

Finishing the Temple

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Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 00] What we have in a passage that we read, both in chapter 39 and in chapter 40, in Exodus, is the concluding of the work of the tabernacle.

First of all, we have all the work being finished by those who have been set apart to do it. And if we turn back a couple of chapters and we see towards the end of chapter 35, verse 30, Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the Lord hath called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Ur, of the tribe of Judah.

And he hath filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, in all manner of workmanship. And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the carving of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any work.

And he hath put in his heart that he may teach both he and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And them hath he filled with wisdom of art, to work all manner of work, and so on.

So these would be the two supervisors who would be overseeing all the work of the tabernacle. And there must have been help to them. It couldn't just have been these two men to do all this work.

[1 : 12] But a simple reason that we read in verse 17 of chapter 40, It came to pass in the first month in the second year. That is the second year after they came out of the land of Egypt.

On the first day of the month, the tabernacle was reared up. So in other words, just inside a year, they have completed all this work. They have finished the work the Lord gave them to do.

And of course, they had their particular tasks and callings and work. Aholiab and Uri, the son of Bezalel, and so on. But other people also had that which they themselves were to bring.

Because they all brought their offerings. They had needed the raw materials to work with. They needed the gold and the silver and the precious stones and all the coverings and the curtains and so on. And all the women that worked away, spinning and weaving and making the special cloths.

And so on, they received. This is chapter 36 at verse 3. They received of Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary to make it withal.

[2 : 15] And they brought yet unto him three offerings every morning. And all the wise men that brought all the work of the sanctuary came every man from his work which they made. And they spake unto Moses, saying, and wait for this, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make.

And Moses gave commandment and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing, for the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it and too much.

The Lord moved people to bring and to give what they had to put into the hands of the skilled workmen to do what they were called to do. And as we saw in chapter 40 at the end, it's not just a case of Moses sitting on his hands and twiddling his thumbs while everybody else does the hard work.

Once it is finished and brought to Moses and it is blessed. They are blessed for their work by Moses. Then we have Moses, obviously not single-handedly, but supervising those doing it, under the command of God, rearing up and setting up the tabernacle, exactly as God has described it, half a dozen times.

We read from verse 17 onwards, you know, they did it as the Lord commanded Moses. There, verse 19. Verse 21, as the Lord commanded Moses. Again, verse 23, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

[3 : 44] Verse 25, as the Lord had commanded Moses. And so on, verse 27. And again, verse 32. It's constant throughout. It is not according to what Moses himself might have invented.

It's not according to his personal ideas. Every detail was according to what God had prescribed. And what was the ultimate end?

What was the ultimate purpose of this? Well, once it is all set up, they don't just sit back and say, what a lovely job we've made of that. Wasn't that great? Aren't we the guys? But rather, once it is set up and it's all reared up, so Moses finished the work.

Verse 33 in chapter 40. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

This was the purpose for which all the work was designed. That the Lord should dwell in the midst of them. And in order to do that, he had given specific instructions as to what they were to do, and how they were to behave, and all that they were to make, and all that they were to work.

[4 : 54] He had given them a sufficiency of all that they needed. You know where you've got that throwaway remark almost when they come out of Egypt, you know, and say, and they spoiled the Egyptians. They borrowed off their neighbors' gold and silver and precious jewels and so on, and they spoiled the Egyptians.

That wasn't just to make them rich and fat. That was because the Lord knew in his providence that a day would come when all of this spoil would be put to the task of creating a sanctuary in which the Lord would dwell in the midst of his people.

And he gave very explicit instructions to that effect. Now you might say, well, it was all accomplished very quickly, wasn't it? Just inside of here, that all this was made and all this was finished despite the lack of machinery, despite any lack of automation.

Remember, there's an awful lot of people working on it. As everybody is doing their bit, everybody's working in it. But also, whilst they're there in the wilderness, they're not doing anything else.

They're not going to war with people. They're not cultivating fields because the Lord is sending manna every day. They're not having to go out and hunt or anything like that. They've got everything they need.

[6 : 06] They are doing this and they are doing nothing else. This is their great task, is to prepare a sanctuary for the Lord to dwell amongst them.

And at the conclusion of it all, we read at verse 34, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. That is what it was all for. That is its purpose.

And whilst you might think, oh, well, a year, that didn't take long. I imagine if you were working on it every single day, except for the Sabbaths, day in, day out, week in, week out, throughout a year, it must have seemed actually quite long enough if you're working hard.

And it would have seemed at one stage to take forever, but in the end, it was just a year. Just almost, you know, the blink of an eye in most adults' lives.

When we devote what we have and our skills and our abilities and the labor of our lives to the serving of the Lord in our particular employments, in our homes, in our lives, in the decisions we take about how we spend our money, about where we go and what we do for jobs, about political choices, all these things.

[7 : 18] When we put all of these things at the Lord's disposal, when our lives are devoted to living for the Lord in every aspect, and we are doing the spiritual and outliving equivalent of what these Israelites are doing, working away with all the curious patterns and the colors and the rich silks and all the blue and scarlet and fine twined linen, the gold and the precious jewels and making the priestly garments, all of this physical work was conveying a spiritual message.

So likewise, the way in which we live out our lives in following the Lord, whether it is according to His explicit instructions in His Word or not, as we deviate from Him, so likewise we serve ourselves and the world more than we serve the Lord.

In this instance, the Israelites had a rare occasion of being dedicated to doing exactly what the Lord said and they did it perfectly. And Moses blessed them.

As we devote our lives to the Lord in such detail and put every aspect of our lives under His command, under His instruction, according to His Word, seeking Him day by day, what do we find?

we find that what may have seemed like it was taking a lifetime, yes, it was a lifetime, but a lifetime that seems to have passed in the blink of an eye, a lifetime with the Lord here upon earth.

[8 : 53] It's too short. It is too short when we have Christ involved in all that we do and all that we say and the bringing up of our families and the labour of our hands and all that we do to have Christ involved in every aspect and detail of our lives is to sweeten, to enrich, to enhance, to bless, to strengthen.

It is to make it good that which would left to itself be simply of the dust of the world. Because the Israelites applied themselves to the things exclusively of the Lord and they focused upon nothing else for that time.

It went so quickly, although it must have seemed day by day like it was taking well and truly long enough. And as we devote ourselves, not explicitly merely to religious practices, but to involving the Lord and obedience to the Lord and His instruction and His command in every aspect of our lives, yes, it takes a lifetime, but it goes so quickly.

It is completed so quickly. And if we seek to be faithful to the Lord, we receive the blessing of the Lord as well because of what He has done for us.

All that the Israelites did, the Lord had already given them the means to do. He had given them the raw materials. He had given them all the things that Uri and Bezalel and the Holy Heart needed to work with.

[10 : 28] He had given them all the abilities. He had given them all the materials, all the goods. And all that we need to be able to follow the Lord, He has already done for us.

He has already achieved on our behalf. He has already paid the price and given us what we need to work with. You see, the Israelites' obedience to the Lord here was not what got them out of Egypt.

It wasn't according to how diligent they were to the detail of what God commanded that got them somehow miraculously across the Red Sea. God did that. God sent the plagues that broke the power of Egypt.

God delivered them in the midst of those plagues. God brought them out safely. God stood as a pillar of fire against the Egyptian chariots. God drowned Pharaoh and all his army in the Red Sea.

God fed them miraculously with the manna and the quails. God brought the water from the rock. God had done it all. The only reason they're able to work with their hands to serve the Lord, to prepare this tabernacle for Him is because of what God Himself has already done.

[11 : 34] And the only reason we are able to devote our lives in its detail and in every aspect of its work to the Lord day by day is because of what Christ has already done.

We are not in Egypt. We may be in the wilderness, but due to Christ and His work, we are at least free from the bondage of Satan, from the bondage of Egypt as it was at all.

But what is the purpose then of this tabernacle? That the Lord might dwell in their midst. A cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

The immediately preceding verse, verse 33 of chapter 40, says what? So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent. The work is finished.

And yet, and yet in a very real sense, the whole reason for all the work is only just starting. It is so that that tabernacle will go with them everywhere they go.

[12 : 41] Wherever the pillar of cloud or fire leads them, they will go. And where they settle, God will dwell in the midst of them. His cloud will fill that tabernacle. He will lead them.

He will be amongst them wherever they go. That is the purpose of it. Its work has only just begun. The reason, the purpose for all that went before has only just begun.

It is only when all the labor and toil and diligence and attention to detail has been completed. So Moses finished the work that God enables to begin the reason for what it was all for.

And so I would suggest to you that this life, which may at times seem so long, so detailed and with so many tasks and duties and how difficult it is to frame our lives according to the teaching, the detail, the commandments of God's word.

And so often we stray and we fail and we make mistakes. I don't imagine mistakes weren't made during the preparation of the tabernacle. But when it was found to deviate from what God had specified, they'd have to scrub it out and start it again.

[13 : 53] They'd have to remelt that piece of gold and then refashion it again. They'd have to unpick that stitching in the curtains and redo it again. They would have made mistakes, of course they would have. But the end product was perfected.

So Moses blessed them because they had done it as the Lord had commanded. Even so had they done it. So that at the end of the day, when Moses did his task, when everybody having done that fulfilled their individual task, the people bringing their goods and their offerings, the skilled workmen preparing all the artifacts in the tabernacle, Moses and Moses supervised, reeling up the tabernacle, putting everything in place, washing their hands and feet, offering up the burnt often, putting on the incense.

It's all done. It's all finished. And the Lord dwells and comes into the midst of them. Is that not ultimately what we aim for? That when this earthly tabernacle is completed, perfected, that the Lord comes and dwells amongst us, or rather we are taken to where the Lord intends to bring us as a permanent inheritance.

It's not that the tabernacle was a substitute for the promised land. The tabernacle doesn't disappear when the Israelites come into the promised land. It's just that they have by then received their inheritance and God intends to dwell in the midst of them, in the midst of their inheritance.

For this is the final, if you like, seal upon the work. This, which seems to be the end, the conclusion of all their labors, is in fact the beginning of what it was all for.

[15 : 48] And this is, this is what we read here in, for example, in Ezekiel's vision of not a tabernacle, but a perfected temple in heaven. If we read at the end of Ezekiel in chapter 48 and verse 30, these are the goings out of the city on the north side.

4,500 measures. And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel. Three gates northward, one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi.

And at the east side, 4,500 and three gates, and one gate for Joseph, one for Benjamin, one for Dan. And at the south side, 4,500 measures, three gates, one gate of Simeon, one gate of Isaac, one gate of Zebulun.

And at the west side, 4,500 with their three gates, one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Napoli. It was round about 18,000 measures and the name, that is the character, the identity, the descriptive reality, of the city.

From that day shall be, the Lord is there. That is what it is all for, the perfection of the heavenly temple that Ezekiel sees in his vision.

[17 : 03] The ultimate reality is, the Lord is there. Just as for the tabernacle, the ultimate reality, the Lord is there. What is it that will make heaven, heaven, when we get there?

That the Lord is there. It will be an empty place where we just somehow, not that this could happen, get this in, here's your streets of gold, there's your foundations of precious stones, there's all the angels lying in heaven, there's all the choirs that are singing, and, oh, where's the Lord?

Oh, where's Jesus? Where's the Lord? Oh, he's not here. He's gone. Can you imagine how that would feel? The emptiness, the desolation, because the truth, the riches, the glory of heaven is not all its furnishing.

It is the presence or absence of the living God. The Lord is there. Now remember Ezekiel's vision there with all the different gates each being made after the tribes of Israel.

That's what we read, of course, in John's vision in Revelation. And we read of how he saw, he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

[18 : 20] Having the glory of God and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clearest crystal, and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

On the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, on the west three gates, just as Ezekiel foresees. What Ezekiel sees as a perfected temple is in fact fulfilled and explained in Revelation as being the holy city, because the whole of it is holy to the Lord.

There's not a temple as such, because the Lord dwells in the midst of it. Revelation 21, verse 2, I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

In other words, just as God's dwelling in the old tabernacle, a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. So we read, in the fulfillment of glory, the tabernacle of God is with men.

[19 : 52] That is the reality that this earthly symbol was pointing to. It is a completion, and yet it is only a beginning. When you and I complete the number of our days of this earthly veil, if we stand before the Lord in glory, justified by his grace, covered and washed by his blood, that is not the end of all things.

That is the beginning of the true purpose for which we were designed and conceived and thought of in the heart of the Father from all eternity, for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.

The tabernacle of God is with men, he will dwell with them. They shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And what happens in this glory were God's?

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I made all things new. And he said unto me, Write, for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done.

[21 : 14] I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Now when he says it's done, is that me okay? We're going to pack it all up, forget about heaven and earth. No, rather, when he says it is done, he means that all the preparation, just like with the tabernacle, all the work that went before, that is finished, that is complete.

Now the purpose for which it was exercised is beginning. Because I am not just the end, I am the beginning. Not just the Omega, but the Alpha.

I will give unto him that is a thirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

The tabernacle of God is with men. This is the ultimate promise, the ultimate reality, the purpose of the tabernacle in the first place, that God should dwell there.

Psalm 46, verse 5, God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early.

[22 : 24] Zechariah chapter 2, verse 10, Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.

This is God reiterating his promise in the law, in the prophets, in the gospel, and ultimately, in the final prophecy of revelation.

He is consistent throughout. He does not change, because the word of God, as the confession says, is not manifold, but one. It is one message of grace throughout, from Genesis to Revelation.

God dwelling, desiring to dwell in the midst of mankind. Now, of course, not all of mankind will have him. Many will turn against him and turn away from him.

They desire not life in all its fullness, and God, in his perfect justice, and in his perfect mercy, the goodness and the severity of God gives them exactly as they choose.

[23 : 26] If they desire not the prince of life, then there is only death. And that is what men desire. And say, oh, this world is all there is. Don't believe in anything else.

You have your life, you've got it, and you die. For the believer, this life is certainly not all there is. This is the time of work. This is the time of preparation.

This is the time of laboring on the tabernacle. This is the time of being in the wilderness. And yes, God meets your every need, but this is the time when all you focus on is working on that obedience to God, the preparation of that tabernacle, the end result of which is that the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

This earthly tabernacle of ours, we must help him at least now off. Our dust will be laid in the ground, but we will have in the fullness of time our resurrection body, which the Lord will inhabit with his spirit.

The cloud of his presence will fill, and we will never depart from him. Then, this is the time of preparation. This is the time of labor. This is the time in the wilderness, but for the world and the God-denier, this is life.

[24 : 47] This is all that there is. And you have it, and then you die. Death is what they desire. Death is what the Lord in his mercy gives them. death temporal.

But before that, there is death spiritual. Because to reject the Prince of Life is to court death. It is to invite death. It is to embrace death.

So death spiritual is what comes first. And that spiritual death means that when temporal death arrives, eternal death is what awaits.

What a dark and hopeless scenario. How much to be pitied are those who are not just in the wilderness, but in the wilderness without God.

The work of the tabernacle is that it may be completed, that the Lord may dwell in it, and that the reason and purpose for doing it all will have finally begun.

[25 : 52] likewise will us. This life which seems at times to take so long, but in retrospect as we look back, as we reach towards the end of our days, will seem but the blink of an eye.

And something that was half a century ago will seem but as yesterday, when it is past such a short time, all the work was in fact completed in.

but to what end, to what purpose, that the Lord should dwell in the midst of his handmaid. God is in the midst of our, the name of the city is the Lord is there.

God's tabernacle is with men. That is where he desires to be, and that is where he desires his children to be. And when all the time of labor and preparation and sojourning in the wilderness is done, it is not then that all things are brought to an end.

It is that the reality for which all these things were undertaken will have finally begun. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle that is great.

[27 : 14] And I will take over that one and I will ask separately to keep the tent of that. The squish of is the can■ to keep and the time compatible with the