

When Glory Came Down
(Exodus 40:1-38)

06/02/19

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Man is made to worship God. But we need to worship Him in a proper way by consecrating ourselves and by responding to His instructions in obedience. The tabernacle is a foreshadowing of Christ, who dwells within us and desires to direct us. May we respond to Christ's instructions by obeying Him.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most memorable experiences I had with the Lord was in October 4, 1997 in Washington D.C. at the national mall, where some million men came together to repent and worship. It was sponsored by Promise Keepers, who promoted men to reclaim their spiritual leadership responsibility in their families. The event was called "Stand in the Gap." There were men from every part of the United States. We had a glimpse of what it would be like in heaven as we joined together to lift up our voices to worship and praise God. At the beginning of the six-hour worship service, the moderator asked us, "What denomination are you from?" All million of us shouted our denominations. It sounded like a bunch of gibberish. We were not able to understand what was said. However, the moderator asked a second question, "Who do you worship today?" All million of us shouted in one accord, "Jesus." I totally could sense God's presence in the mall as we worshiped our Lord of Lord and King of Kings.

Worship is precious. As a matter of fact, God made us so that we can worship Him. It is His desire for us to enjoy His presence. God has also called the Israelites to worship Him. However, they had forgotten how to worship the Lord since they had been slaves in Egypt for many decades. Although they had been away from the Promised Land for some 400 years, God had not forgotten His covenant that He had made to Abraham. God promised that Abraham's descendants would grow and expand like the stars in the sky. In addition, God promised that they would be a blessing to the rest of the world. The third promise was that His people would have a land for themselves.

Pharaoh persecuted God's people because he felt threatened by the success of the Israelites. As God's people cried out to the Lord, God sent Moses to deliver them. Moses approached Pharaoh asking him to let God's people go so that they could worship the Lord. The Egyptian king questioned Moses' authority. Moses said that "God of Israel, the great I AM" has sent him. God is the Self-Existence and all powerful God, who authorized Moses to confront Pharaoh. Pharaoh did not know the God of the great I AM. He disregarded Moses' request. Throughout the rest of the Book of Exodus, we see the theme: "You Shall Know I AM." Not only would the Egyptians know God of the great I AM, but also the Israelites.

Since Pharaoh challenged God, the Lord had to show Him who was actually in charge through the 10 plagues. God demonstrated His power as He parted the Red Sea to allow His people to walk on dry land. That was a miracle. When the Egyptian army came pursuing them, God released the parted waters and drowned the whole army. God not only did this for Israel's good, but also for His glory. (Exod. 14:17b,18) "I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen." In response to these mighty deeds of salvation, God's people gave God the glory. The Israelites worshipped the Lord. One of the songs that they sang was "The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him" (Exod. 15:2).

When they arrived at Mt. Sinai, Moses went up to meet God and to receive the Law including the 10 Commandments, which provided instructions as to how they ought to worship

God and how they could live in harmony with one another. Because Moses had been for a long time, the people got impatient and they erected an idol, a golden calf to worship it. God is a jealous God and God's wrath was poured upon them. After they repented, God's people praised the Lord and renewed their covenant to worship the Lord. They had a new beginning.

As they travelled to the Promised Land, God commanded Moses to make a tabernacle, where God could dwell and where His people could worship Him. It had to be a movable place of worship because God's people were journeying through the wilderness. Today, we have come to the last chapter of Exodus. We have reached the climax of this book where the Lord provides the final instruction on setting up of the tabernacle. This chapter can be divided into three sections. First, there is the instruction of the Lord. Second, we have the obedience of Moses. And thirdly, we see the response of the Lord. At the end, we will all know that God is the great I AM. He is worthy to be worshipped and His glory will be displayed. [Let us start by looking at the instruction of the Lord, which we can see in the first 15 verses of Exodus 40. There are two parts to the Lord's instruction. The first is the setting up of the tabernacle and the second is the setting apart for the Tabernacle and the priests.]

A. The Instruction of the Lord (v.1-15)

1. The setting up of the Tabernacle (v.1-8)

In the previous chapter, God raised craftsmen to make all the components of the tabernacle. It was brought to Moses so that he could examine and inspect it. It was done according to what the Lord has commanded. (Exod. 39:42-43) "The Israelites had done all the work just as the Lord had commanded Moses. Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the Lord had commanded." They are now all set to erect the tabernacle.

From verse Exod. 40:1, we noticed that the timing was special because it landed on the anniversary of Israel's exodus from Egypt. It took the Israelites about 3 months to arrive at Mt. Sinai and they had been here for about 9 months making all the components of the tabernacle. It had been quite a year, where they had experienced God guiding them through the pillar of cloud, God providing them manna or food every day. That is a lot of food to feed about 2 million people. Could you imagine cooking 2 million hamburgers? God provided enough food for all of them for 365 days. In addition, God had provided them water also. God had given them victory over enemies. God is indeed the great I AM. He has displayed His glory time and time again.

APPLICATION: Can you recall how God has provided for you this year? How He has guided you? How He has protected you? How He has blessed you? How He has answered your prayers? Indeed, He is the great I AM. He is worthy of our worship.

Now that all the elements of the tabernacle is completed, God instructs Moses to set up or assemble the Tabernacle. All the furnishings were now to be set in place starting inside the Holy of Holies with the ark of the covenant. Then he sets up the furniture that went inside the Holy place with the table of showbread, the lampstand, and the altar of incense. [READ vv3-5] Afterward, God gave him instruction as to set up the furniture that went outside with the altar and laver and finally the fence that went around the tabernacle. [After setting up all the elements of the tabernacle, God provided instruction on setting apart of the tabernacle and the priest from vv. 9-16.]

2. The setting apart of the Tabernacle and the Priest (v.9-16)

After identifying all the elements and where they need to go, Moses was instructed to consecrate the tabernacle and its furnishings as recorded in v.9-11. The word "consecrate" means to set apart for God's use. May we consecrate all that God has

entrusted to us. For all that we have belongs to the Lord. May we set them apart for the use of God.

APPLICATION: Lord, I recognize that you have given me my house and I offer it up for your use. May I invite people into my home so that they can experience the love of Christ. Lord, I recognize that you have given my car. I want to set it apart for your use. May I use it to help transport others that are in need. Lord, I recognize that you have blessed me with so much clothes. I want to donate some of it to others that might be in need. It is a totally different perspective if we see what we have belonging to God verses belonging to us. God has entrusted all that we have for His glory. May we consecrate it and set it apart for His purpose.

Not only were the furnishings consecrated to the Lord, God also gave instructions to consecrate the priests, which were Aaron and his sons. READ v. 12-13, "Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water. Then dress Aaron in the sacred garments, anoint him and consecrate him so he may serve me as priest." Before the priests were able to serve God's people, they had to be cleansed so that they would be set apart for service for the Lord.

In 1 Peter 2:9, the Bible says that we are a chosen people a royal priesthood. God wants us to be set apart for His service also. We are called his royal priesthood. In 2 Cor. 5:20, the Lord called us to be His ambassadors. We are to represent the Lord on this earth. We must dedicate and consecrate ourselves to God for His service. We are created to serve the Lord and not for ourselves. (Eph. 2:10) "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." We are bought with a price. We are saved from hell. We owe our lives to the Lord. Lord, use us as you please. (2 Cor. 5:15) "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

APPLICATION: There are many opportunities where you can serve the Lord. It might be ushering visitors, greeting guests, playing an instrument on the worship team, teaching in VBS, discipling a youth, doing childcare during Parents Night Out, doing audio visual, or designing posters. God has gifted us with many talents. May we consecrate ourselves by setting ourselves apart to be used for the kingdom of God. That is an act of worship. (Romans 12:1-2) "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God- this is your spiritual act of worship."

[God has a special task for Moses, which was to erect the tabernacle. As we look at the next section, we see the obedience of Moses. When God makes it clear what Moses needs to do, he was quick to obey.]

B. The Obedience of Moses (v.16-33)

From vv. 16-33, Moses carries out the instruction that God has given to him. A good summary is recorded in verse 16, "Moses did everything just as the Lord commanded him." Seven more times in this chapter, Moses said that he has done exactly as the Lord commanded him (vv.19,21,23,25,27,29,32). If we go back to Exodus 39, there is another ten occurrence where it states, "as the Lord commanded Moses." The word "commanded" is used 18 times in Exodus 39 and 40 to remind us that the workers did what God had told them to do. Moses was a faithful servant who did all that God told him to do.

The bible says in 1 John 2:3-6 (NIV), "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made

complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.”

If we claim to know God, then we would obey Him. ILLUSTRATION: Two areas that most Christians struggle to obey are 1) prayer 2) witnessing. These are also two areas that I struggled with. I could preach a good message on prayer and evangelism. However, if I am not practicing it, it does not mean anything. It would not show that I truly know God. A few years back, I had to confess before the Lord that I had trouble obeying Him in these areas. I asked Him to give me the discipline and courage to be obedient to Him. Gradually, God helped me in these two areas. Now, I pray for every member of the English congregation every week by name. I have experienced so much more of God’s power. I have been intentional in building relationships with my neighbors, giving me a platform to talk about the Lord. I challenge you to be obedient to the Lord for it is a clear sign that we really know God. He wants us to know and experience that He is the Great I AM. What has God revealed to you that you need to be obedient in?

C. The Response of the Lord (v.34-38)

In verse 33, it says that Moses finished the work. He has completed all that God has instructed him to do. He obeyed God. Note the response of the Lord. READ vv.34-35, “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”

Up to this period, the Israelites had seen glimpses of God’s glory. They had seen His glory in their deliverance from Egypt. They had seen the fire and smoke on Mt. Sinai. But they had not seen a close, visible manifestation of God’s almighty glory. They were waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promise as recorded in Exod. 29:44-46, “So I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.”

1. The glory of the Lord fills the tabernacle

God’s glory came to the Tabernacle and filled it. The cloud is the symbolism of God’s presence. Now, this cloud dwelt among them. It was an awesome site, which provides great security.

ILLUSTRATION: Each of my five grandchildren has a security blanket. Whenever, they feel insecure, they want to hold their security blanket. It calms them down and comforts them. They want their security blanket to be close by. My 8 year old grandchild has a worn out blanket with holes in it, but she still wants it before going to bed.

Jesus is our security blanket. We can find security in Him just as the cloud filled the tabernacle. It reminds His people of God’s presence. He is the great I AM. He is in control even when things are in chaos. We can find comfort in the Lord.

Where is God’s glory today? The body of every true believer is the temple of God. God does dwell in His people and it’s our responsibility to glorify God in all that we do. (1 Cor. 6:20) “You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.” (1 Cor. 10:31) “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” As God’s ambassador, may we represent God well by glorifying Him. This is indeed an act of worship. [We have seen the glory of the Lord fills the tabernacle. We also see the glory of the Lord guides His people in vv. 36-38, “In all the travels of the

Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out- until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.”]

2. The glory of the Lord guides His people

Every day, the people could see the cloud, which represents the presence of God. When it moved, the Israelites were to move. If it stopped, the Israelites would stop. Wouldn't that be good if there was a cloud that directs our path today? Well, God has given us the Bible, God's holy Word, which is a manual for living. There are many things that God has made clear as to what is God's will. May we be like Moses by obeying all that God has commanded to us.

If we are not willing to do that which God has made clear to us, why should God reveal additional directions to us? If my wife tells me that she loves seafood, but if I do not take her to a seafood restaurant, why should she tell me more about what she wants. If we want to know God's will. 1) Be obedient to what God has revealed to us 2) Seek to please God. In Ps. 37:4, “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.” We delight in the Lord by pursuing to know God and obey Him. When we seek God's heart, God will give us what is in our heart. God desires to guide us. Many times, we want to be in control and not want to be guided deceiving ourselves thinking that God might not have the best in store for us. That is absolutely false. God wants us to know His will so that we can enjoy His presence and the Life that He has given to us. May we pursue Him by knowing that He is the Great I AM by obeying Him.