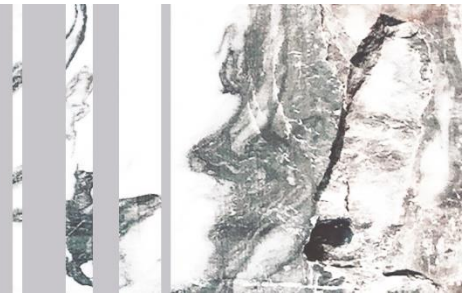


EXODUS

Daily Devotions Week 13



DAY ONE

There are parts of the Bible that are more well-known than others. For example, many people are familiar with John 3:16, Psalm 23, and The 10 Commandments – and these verses may be seen on refrigerator magnets, t-shirts and bumper stickers. But the chapters we'll study this week probably won't make the cut for a coffee mug or a tote bag. This is unfortunate because these chapters reveal the heart and mind of God in a unique way. While the specific applications may not feel very relevant to us today, there are universal principles found in these chapters that are very relevant, practical, and real for our lives today.

Exodus 24-31 details God's design and instructions for building the tabernacle. In the Old Testament, the tabernacle was the meeting place where God dwelled and communed with his people. The tabernacle simultaneously points us back to the Garden of Eden and also forward to the New Heavens and the New Earth. It points to God's transcendence but also to his intimacy. It reveals the fact that he is holy and we are not, yet he still desires to be in relationship with us.

In Exodus 25, the Lord gave Moses very specific instructions for the design and construction of the tabernacle. It was to be the epicenter of Israelite worship. We see God calling the people of Israel to participate with him to build his sanctuary and asking the people to give according to the prompting of their own hearts. God offers no mandate, no specific amount, and no taxation, but rather, God wanted the people to give from their hearts. This is an aspect of God's nature that we see again and again. Remember in Genesis 2:19-20, God created the animals but allowed Adam to name them. In Exodus, God delivers the people of Israel from Egypt but wants Moses to lead them. Now in Exodus 25, we see God wanted a very specific dwelling place but rather than creating it himself - even though in his perfection it would have been perfect - he wanted the people's participation. And still today, he wants our participation in building his dwelling place.

On this side of the cross, we don't go to the place where God dwells. We are to *be* the place where God dwells. In Mark 15:38 at the moment of Jesus' death on the cross, the tabernacle veil is torn in two. This is powerful symbolism because until his death, the curtain separated the holy God from sinful people. But when the veil was torn from top to bottom, it meant we no longer need a priest to be in communion with God. We are each free to approach the throne of God and be greeted with loving, holy, and open arms.

- Are you a place where God dwells?
- Have you allowed God to design you as a place where he can dwell?
- What does it look like for you to *be* the place where God dwells?

DAY TWO

When Scripture calls a person, place or thing “holy” it means that the object is set apart, is separate from, and called by God for a higher purpose. Within the tabernacle there was a Most Holy Place separated from the rest of the building by a curtain. The Most Holy place had one entrance that only the high priest could enter, and he could do so only once a year. We know that God is omnipresent, meaning that he is everywhere at all times. But the Most Holy Place was a place where God’s presence was manifested in a special and unique way.

Once a year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the designated high priest would enter into the Most Holy Place and offer sacrifices for his sins and for the sins of all the people. He was the mediator between God and the nation of Israel. Out of millions of people, only one could approach God and ask for forgiveness of the sins of all.

When Jesus died on the cross the veil between the tabernacle and the Most Holy Place was torn in two. This signified that we no longer need an earthly high priest to mediate for us. We can approach the throne of grace and commune with God ourselves. Theologian Tim Keller says, “The only person who dares wake up a king at 3am for a glass of water is a child. We have that kind of access.”

We celebrate today and every day that Jesus is our high priest, the veil is gone, and we don’t have to wait until the Day of Atonement. At any time, we can stop to speak with the God of the universe because of the death of his Son Jesus on a cross. In Jewish tradition, the high priest would wear a rope around his ankle, because in the event that he said or did the wrong thing he could be struck dead. Contrast this with Hebrews 4:16, “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” We approach the throne of God with confidence, because not only does God see our sin and shame, he sees the work of his Son, Jesus. We are forgiven. The veil is torn. We are free to enter the Most Holy Place.

- Read Hebrews 2:17 - What kind of high priest is described there?
- How does Christ mediate for you?
- Spend a few moments considering and rejoicing in the fact that we can approach God with confidence because of the sacrifice of Jesus.

DAY THREE

Exodus 27:1-18 details God's instruction for how the people should build The Altar of Burnt Offering. The people of Israel participated in what is called a sacrificial system - the practice of offering up something precious for a cause or reason. Ancient Israel participated in a number of offerings - the Burnt Offering, the Grain Offering, the Peace Offering, the Purification Offering, and the Reparation Offering. These offerings would have been conducted on The Altar of Burnt Offerings that we read about in Exodus 27. It is important for us to note that even in their own time these offerings would not have been considered to be a form of legalism. Rather, they were an outward expression of an inward commitment. A demonstration of love and commitment to Yahweh. The prophet Samuel said, "to obey is better than sacrifice." The prophet Jeremiah criticized the people of Israel because although they were offering burnt offerings, they were disobeying God. Regardless of the old or new covenant, God's desire throughout all of time remains the same - for the heart of man to be transformed.

So why don't we offer sacrifices for our sins today? As believers, the ultimate sacrifice was already made for us by Jesus on the cross. The one and only perfect sacrifice, spotless and blameless. God desired to have a relationship with us, but we had created a barrier between ourselves and God who is holy. God is a God of justice, so he could not allow our sin to go unpunished. There needed to be a payment, and we had nothing worthy enough to make that payment. But God, in his infinite love for us, offered us a way. Isaiah 53:5 says, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." Jesus was the only payment in the universe that could satisfy our debt with God. He went to the cross willingly, Hebrews says, for the joy set before him. Because of that ultimate sacrifice, we are bound by no other.

But there is a New Covenant sacrifice that we are called to. In Romans 12:1, Paul says, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." The proper response to God's mercy is to offer ourselves completely to him with no reservation. After all, he had no reservations for us.

- What does it mean to be a living sacrifice?
- Have you made this sacrifice?
- Why? Why not?

DAY FOUR

Exodus 28 is a chapter that some may consider a “boring” part of the Bible. At first glance, the detailed description of the priestly garments doesn’t typically make for the most exciting reading. But its history, symbolism, and relevance for us today makes it extremely rich. If *all* Scripture is God-breathed, then every passage is revealing something about the God we serve - and the more we know about God the more reasons we will have to love him.

In Israel, the high priest is the mediator between God and his people, and his clothing needed to reflect that dignity and honor. Just as the people of Israel needed a mediator, we also need a mediator – ours being the person of Jesus Christ. One of the garments that stands out in the description is the breastplate. Exodus 28:21 says, “There are to be twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.” Each stone represented the people in each of the 12 tribes of Israel. As the priest approached the throne of God, he was taking with him the sins, petitions, and offerings of the people. Since Jesus has taken the place of the high priest, instead of interceding only for the 12 tribes before God, Jesus intercedes for all of us. It’s our sins, pain, and prayers before God. Could there ever be a better high priest than Jesus? He is the Son of God, the one who went to the cross for us, the one that Hebrews calls a “merciful and faithful High Priest.”

Just as the high priest in Exodus would advocate for his people, Jesus is advocating for his people today, people who were bought with his blood and kept by his grace. We are clothed in the righteousness of Christ Jesus. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

We come before the throne with boldness not because we don’t have faults, sins, and mistakes, but because God sees the righteousness of his Son Jesus, who became sin on our behalf.

- What do you want Jesus to bring before the Father today?
- Do you approach God boldly?
- Why? Why not?

DAY FIVE

This week's reading concludes in Exodus 31. We've explored some of the often-overlooked passages of Scripture and we've discovered deep and rich theology that should give us a better understanding of God's nature. We've learned about God's desire that we not go to a place where he dwells but that we *be* the place where he dwells. Exodus revealed how the death of Jesus removed the veil and we are now free to enter into the presence of God; and that we no longer make sacrifices of animals because Jesus was the true sacrifice once and for all. And we've seen how Jesus, our High Priest, mediates for us in place of an earthly high priest.

When we read Exodus 31:12-18, we see God's desire that we keep his Sabbath holy. This points us back to the fourth commandment, "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Sabbath or Shabbat in Hebrew means "rest" or "cessation." It is a day we set aside for God, a day of reflection on the work of God in our lives and in the world. In Genesis 2 we see God himself rest. It's interesting God has just spent the preceding chapters detailing the intricate and complex design of the temple, yet he concludes by commanding his people cease the work he has called them to do in favor of spending time with him.

We're all busy balancing work, relationships, recreation, and more, but it must be noted that God is calling people doing his work to rest. It's not a sin to be tired, but it is a sin to neglect our relationship with God by not setting aside a day for him. This is difficult because so many of us are involved in really good things, much like the people of Israel, but our work (even our good work) doesn't define us. God does. We must never sacrifice good things for the best things. Scripture refers to Sabbath as a gift from God, but unfortunately, it's a gift that is often neglected. The reality is, God doesn't need our work and God doesn't need our rest. He commands it for our good and for our joy.

- What day is your sabbath?
- How do you keep it holy?
- Read the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10. Who do you resonate with most from the passage? Why?