

# Notes on Exodus 27—40

*by Grant Thorpe*

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## Chapters 27-28

**Ch 27** Part of God's revelation to Israel was how the heavy items for the temple were to be carried. Nothing was insignificant in establishing the modes of worship for his people. Sacrifices for the altar were described later however the altar had horns on its corners which would later be used by suppliants being pursued by those seeking retribution. They symbolically devoted themselves to God as an offering, for God to do with them what he chose.

**Ch 28** A priesthood separated to God was necessary until the true priest, Jesus Christ, had come. The names of Israel were engraved on two stones on their shoulders, perhaps suggesting their responsibility, and on twelve stones over their heart, suggesting that their whole life was given over to this duty of representing Israel. Bearing judgment may signify that the two articles (Urim and Thummim) were used to judge what was right and wrong in matters brought to them. Hearing the priest's bells ringing as he moved assured Israel that the ministry was being carried on and that, in their representative, they were holy to the Lord, even if their was guilt involved in the offerings that Israel brought to God.

## Prayer

Thanks be to you, our Father, that Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest. In him we are assured that all things necessary for us to come to you are done and accepted. Then let me come now, boldly, and know that in Jesus Christ, I together with all your saints am holy to the Lord. Father, work in my heart a true love for your world that I may be a member of your priestly people, faithfully representing the great favour you have showed to us your people. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Chapters 29-30

**Ch 29** God taught Israel that they may be represented in order to be received by God. The modern church may argue whether it requires an ordained and robed priesthood to act ceremonially for them however Christian faith is structured around being represented by Another. If there is no Christ acting for us, we have no faith, no God, and we are no people.

God provided appropriate offerings to purify the priesthood. Though chosen by God, their naked humanity could not stand before God, let alone represent others. They had to confess that they should die because of their sins, and that this beast would take their place. However glorious their dress, it was not acceptable without sprinkled blood. Even the altar, made according to God's direction, was not clean (we bring arrogance

and impurity to the noblest of our endeavours) without blood sprinkling. All this anticipated the coming of our Great High Priest who would not need to offer for himself but would offer himself for us. Well may we place our hands on him to say: 'This one is for me!' When he was offered up, and, now, us in him, the Father is well pleased with both his Son and those who trust in him. Also, as the priesthood was consecrated by eating part of the offered beast, so we 'feast on him in our hearts and are thankful' when we participate in the communion feast.

The point in all of this was that God would meet with his people. Ultimately, they were sanctified, not by things that they could do but by the offerings given for them and by God's own presence for which the sacrifices were the preparation. All of our service is acceptable to God for the sake of Christ whose blood was spilt for us and because of his gracious presence with us.

**Ch 30** All of the details of Israel's worship must have been wonderful for them to consider. God was among them to meet with them. Their incense rose from an altar just outside the most holy place. But this most holy altar was to be sanctified annually. A small ransom fee, as a reminder of their being ransomed by sacrifice, was to be part of every registration of the people. Washing before offering sacrifice was mandatory. Everything needed to be anointed with a unique formula oil to set it apart for God. In these many ways, Israel knew that they had access to God and that God maintained the holiness of his own place among them. Worship was never their 'own thing'; the priests, and in them, the people, were appropriately appointed courtiers in the presence of God's majesty.

## Prayer

Holy Father, you have chosen us, sanctified us by the coming of your Spirit, given us your word and sprinkled us with the blood of your Son. Our worship and prayers ascend to you constantly and we are not rejected. Let us not forget that we cannot live without the ransom of our lives or without the constant attentions of your Son to his high priestly ministry on our behalf. May love for you and all people grow more and more. May peace and the peace we bring to others spread deeply and broadly. May joy in you and in life keep us strong and expectant as we await the coming of your Son. In his name we pray. Amen.

## Chapters 31–32

**Ch 31** The sanctifying of all the articles of the tabernacle was prescribed before the skills were given to these two men. Their service happened inside of God's sanctifying of all things with blood. But God provided all the ability for the achieving of the beauty of his tent. Just as important was the provision of leisure, the absence of work, not just because they needed time to attend the worship but because their spirits needed to be released from the compulsions of attempting to be their own creator with endless labour. Not to acknowledge God in this way was to be excluded from the covenant. So ended the words of God that accompanied Moses' receiving of the tablets of the covenant.

**Ch 32** The Bible is never a mere prescription, even though it be the prescription of God's law. The Bible is the revelation of God in the context of the sin of his people. Only in the revelation of his severe yet gracious dealing with sin is his nature fully revealed. There could hardly have been a more blatant breaking of the covenant Israel had vowed to keep, and involving the weakness of Aaron, the one who was to be central to

their worship. But when Moses heard that God would make a new people from him rather than from these people who had come through the Red Sea, he refused to accept that this was God's final word. They had already been baptized into him as covenant head (I Cor. 10:2) and he accepted responsibility for their receiving what God had promised to them. But he would not accept that they were his own people, as God had called them. They were the Lord's people.

The tablets, on which God had written were smashed, signifying that unless God spoke again, it remained in doubt as to what manner of people this was. Were they still under his covenant? Moses believed so. But the continuing revelry had to be stopped and in this, his own tribe assisted him and showed that they, with him, were the Lord's. (We are not told where Aaron was in all this.) But atonement had to be made, and Moses suggested that he may be able to make atonement. But his offering could not be more than his being excluded with his people. He could not take the place of his people. Only our true Head, Jesus Christ, was able to do this and to make atonement once for all.

## Prayer

Our Father in heaven, you have joined us to your Son, and so, we are your people. Yet the revelation of us as sinners still comes. Make us always mindful of the atonement Christ has made that we may live humbly and gratefully before you. Have mercy on all your people Father. Many sins continue to abound among us. Some seem not to care. Grant that we may not become cynical but may become surer of your covenant purpose to sanctify all things through your Son. In his name we pray. Amen.

## Chapters 33-34

**Ch 33** The situation was far from resolved because the Lord had not assured Israel of his personal presence and a plague had fallen on the people. God would not go with them personally or Israel's sins would so draw God's anger as to consume them. However, they were to remove ornaments and await God's word to them. Here we are told of the temporary means Moses used for meeting with God, as friend. Moses counted on this friendship to ask God for no diminution of his presence, and that he may see the glory of God.

**Ch 34** So, in receiving copy two of the covenant, he was also granted a proclamation of the Lord's name. The Lord was merciful. He was able to deal with sin, even to four generations, but his steadfast love would last for thousands of generations. In the power of this proclamation, not now on the basis of his own intercessions, Moses asked again for the Lord to forgive Israel and to take her as his inheritance. The answer was a 'Yes', some of the provisions of the earlier covenant book were repeated and the law was reinscribed.

The appearing of glory to Moses worked a change in his appearance that was fearful to Israel, though unrealised by Moses. But he called them to him. Paul tells us what was probably a Jewish tradition, that the veil Moses put on after speaking to the people was to hide the fading glory. But, he went on to say that no such veiling is necessary with Christ in whom we have seen the glory of God (II Cor. 3:7-18)—full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

## Prayer

Lord, have mercy on us. We cannot live with the constant condemnation that your law rightly brings against us. We turn from the things that have become our idols so as to hear your word proclaimed to us, words of mercy. We are grateful for the intercessions of our covenant Head, Jesus Christ because he has stood and borne the judgments that rightly were against us, and taken from us all condemnation. He has asked that we be remembered as your inheritance, and such we are, to this day. May we never forget your glory, full of grace and truth, which you have cause to shine on us through your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Chapters 35-36

**Ch 35** Sabbath had been given as a sign that the Lord sanctified his people (31:13). With the covenant broken by man and restored, or rather, maintained by God, the sign of the covenant was reaffirmed. Now was the time to ask who was of a generous heart. The Lord had prepared his people to be generous or noble or willing or moved in heart (various words used and repeated), and, in the case of the workers, enabled by God's own Spirit to make the tabernacle.

**Ch 36** It was to God's glory that he had willing workers, and more than sufficient for his temple. It was also to God's glory that the workmen did not originate anything beyond the command given by God. It is as if they said: 'You know what is necessary to the worship of your name, and we are glad to make it with all the skill which you provide.'

## Prayer

Father, you have declared that you are among us. You have caused us to remember your name. The body of your Son is now our temple and you have raised up this temple when we tore it down. We bless you that you have preserved true worship for us and now we gladly offer ourselves in the worship of you. Father, we see the sacrifice of Christ acceptable to you on our behalf, and the rising of our prayers like an incense that is pleasing to you. We acknowledge that you are Lord over us but also among us. Take from us the false constraint to make a worship of our own. Grant that we may offer freely of everything that is ours that your saving grace may be known. Amen.

## Chapters 37-38

**Ch 37** Nothing new appeared in the record of how things were made.

**Ch 38** But Moses thought it was important that the record be included in the narrative of how the temple was made (v. 21). It was the description for Israel of how the Lord had prepared their hearts for this moment and how completely God had provided for them to be his holy people in his presence. For the general population of Israel who never saw inside the tabernacle, it would have been a proclamation of the worship that was being offered continually on their behalf.

## Prayer

Father, you have wrought for us all our works. It has not been by might or by power but by your Spirit that true worship has arisen from us to you. But you have made us glad of heart, we have

offered willingly when you required us to act, and today, we are ready for your will. Keep us simple in your service, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Chapters 39-40

**Ch 39** This must have been one of the high moments in Israel's history. Everything God had said to do had been done, and Moses blessed the people. We are reminded of the occasion when Jesus said his work was finished. His own body was the temple. His flesh was the sacrifice and his blood was sprinkled over what was to be sanctified—ourselves. He was the Great High Priest and, though we cannot see into the heavenly temple, we know that he ever lives to make intercession for us. It is for us to live in this finished work of Christ, to live in Sabbath rest, for this worship that he himself has prescribed is pleasing to him.

**Ch 40** For something so sacred to be erected was no small thing. The High Priest would only enter the most holy place once a year. The constant use of 'you shall' guided Moses through the stages of what he was to do. Then God's glory filled the temple and thereafter led the people through their path to the Promised Land. God's glory is the outshining of his nature. They were being led by the God who had revealed his very heart to them—a God of mercy—for such he had been to them and such he would always be.

## Prayer

Lord, our worship is chiefly this, that your own glory rests on us for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ. What can we say? Surely, we have not deserved the least of your favours, but your glory has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of your glory in the face of Christ. Let this suffice for guidance all our days. May we seek to be wherever the meekness and gentleness of Christ shall take us, for his name's sake we pray. Amen.