so the questions go as I probe my life...

Lord, show me where I entertain other gods or voices that are contrary and additional to Your voice. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, April 17, 2016, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.