

THE CLOUD AND THE GLORY

INTRODUCTION

Exodus 40 is the climax of the book of Exodus. Exodus tells of the way God transformed a people, taking them from Egypt where they were bound in slavery, leading them into the wilderness, patiently putting up with their rebelliousness and finally manifesting His abiding presence in the midst of His camp and making them His own people with a promise of being settled in a land of milk and honey.

The more we can grasp the significance of the cloud to the people of God in the Book of Exodus, the better we can understand the significance of one of God's great provisions for His people, the church.

MESSAGE

Read Exodus 40

Exodus 40 picks up the account where preparations and construction of the tabernacle have taken approximately six months and now, at last, the tabernacle is being set up for the first time. Imagine the excitement of this day.

GOD'S ORDER AND HOLINESS

1. Correct order - Everything had its correct order and place.

- In verses 1-8, the terms "place," "arrange," and "set up" are repeated.
- Our God is a God of order, there is a place and order for everything.

2. Anointing and Consecration.

Verses 9-16 focus on the words "anoint" and "consecrate". This results in the object becoming holy. That which is in God's temple must be made holy and separated unto Him.

3. God's sequence for construction

Verses 17-33 Describe a descending order of "holiness" in erecting the tabernacle.

- We move from the inside of the tabernacle to the outside courtyard. We begin in the holy of holies, the most holy place in the tabernacle, and we end in the courtyard, the least holy place.
- This order and sequence is found in the set-up instructions, the anointing instructions and in the final erection:
- Holy of Holies (Tabernacle – Ark – Veil)
- Holy place (Table, shew bread, lamp stand and altar of incense).
- Outer Court (Altar of burnt offering, laver, courtyard)

- Entrance
- People

God came to the people first! This is our God. He came closer and closer and closer and now He dwells within us and we are His temple!

ASSEMBLING THE TABERNACLE – Exodus 40:17-33

1. Obedience – follow the manual

Have you ever saved for something special, you order it and can't you wait for it to be delivered? When the package finally arrives, you immediately open it and find a great quantity of individual parts, which you must assemble. Unless you follow the manual, you are going to land us with some spare parts and not know where they belong...

Verse 16 tells us that Moses carried out God's instructions, and then verses 1-33 describe his obedience in detail. Then, seven times in verses 17-33 we are told that Moses did exactly as God commanded him.

The Bible is our manual – Just like the Israelites had to follow the tabernacle building, preparation and assembly instructions, we also need to follow the instructions it gives us. ***Are we doing so?***

2. A precise timing is indicated.

God instructed that on the first day of the first month of the second year the tabernacle was to be put up.

God's timing is always perfect! We must never try to rush God!

THE CLOUD AND THE GLORY DESCEND – Exodus (40:34-38)

1. The best has truly been saved till last (for the Israelites).

The glory of God descending upon the tabernacle is the closest the Israelites have ever been to God – The living God's presence right in the middle of their camp!

2. The descent of God's glory upon the tabernacle was the fulfillment of God's previous promises to Israel and to Moses:

God had promised to deliver Israel and make them His people and to meet with them at the tabernacle.

The cloud was a visible manifestation of the glory of the Lord.

Previously God was ahead of them or behind them, but now He was among them and the presence of the cloud was visible proof to them, and any enemy who may be spying out their camp!

3. The glory of God revealed in the tabernacle was greater than any glory previously revealed to Israel.

The glory of God in the tabernacle was so awesome that even Moses could not enter the tabernacle.

4. The cloud would be continually present and would guide the Israelites on their way to the promised land of Canaan.

Exodus 40:38 (NKJV) For the cloud of the Lord was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

By this cloud God led the Israelites, informing them as to when they should make or break camp, as well as leading them in the proper route, it was an assurance to the Israelites that they will get to the promised land of Canaan, for God Himself was going before them.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME?

What, then, is the significance of this event for the you and I? 1 Corinthians 3:16 tells us that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE, HOLINESS AND TIMING

God manifested His presence in the place which He prescribed, and among those people who precisely carried out His commands pertaining to the tabernacle.

We are reminded today that if we want God's presence in our lives, we can't take a haphazard, man pleasing approach. We must obey the Lord, following His instructions carefully.

John 14:6 (NKJV) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Romans 12:1 (ESV) I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship

- You don't get to heaven by being a good person, you need to receive Jesus as your Lord and Saviour – There is no other way.
- We can't serve God on our own terms, Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will obey Me.
- We must be sanctified and consecrated!
- It was not until the tabernacle was made in complete compliance with God's instructions that He descended upon it.
- Timing – The Bible teaches us to seek the Lord while He may be found!

Until we surrender completely to God and invite Jesus to be our Way to the Father, His glory cannot descend upon our lives. We only receive His Holy Spirit when we are truly born-again, and we must also live the consecrated life.

We must respect God's temple.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (NKJV) Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

Let us seek to be meticulous in keeping God's commands, and not just in their letter, but in their spirit as well, and let us seek Him today.

2. THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US ASSURANCE

The manifestation of God's glory in the tabernacle was to be an assurance to Israel of God's presence among them.

- This assurance of God's presence was even more precious after the great sin of the nation in making and worshiping the golden calf (Exod. 32).
- God's presence assured the Israelites that God would be among them, in their midst, in spite of their sin.
- God has provided us with the same kind of assurance as that which the cloud provided for Israel.

Romans 8:16 (NKJV) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

The Spirit of God abides within the saint as the cloud used to abide within the tabernacle. If we have been truly born again by personal faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit indwells us and assures us that we are the children of God. The Spirit also gives us guidance, as the cloud guided the Israelites.

Through His Spirit, God indwells the believer, giving assurance of the forgiveness of sins, of the presence of God, and of continual access to Him, through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

3. THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ASSURES US OF GOD'S DIVINE GUIDANCE

Matthew Henry Commentary on Exodus 40:34-38: The cloud covered the tabernacle even in the clearest day; it was not a cloud which the sun scatters. This cloud was a token of God's presence to be seen day and night, by all Israel, that they might never again question, Is the Lord among us, or is He not? It guided the camp of Israel through the wilderness. While the cloud rested on the tabernacle, they rested; when it removed, they followed it.

Are you following your own will, or God's guidance and direction? Today we are reminded that we have the Holy Spirit who will lead us, and when we let Him lead us, it is a declaration that we are the sons of God!

4. FROM GLORY TO GLORY

- A.** Some may prefer to have the cloud than the Spirit. That is, they would prefer something visible, something spectacular, to assure them of God's presence and guidance.
- The ministry, and unseen indwelling of the Holy Spirit is both different and superior to that of the Old Testament cloud. **We go from Glory to Glory!**

Even Moses could not enter the tabernacle when the glory fell. But what Moses could not do, our Lord Jesus has done. In Hebrews we are taught that we can come boldly before God's throne of grace

The cloud was appealing because of its visible splendor and miraculous nature, but it was inferior to the unseen, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

Visible, miraculous, "signs and wonders" have never had a lasting impact or value.

- It was with the cloud in sight that the Israelites grumbled against God, resisted and rejected Moses, and fashioned their golden calf.
- It was in sight of the cloud that the Israelites refused to possess the land of Canaan, fearing the giants who lived there.

In the days of our Lord Jesus, the miracles which He performed did not have a lasting effect on either his unbelieving enemies, nor upon the disciples.

Miracles and signs don't change hardened hearts. The new covenant was the promise that God would turn hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. **The ministry of the Spirit is vastly superior to that of the cloud because His presence is within us and this results in changed lives!**

B. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian is far more personal and intimate than the majestic Glory of God in the man-made tabernacle.

God was near to the Israelites, but He was still separated from the people.

Even Moses could not enter into the presence of God in the tabernacle and only the high priest could enter into the holy of holies, and but once a year. But because Christ has torn the veil, and He dwells within each individual believer, not just in the midst of the nation. **Colossians 1:27** Christ in you, the hope of glory.

C. The Holy Spirit adopts us as sons and bears witness that we are Gods children!

Romans 8:14-17 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

CONCLUSION

The account in exodus points forward to our own experience! We were once slaves to sin, held captive in a spiritual Egypt. Then we heard of Jesus and started to follow Him. He led us out, patiently dealing with our faithlessness and rebellion on the way. Finally, the day came when we gave Him our hearts and He came to dwell not among us, but within us through the abiding presence of His Holy Spirit. The cloud and the glory that descended upon the tabernacle were immeasurably glorious, but they pointed to an even greater glory, the glory of the living God, not living among men, but living in us!

Now we too have a promised land, it's known as Heaven. Far superior to the Israelites land of milk and honey, where we will continually be with God and all slavery to sin will be a thing of the past.

Do we realise that the God of all creation indwells us? We partake of His Glory. There is nothing we can't do, we are sons and heirs of God Himself.

His presence comes when we walk in obedience and live as living sacrifices. It reminds us that even though we have sinned, He still loves us. His presence assures us that we are God's children and seals us for heaven. His Spirit in us leads and directs us and it signifies an intimacy and a closeness not experienced by the Israelites who witnessed His amazing manifest glory.

Have you experienced this intimacy with God, this nearness to Him through His Spirit. You may attend church and feel God's presence **among** His people, but not **within** your own heart and soul. If this is so, it is likely because you have never **properly** experienced the new birth of personal conversion. To do this you must not only believe that Christ died to save sinners, but personally receive Him as your Savior, the One whom you trust solely for the forgiveness of your sins, and for the blessings of His presence, both now and for eternity. Then you will experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who assures you that you are a child of God, and who will guide you day by day.