

Title: Inside Out – pt.2
Text: Exodus 25-27
Theme: The Tabernacle
Series: Exodus #43
Prop Stmt The Tabernacle tells the story of the Creator, the fall, redemption and promise!

Read Text: Exodus 27

Compared to the Taj Mahal, the Biltmore mansion, and some of the castles in Germany, the Tabernacle is downright unimpressive. It sat rather low to the ground, and aside from the stark white curtains that separated its courtyard from the rest of the camp, it would have been easy to overlook.

When London's famous pastor, CH Spurgeon was preaching on this text, he imagined what some of the surrounding nations thought of the religion of Israel when they saw the Tabernacle. From the outside it looked rather unattractive. He said, "You Amalekites out there cannot see the silver footing of it all; you Moabites cannot perceive it. All you can see is the badger skins outside – the rough exterior of the tent. You say, 'That tent is a poor place to be a temple.'" Then applying that same idea of God's design he went on to say, that the "gospel is a very simple affair. No doubt it is to you, but you never saw the silver sockets, you never saw the golden boards, you never saw the glory of the inside of the place lit up by the seven-branched candlesticks, and glorious with the presence of God. Brethren, redemption is our honor and delight."

But, that is how the gospel looks to this world. It is simple, crude, unrefined, and undignified. However, when you get inside you can see the glory of God. The tabernacle, like Christ, and like the gospel, presents such a profound contrast with our world. Our world is obsessed with image while God is passionate about truth. You want image? You want cheap? You want shallow, fake, hollow living? Follow the culture. That's all that it has. It is all about the outside. Why is botox and liposuction a multi-billion dollar industry? We are obsessed with the outside because we have nothing on the inside. But that is not the way God works. God starts with the inside. And that is why Paul says in 2 Cor. 6 that "We are the temple of the Living God." We are a bunch of nobodies, who do not look like much on the outside, but we have been indwelt by God in order to make him famous. He takes common things and uses them to reveal surprising things about Himself. God doesn't need powerful politicians, superstar athletes, or cultural icons to carry out his kingdom. His work has never been done that way. God takes ordinary people like you and puts his glory on display by redeeming us, setting us apart, and using our lives as we forgive, serve, and live with a simple joy and profound, and unrelenting joy. We are the tabernacle of God, here on this earth to make Him known. Just like Christ! Our lives and our worship are to be like our Redeemer and his gospel. Simple, yet surprising! Little is much, when God is in it. We have already seen in Exodus, that God tends to choose the overlooked for his kingdom. The requirement of all who would apply is humility.

Chapters 25-31 are all about a holy place and a holy people. The tabernacle is the holy place where God meets with his people and the priests are the holy people who represent the people before God. This morning we are continuing to look at the pieces of furniture and the structure of the Tabernacle.

The dimensions reflect an order and design. M.R. DeHaan wrote this about it:

The only building ever constructed upon this earth which was perfect from its very beginning and outset in every detail, and never again needed attention, or alterations, was the tabernacle in the wilderness. The blueprint, the pattern and the plan, the design, and all of its specifications, were minutely made in heaven, committed to Moses for the children Israel.... Every single detail was designed by Almighty God, every part had a prophetic, redemptive, and typical significance. There is no portion of Scripture richer in meaning, more perfect in its teaching of the plan of redemption, than this divinely designed building. God Himself was the architect, and every detail points to some aspect of the character and work of the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, and in its complete form, it is probably the most comprehensive, detailed revelation of Jesus, the Son of God, and the plan of salvation in the entire Old Testament.

Last week we looked at the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of bread, the Lampstand and the Curtains.

3 More Parts

1. The Altar - 27.1-8

The altar was the largest piece of furniture measuring 4' 6" high (exactly double the height of the ark and the table) and was 7' 6" long and wide. It was like a big grill. The altar was made out of wood and overlaid with bronze. Bronze is much more resistant to heat. The bronze not only made sense from a practical standpoint, but since the bronze altar stood in the courtyard, it had a function that represented the people, whereas the pieces inside the tabernacle represented God. Inside the tabernacle, the pieces were gold. Outside, they were bronze. The inside of the bronze altar was hollow. The grating on the sides allowed for the oxygen to flow freely and the horns on the corners were probably helpful in tying down the sacrifices that were offered. Earlier (Exodus 20) God had given instructions about an altar stating that his people were to use earth and stones. This makes perfect sense to me. Whenever the tabernacle was being set up, an altar of earth was to be mounded up secured by stones at the base. The bronze altar would be placed over it. The earth underneath would be practical in that it would hold the coals closer to the offering.

Notice the positioning of the altar. Due to its location and size the altar is "accessible, unavoidable and unmistakable."¹ The message is clear. There is no access to God except through sacrifice. As the law is unfolded, we find out that just as God is very specific about the details of the Tabernacle, he is also very specific about what kind of sacrifices

¹ Walter Kaiser, EBC, vol. 2, p. 462

are made. Everything that is exact and detailed. There is no mistake that all of this is pointing forward to Christ. But keep this in mind. The altar and the bronze basin are the only two pieces of furniture in the courtyard. They are the only pieces that the people in Israel see. Everything else is hidden behind the curtains in the Tabernacle, visible only to the priests. However, the altar is not standing out in the middle of nowhere nor in plain sight. The courtyard was separated from plain view and could only be accessed through the entrance on the east side. In fact, there is a partition that separates the courtyard from the rest of the camp.

2. The Court – 27.9-19

The courtyard is marked off by a curtain wall that stands 7.5 - 8' tall and is 150' on the north and south and 75' on the east and west. Once again, we see another way that God is illustrating three things: 1) God is Holy (unique, separate) 2) This place is holy and 3) His people are holy. Because God is holy, wherever he is, is hallowed ground. Because God is holy, his people are holy. What does it mean to be holy? Seriously, is a holy person someone who never eats hamburgers or takes a bath because they are sitting on top of a mountain chanting mantras? NO!! Holy, means separated unto God and yet time and time again that which is separated unto God still has a connection with people. That is the tension that the Tabernacle addresses. The curtain separates the tabernacle area from the camp and designates it as holy. But it is still accessible, but it is only accessible one way.

Birds-eye view of the Tabernacle Diagram – p. 520 (Enns) Now you see part of God's design. The outside (and eastern half of the court) focused on sacrifice, since that was the only way God could dwell with his people and the only way God could be approached. The inside (and western half of the court) focused on the dwelling place of God. The purpose of the sacrifice is so that God could live with and enjoy his people.

So, this is what we have so far:

The furnishings on the inside of the tent are made of gold. The base of the frame is made of silver. The piece of furniture (described so far) is made of bronze and the base of the frame of the courtyard is made of bronze. Gold, silver, bronze: the closer one gets to God, the more precious the metal is. God is in the tent, in the most holy place, the children of Israel are in their tents in the camp. The outside courtyard is the closest the people can get to God, and that is only the basis of following the sacrificial system that God gave them. There are obvious reasons for all of this.

3. The Oil for the lamp – 27.20-21

There are two more items that are described a little later; the altar for incense and the basin. But this section on the furniture concludes with instructions about the oil for the lampstand. The people were commanded to bring pure beaten olive oil. This oil "was extracted from unripened olives that were beaten and pounded in a mortar rather than crushed in a mill. The pulpy mass was then placed in a basket; and the oil, without any

mixture of other parts of the olive, dripped through the basket, giving a clear, pure oil that burned with little or no smoke.”² If you have ever marinated chicken in olive oil and then put it on the grill, you know how flammable that stuff is. The priests had to tend to this lamp morning and evening, so that the flame would never go out. Now,

Why this Matters

I think that God’s design for the Tabernacle will be one of those object lessons that in eternity God will use to teach us more and more about himself. The Tabernacle does a couple of things: It looks back to the garden of Eden, it looks forward to Christ and it looks forward to the Eternal State. It looks back to how things once were, what God is going to do to fix what went wrong, and how God is going to restore the universe. It really is a fascinating microcosm of the universe and the plan of God. So, amongst other things, in the tabernacle we see illustrations of God’s purpose for his people.

1. To see God’s Purpose for his People

The tabernacle helps you see how seriously God takes you and how important your call to holiness really is. When you consider how precious and how holy the Tabernacle/Temple of God is, then it should really impact you when you reflect on the fact that when you become a follower of Christ, that you are called the temple of God. God’s ultimate plan was not to live in a tent amongst his people, but to live in and with his people. The tabernacle points to what God had in mind and part of that was for his people to be a witness for him. For example: The first piece of furniture that we looked at last week was the ark of the covenant. Inside the ark, Moses was commanded to put the Testimony; that is the law of God.

Now, when you go back to the garden of Eden, you see that God gave his law to Adam and Eve. They were supposed to bless the earth by filling it with people who would spread the borders of Eden, bringing order from chaos and bringing everything under authority. By doing this, they would fill the earth with the glory of God through lives that lived in glad surrender and joyful worship of God. But Adam failed. Because of his failure he was banished from the garden, which was now guarded by cherubim. But, God still wants his people to live by his law. So, God gave them the law as the Testimony that they were to have to the nations. Israel was now given an opportunity to do what Adam did not. But, Israel failed. They became so proud of the fact that they had the law and the temple, that they trusted in their possession of the law, instead of trusting in God. What Adam did not do, and what Israel could not do, Christ did. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Christ perfectly obeyed the Law of God, for he was God. And therefore, because Christ was perfect, and fulfilled the law of God and then died in our place, now, when we trust in Christ he writes his law upon our hearts and replaces our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. Now, we are the tabernacle. We are the presence of God on the earth. When we gather together in the way that we should, the testimony of God is put on display. The Tabernacle is the pattern for how we are to live. Our lives are to be focused on sacrifice

² Ibid, p.464

(the cross/altar) in order to worship (enjoy God's presence with his people/ark). But another purpose of the Tabernacle was to point toward Christ.

2. To see God's Preparation for His Son

No one can get into the Holy Place without first coming through the altar where an innocent substitute was sacrificed for the sins of the people who are being represented by the priest. But what about the sins of the priest? On that same altar, a sacrifice had to be offered for the priest himself. When the priest went into the holy place, he had a mission to do. That mission was carried out every day. There was work to be done in the tabernacle, which is why there were no chairs for the priest. In the Most Holy Place there was a seat for God. He can only be approached by one who is qualified, and even in that, the one who comes cannot linger. All of this points to Christ. First of all, the entire system reveals how deep our sin is and how serious God views it. Day after day after day, sacrifices were offered without end. The whole system revealed the need for a perfect priest and a perfect sacrifice. The tabernacle provided the only way at that time that God could live with his people and for the people to be able to relate to and come to God. But even at that, what the tabernacle offered was never final, and yet the picture was clear. If you were going to be able to relate to God you had to do it through the sacrifice that He determined. And yet, even at that they were still held at a distance. The curtain inside of the Tabernacle had cherubim woven in it that separated them from God. The only way the people could come to God was through a sacrifice, and through a priest who represented them. All of this points to Christ. But Israel missed it. The sacrifices became mere ritual for most of them. The seriousness of their sin was lost in the habit of their customs. Their biggest need for a Redeemer was overlooked as they thought their biggest need was for relief. They ignored how serious their internal problem was and looked for relief from the external problems. People have not changed. We, to this day have such a difficult time recognizing that our biggest problem is our standing before God. We think that our problems are circumstantial. So, instead of crying out to God because of our sin, we cry out to God because of the pressure we are under. Since we do not understand the heart of our problem, we do not recognize our true Savior. That is why our world does not want a Redeemer, it wants a genie. But, Christ knows you better than you know yourself. Your circumstances are not your problem, your heart is. You need a Redeemer. You need a perfect sacrifice. You need Him.

He is the offerer (priest) and the offering (sacrifice). The altar is the cross, the sacrifice is his life. By means of his offering, he provides the only means by which God can have fellowship with his people. Later on, the temple replaced the tabernacle. And when Christ died, the curtain that hung in the temple (the 15' high, 4" thick curtain that required 100 men to move it in place, was ripped from the top to the bottom. Can you imagine what happened to the priests who were serving in the temple at that time? This violent tearing sound revealed the most holy place! The way to God was now open to all! But there was even more. The presence of God on the earth was no longer focused in Jerusalem. God was going global! After all, that has been his plan from the beginning.

3. To see God's Plan for Creation

The last thing that I want to point out is how the tabernacle has all along been a reflection of God's plan for creation. God told Moses to make this Tabernacle exactly according to the pattern that God revealed. Hebrews 8.5, says that the Tabernacle was patterned after the real temple in heaven. Just as man was made (in the image of) to reflect God, the earth was made to reflect where God dwelt (heaven). So, what the tabernacle was then was the place where heaven had come to earth. There in the desert, in the midst of a sin-cursed, chaotic world, was the perfectly aligned, perfectly arranged, perfectly ordered tabernacle. God provided a little place of order in the midst of a chaotic world. The first garden had gold, the tabernacle had gold, and the eternal state will pave streets with it. That tabernacle pointed to Christ and pointed to the kingdom that is coming. Today, the tabernacle/temple is gone. It has been replaced by us. We are the tabernacle. We are the dwelling of God. We are the taste of heaven on earth. If we really stop and consider what is taking place in our gathering, we would realize that there is an out of this world reality that invades this gathering. The gospel in your life or in anyone's life is the result of a God invasion. Wow! What an awesome realization in the midst of so much mundane all around us. We may not look all that great on the outside, but your body (and corporately – this body) is the Ark of the Covenant. The testimony of God has been written on your hearts. Your life is the lampstand that burns for his glory, by means of the oil that is the Holy Spirit. The bread and table represents the fellowship that we can have together with God, but only because we were able to come in through the sacrifice of a perfect priest, and perfect sacrifice on our behalf.

Today, we don't always live out his testimony, and we sometimes hide our light, and our fellowship can be strained by our selfishness. But, still, we are the only plan that God has to put his glory on display to this world and show them the true Savior, who came and will return.

Pray, ask God to reveal at least one thing you are going to change this week.