

Exegetical Notes, Exodus 40:1-38
“The Glory of the Lord”

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Exodus 40:1-38

Verse 1-2

Then YHWH said to Moses: “Set up the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the first month.”

- When all the work was finished, God told Moses to set up the Tabernacle.

Verse 3-16

“Place the ark of the Testimony in it and shield the ark with the curtain. Bring in the table and set out what belongs on it. Then bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. Place the gold altar of incense in front of the ark of the Testimony and put the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle. Place the altar of burnt offering in front of the entrance to the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting; place the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar and put water in it. Set up the courtyard around it and put the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. Take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything in it; consecrate it and all its furnishings, and it will be holy. Then anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils; consecrate the altar, and it will be most holy. Anoint the basin and its stand and consecrate them. 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. Bring his sons and dress them in tunics. Anoint them just as you anointed their father, so they may serve me as priests. Their anointing will be to a priesthood that will continue for all generations to come.” Moses did everything just as YHWH commanded him.

- God gave Moses specific instructions about how to set up the Tabernacle.

Verse 17-33

So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year. When Moses set up the tabernacle, he put the bases in place, erected the frames, inserted the crossbars and set up the posts. Then he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering over the tent, as YHWH commanded him. He took the Testimony and placed it in the ark, attached the poles to the ark, and put the atonement cover over it. Then he brought the ark into the tabernacle and hung the shielding curtain and shielded the ark of the Testimony, as YHWH commanded him. Moses placed the table in the Tent of Meeting on the north side of the tabernacle outside the curtain and set out the bread on it before YHWH, as YHWH commanded him. He placed the lampstand in the Tent of Meeting opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle and set up the lamps before YHWH, as YHWH commanded him. Moses placed the gold altar in the Tent of Meeting in front of the curtain and burned fragrant incense on it, as YHWH commanded him. Then he put up the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle. He set the altar of burnt offering near the entrance to the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, and offered on it burnt offerings and grain offerings, as YHWH commanded him. He placed the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar and put water in it for washing, and Moses and Aaron and his sons used it to wash their hands and feet. They washed whenever they entered the Tent of Meeting or approached the altar, as YHWH commanded Moses. Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work.

- Moses followed the instructions that God had given, setting up the Tabernacle exactly as he had been told.
- When Moses placed the Ark of the Covenant in its place, he put “the Testimony” inside it. “The Testimony” was the stone tablets upon which God had written his commands.

Verse 34-35

Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of YHWH filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of YHWH filled the tabernacle.

- In Exodus 13:21, we are told that God led Israel on their journey, appearing to them as a pillar of cloud in the day and a pillar of fire by night. As the events here noted happen in the daylight, the pillar of cloud moves to the Tent of Meeting and settles over/on it. This move by God shows his approval of Israel’s work and declares his intention

of continuing to abide with them. However the cloud is somehow mysterious. It veils or hides the presence of God as much as it declares it.

- The “glory of YHWH” is somehow distinct and apart from the cloud. What the cloud hides is revealed in the glory. The cloud wraps God in mystery, but the glory shows the splendor of the Lord.
- The revelation of God in mysterious splendor repels even Moses. Moses cannot enter the Tent because it is filled with the mystery and the splendor of God.

Verse 36-37

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.

- The cloud became the signal from God to the people that it was time to move from place to place. If the cloud did not lift, they did not move. If it lifted, they packed up and followed it.

Verse 38

So the cloud of YHWH 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.

- God showed his presence with the people of Israel through the visible signs of cloud and fire throughout their journey to the promised land. In this way, he showed himself to be “Immanuel,” “God with us.” This is how God first affirmed that he was physically present with his people.
- The phrase, “The house of Israel” declares the nation of Israel to be God’s extended family. They are to be viewed as the “household of God.” Today, that same distinction is extended to the Church.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Glory of the Lord*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)