

FEBRUARY 7

Exodus 26-27

It is probably a good idea to have a diagram of the tabernacle. In the Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 147, you can find one.

By the way, have you figured out how long a cubit was?

Exodus 26

Vs. 1-29 The tabernacle was actually the inner tent. The area around the tabernacle was the courtyard of the tabernacle. God has already described the ark and mercy seat that go in the Most Holy Place (see the BKC diagram) and the table for the bread of the Presence and the lampstand which were in the Holy Place. In chapter 26 God gives Moses the plan for the inner tent, the tabernacle, where they stood.

Notice the directions on the diagram. The entrance faced east, so if you were looking at the entrance to the courtyard or the tabernacle, you were facing west.



V. 30 This gives you the idea that God also showed Moses visually what it would look like.

Vs. 31-34 This is the veil that separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place. This is the veil that was torn when Jesus died, showing that mankind could now have full and unhindered access to the throne of grace, or in this case, the seat of mercy.

Vs. 35-37 Looking in the Holy Place you would be looking west. On the left (south) was the lampstand and on the right (north) was the table for the bread of the Presence. Looking straight ahead you would have seen the veil to the Most Holy Place. Missing at this point would be the altar of incense that stood in the middle just in front of the veil. That incense would represent the prayers of God's people rising up the veil and coming into His presence.

Notice how much detail and “art” God is putting into the tabernacle. This would be a major project for the people. They would give all of the jewels and precious metals and their best craftsmen. The skins had to be cured, cut, dyed and sewn. Interestingly, God had prepared the people to build this center of worship. These are the people who built the cities for the Egyptians, so I’ll bet they had skills. Finding good drawings of the tabernacle, the ark, and the lampstand will help in your appreciation of the art.

My bent is not to go overboard when building buildings for churches, but the people who criticize churches for doing a good job and making the inside and outside look nice have never spent time reading how God designed His “tent of meeting.”

The tabernacle would prepare Israel for its national identity. In addition to worshipping only Yahweh, they would worship Him in only one place, not all over, under every tree and on every high place, as Israel will do later in idolatry.

By the way, you’re in for a surprise in your “Tabernacle Construction” reading in a couple of days.

Exodus 27

Now that the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place have been described, God describes the altar and the courtyard. God's presence was in the Most Holy Place. The courtyard protected the people from approaching God to their own destruction. God was to be approached through the entrance to the courtyard and then through sacrifice expressing thanks, repentance and worship. All of this would be symbolic of what God would provide for mankind in the death and resurrection of His Son.

Vs. 1-8 This is the making of the altar for sacrifices.

Vs. 9-19 This is the court of the tabernacle.

Vs. 20-21 You can see the conditional nature of this covenant with Israel. God promised to be with them if they obeyed. The lampstand was to burn perpetually. You can see the symbolism in that, yet the people had to bring the oil. I'm sure they didn't always bring it, and at different times in their history I'll bet the light went out.

Yet, God's promise to save mankind and fulfill the promise to Abraham was without condition. What the old covenant couldn't do because of the power of sin, the new covenant has made possible because of Jesus. He has provided forgiveness and has broken the power of sin for all who are reborn in Him.

Matthew 25:1-30

Yesterday I mentioned that I thought the "unfaithful" servant could be a believer. I do, but to be fair to the text and to a normal interpretation, "the weeping and gnashing of teeth" club would put him into the unbelieving category. Jesus often told His parables in different situations and to different groups. When they are applied directly to the Twelve and to those who believed, the impact was more of a warning for reward and punishment. If you want to see what I mean, look at Luke 12:35-48. This teaching was for the Twelve, and although treating a disciple like the unfaithful and dispensing severe punishment was warned, I don't see that as damnation.

I think believers in the western world play too much with grace. We fall asleep in the light. Yes, we are loved and totally accepted and don't have to do anything to be absolutely accepted and welcomed into the arms of God, yet God wants us to work in the harvest with the passion of our Savior.

Both of these parables are directed to the religiously half-hearted, not to the Twelve. In Luke 13:23-30 someone, probably one of the many who followed Jesus, asked Him a similar question. This would have been a couple months earlier. You can see by Jesus' answer that He was challenging the unsaved followers to become fully serious as quickly as possible.

Vs. 1-13 This is the parable of the 10 virgins and has to do with a person's readiness for the return of Christ. What I've appreciated about the Plymouth Brethren is the healthy biblical emphasis they put on looking for the return of our Savior "for His own." Hardly anyone today mentions our expectant waiting, but Jesus taught it and it is all through Paul's writing. The first Awana verse I memorized as a new Awana leader was Titus 2:11-13, *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.*

The five unprepared virgins don't get in and their condemnation is similar to those religious persons we found in Matthew 7 who did mighty miracles in His name, but to whom Jesus said, *I never knew you.*

Vs. 14-30 The parable of the talents is interesting because it is told in two different places. In Luke, Jesus tells it at Zacchaeus' house, before He enters Jerusalem. The point is the same; God

expects us to invest the truth He has given us to gain interest, or we would say, to bear fruit. Fruitlessness, by not expecting the master's return and therefore hiding the truth, signifies a lack of love and faith in the master.

Applied to that generation of Israel, they had the truth of God, but did not bring Him the fruit of a believing nation nor of many nations coming to worship in Jerusalem.

If an unbeliever is in view, he goes to eternal punishment.

I would still make some application to us as disciples who are commissioned to follow Jesus in the harvest. The life of Christ in us is meant to bear fruit. John 15:8 is important. One sows, another reaps, all work together; but to slide through without trying is not living in accordance to the love and grace we have been shown. Making disciples, who make disciples is not our hobby; it is our business here on earth.

Our punishment as believers, if we live in disobedience and do not prepare for His return, is that we will stand before His judgment seat and see our life's work burned away. We will stand in shame before the One who endured the scourging and spitting of men and the wrath of His Father to bear our sin and give us His righteousness and life. (Heb. 12:1-13)

Psalm 31:1-8

What a powerful psalm this is. You feel David's desperation and great faith struggling side by side.

Vs. 1-2 In all of the years David was a shepherd, living on the hills with the sheep, he had no refuge. Now after the couple of years of fame after he killed Goliath, David is living on the move, in the mountains and in the wilderness, again, without shelter or refuge. What a brilliant way for the Lord to engineer the need for refuge into David's heart. This seeking of refuge in the Lord became one of David's passions and favorite expressions.

Vs. 3-5 While the first two verses were David's cry for help, these verses express what David knows to be true about God. David experienced salvation and knew he could entrust himself to God's care.

V. 5 Notice that Jesus says the first part of this verse as He dies. Not all of the words of this psalm can be attributed to what Jesus thought or felt on the cross, but many of these thoughts would have been what Jesus experienced. Read this psalm from Jesus' perspective as He is nailed to, hanging from, and taking His final breath, on the cross.

Vs. 6-8 Verse 6 could be looked at as saying that trusting in anything but God involves some sort of inappropriate trust in something else. David knew that God's *steadfast love* was directed toward him. God not only knew of his suffering, but God kept David 10 minutes ahead of the hounds.

Proverbs 8:1-11

When I read this every year, I wonder if my striving to follow, understand, gain wisdom and hear the Spirit is increasing. I know it is, but if I would have known how much grief it would have saved me, and how much more enjoyable it is to follow after God like this now, I would have made a bigger point of it back when I was twenty. Passion is great, but it can get you into a lot of trouble without the wisdom the Spirit gives. The trouble is, even with the Word sitting in your lap and the Spirit living in your heart, you have to want to dig, hear and submit.