

The Book of Exodus

Lesson 18: The Ark, the Table, and the Lampstand -- Exodus 25:1-40

Think of the most loved house you have ever stepped into. Not the grandest, just the one where you felt most wanted. Somebody planned that house around the hope that people would come and stay. The chairs faced each other. The table was set. Light filled the rooms. A house like that is an argument made in wood and stone, and the argument is simple: I want to be near you. Exodus 25 is God making that argument. 'Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.' The God who flung the stars into space wants an address among His people.

What strikes you first is how He starts. Not with a command to pay, but with an invitation to give. 'From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution.' Gold and silver, blue and purple yarn, fine linen and acacia wood, oil and spices, all of it brought by willing hearts. God could have created the tabernacle out of nothing. Instead He invited a freed people to pour out their treasures gladly, so that the place where He met them would be built from their love.

Then come the furnishings, and each one preaches. The ark with its mercy seat, where God would meet Moses and speak from between the cherubim. The table with its bread of the Presence, set out week by week before the face of God. The golden lampstand, hammered from a single talent of gold, its lamps burning so the holy place would never go dark. These are not random objects. They are a God-designed picture, a shadow of heavenly things, pointing past themselves to a greater sanctuary and a greater High Priest who was yet to come.

So read this chapter slowly, and do not let the unfamiliar details push you away. Behind every cubit and every clasp stands a God who said, I want to dwell among them. That longing did not end at Sinai. It runs straight to the manger, to the cross, to the church which is now the temple of the living God, and finally to the day when the dwelling place of God is with man forever. The blueprint in Exodus 25 is really a love letter, and your name is in it.

Group Discussion: When God says 'let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them' (25:8), what does that reveal about the kind of God He is, and how do we see that same desire to dwell with His people running through the whole Bible into the church and into eternity?

Personal Reflection: God asked for offerings only from those 'whose heart moves him' (25:2). When you give to the Lord's work, how much of your giving flows from a willing, glad heart, and where has it become grudging, mechanical, or stingy?

Read Exodus 25:1-40

Study Questions

1. Read 25:1–2. God tells Moses to receive an offering ‘from every man whose heart moves him.’ What does it reveal about God that He builds His dwelling place from freely given, willing-hearted offerings rather than compelled payment?
2. Read 25:2 again, alongside 2 Corinthians 9:7. God wanted offerings from a willing heart, and the New Testament says God loves a cheerful giver. Examine your own giving: is it cheerful and purposeful, or reluctant and pressured, and what would need to change in your heart?
3. Read 25:8–9. God says, ‘let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them,’ and ‘exactly as I show you... so you shall make it.’ What do these two statements together teach us about God’s desire to be near His people and about how that nearness is to be approached?
4. Read 25:8. The God of all the earth wanted a dwelling place among a recently enslaved people. Where in your life are you living as though God is far off and uninvolved, and how would it change your day to believe He truly desires to dwell with you?
5. Read 25:10–22. Describe the ark and its mercy seat, where God promised, ‘There I will meet with you... from between the two cherubim.’ What does the ark, holding the testimony and topped by the mercy seat, reveal about how a holy God meets sinful people?

6. Read 25:21–22. God promised to meet His people and speak with them at the mercy seat above the law. When you come to meet with God, do you come expecting Him to speak and to show mercy, or do you approach Him as distant and silent? What shapes the difference?
7. Read 25:23–30. The table held the bread of the Presence, set before the LORD continually. What was the significance of bread kept perpetually before God's face, and what does it suggest about the fellowship God intended with His people?
8. Read 25:30. The bread of the Presence was to be before God 'regularly,' week after week. What in your life is meant to be a steady, continual practice of communion with God, and where have you let that regular fellowship lapse?
9. Read 25:31–40 with Hebrews 8:5 and 9:23–24. The lampstand and all the furnishings were to be made 'after the pattern... shown you on the mountain,' and Hebrews calls these things 'a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.' How are the tabernacle and its furniture a God-designed shadow that points forward to Christ and the heavenly realities, and why must we not bind this system on Christians today?
10. Read 25:40 once more. Everything was to be made by the pattern God showed, not by Israel's own design. Looking back over the ark, the table, and the lampstand, name one specific way the Lord Jesus is teaching you, through this chapter, to worship and serve God as He directs rather than as you prefer.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Hebrews 8:1-5, the earthly sanctuary was a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, made by the pattern shown to Moses; Hebrews 9:1-12, the furnishings of the tabernacle and how Christ entered the greater, more perfect tent by His own blood; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, God loves a cheerful giver who gives as he has decided in his heart; John 1:14, the Word became flesh and 'tabernacled' among us, the true dwelling of God with man; Ephesians 2:19-22, the church being built into a holy temple, a dwelling place for God by the Spirit

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