

Worship by God's Design - Studies on The Tabernacle
Midweek Teaching Series

Part 2 - Generosity of Heart

How was the Tabernacle going to be built?

Exodus 35: 4-19



The Tabernacle was to be a holy place where God would dwell in the midst of his people. It was therefore going to be the greatest and finest construction the people will have seen. Nothing was going to be left to chance or guess work; God clearly revealed to Moses what it would take build the court, with the visible signs of sacrifice, and the tent, the Tabernacle, where worship and intercession would be made on behalf of the people before God. The Lord instructed Moses that the people should,

Take from among you a contribution to the LORD. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD's contribution: gold, silver, and bronze.

Exodus 35:5

But the people are in the wilderness, so how could they build the Tabernacle and I've in this way? God would use their most recent experience to provide

all that would be needed for this tent of worship. When the Children of Israel fled from Egypt they took with them silver and gold jewellery. We are told in Exodus 12: 35-36,

The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewellery and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

God had provided everything that would be needed for the building work. But there is a long list of items that are required in Exodus 35.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| - Gold | - Goats' hair | - Spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense |
| - Silver | - Tanned rams' skin | - Onyx stones and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breast piece. |
| - Bronze | - Goatskins | |
| - Blue and purple and scarlet yarns | - Acacia wood | |
| - Fine twined linen | - Oil for the light | |

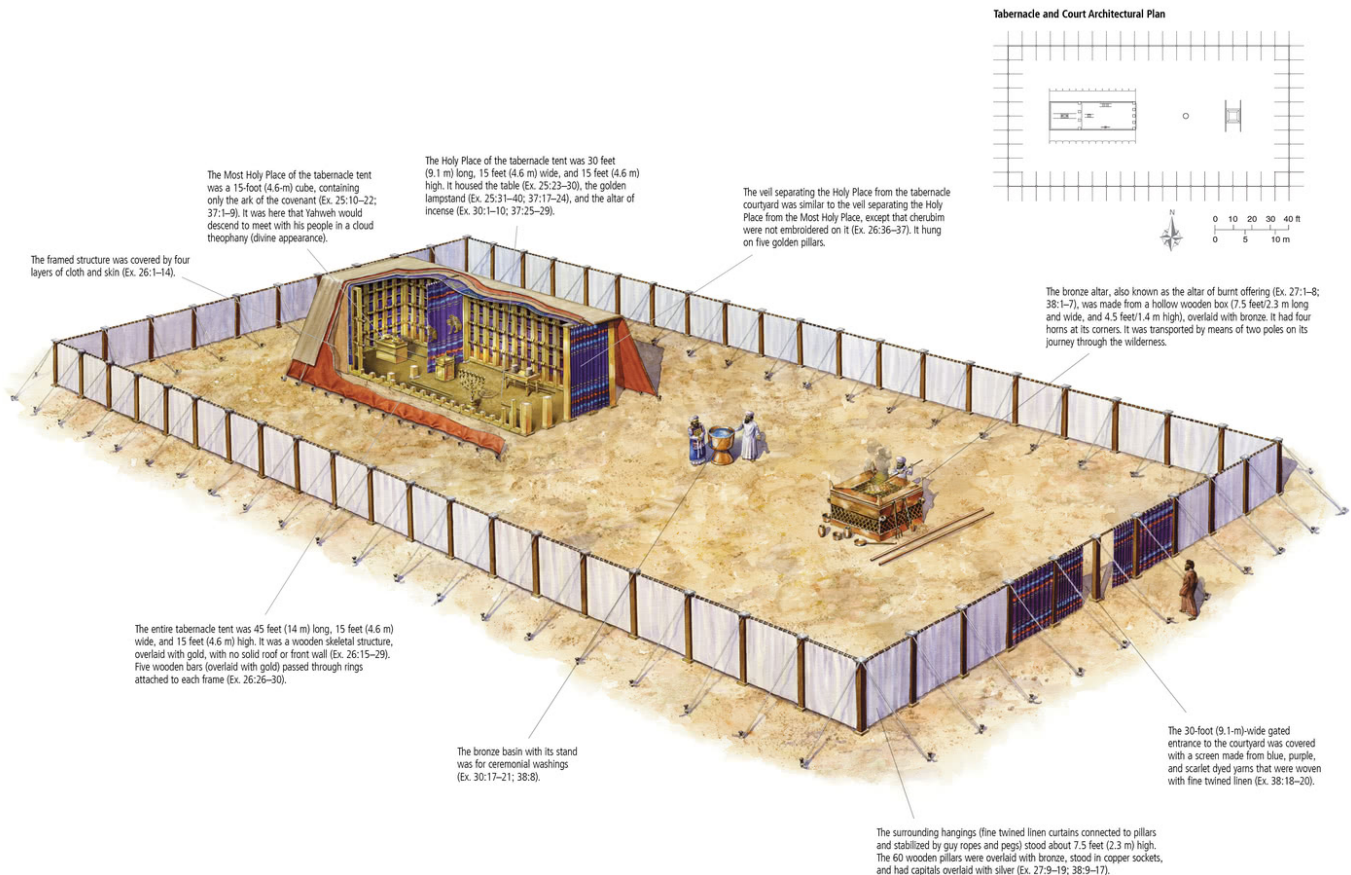
Through his providence God placed the Children of Israel exactly where they needed to be to avail of these items. They either carried them from Egypt or found them in the wilderness. So, the people could start giving to this important work. But this was not a command! Only those who were generous in heart should give. God didn't want people to come in an obliging way to him, he wanted true gifts of worship for what would be his house. And this has been the standard God has required throughout each generation. We read in 2 Corinthians 9:7

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

But it wasn't only the giving of items that were required. Skilled craftsmen and women would be needed to put it all together. Verse 10 tells us that God invited all the people to come and work.

Let every skilful craftsman among you come and make all that the LORD has commanded.

And again we have a list of what was needing to be crafted. It included people who could craft metals, wood and precious stones, as well as those who could spin wool and weave cloth. This was going to be a community effort, but that's what Sinai was all about. It was about establishing this group of people as a community, both socially and spiritually. The Ten Commandments weren't simply rules to be obeyed; they were also principles of God's standards for his people.



The Response of the People

Exodus 35: 20-29

These verses detail for us how the people responded to the word of the Lord given by Moses. On two occasions we read of their positive response.

And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the LORD's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments.

Exodus 35:21

All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the LORD.

Exodus 35:29

When Moses delivered this invitation, the people of Israel responded, giving abundantly to the work. God's people at this point realised that their possessions did not finally belong to them but that they were to be

wise and willing stewards of them for the glory of the Lord and the work of the old covenant church. So they gave, and they gave generously and willingly.

John Calvin, in his commentary on this passage, highlights what the Israelites' being willing to give says about human free will. Calvin writes,

Those, therefore, whom the Spirit rules, He does not drag unwillingly by a violent and extrinsic impulse, as it is called, but He so works within them upon their will, that believers stir up themselves, and they voluntarily follow His leadings.

Application for Today

When God desired to dwell with his people he wasn't doing so by imposing himself on them. They had covenanted with him to be his people and know him as their God. Sinai renewed that covenant promise. When identifying a change in the people, God was looking at their hearts to see if they were fully toward him. When we see how God works, we know that he looks at who we are in our thoughts and desires rather than in our outward appearances and actions. These may display the outworking of the heart, but it all comes for the centre of our desires. That is why God said to Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:7,

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

God continues to look at our hearts today to see if they are set fully for him. This will be displayed in our actions, such as our giving and service, and in our words, how we speak to people and what we say. He is looking for renewal and transformation that can only come through Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us in John 3:6,

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

We are to live as people born of the Spirit of God. Our words are to be true and sincere, our actions are to be kind and charitable and our thoughts are to be pure and focused on God.

Questions for Further Study

1. Seeing in Exodus 35 what God requires of his people, how are you matching up to what he asks? Is there any opportunity to grow in love with Christ more?
2. God wants those who worship him to do so from a genuine heart. How do you prepare for worship of him each day and as you approach Sunday worship?
3. How can greater understanding of the invitation to provide for the building of the Tabernacle draw you closer to God as you live for him?