

## 466 “Glory to God in the highest!”

In Exodus 24.15 and 18 we read – “And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount ... And Moses went into the midst of the cloud ... and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights” (KJV).

During that time the Lord gave Moses a long list of meticulous instructions, (the significance of each one amply repaying our prayerful study). First, setting the scene, the people, (who had recently “answered with one voice, ‘All the words which the Lord hath said we will do” (Exodus 24.3end), were to give an offering willingly, for a “sanctuary” to be made for the Lord, so that He “may dwell among them” (25.1-8).

We then hear of the ark, the mercy seat, the table and its equipment, the shewbread, and the candlestick with its equipment (25.10-40). We are shown the significance of gold - beauty, preciousness and above all indicating holiness. Then we learn of the tabernacle, with its covers, boards and bars (26.1-30), and of the veil with its hangings – “and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy [place] and the most holy” (26.31-37 / Hebrews 9.1-5).

Outside the tabernacle itself we read of the altar, overlaid with brass, and its equipment (27.1-8), and of the court and its hangings, with brass and silver fittings (27.9-19). The people were to supply “pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always” (27.20-21).

Then the Lord’s attention turns to the priesthood of Aaron and his sons, and their “holy garments ... for glory and beauty” (28.1-2). These garments are extraordinary! – with each feature having spiritual significance (28.1-43). We can pause to note just one of these features – the “bells of gold” upon the hem of the priest’s robe. But why bells? This is why! - “his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy [place] before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not” (28.33-35). We see how the Lord God in His mercy is emphasising at every turn that He is HOLY, and that His HOLINESS must never, ever be forgotten or abused. If ever there is such abuse, death follows (as with two of Aaron’s priestly sons, Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus 10.1-7; and with the well-meaning but hasty Uzza, I Chronicles 13.9-14).

In Exodus Chapter 29 we learn of the meticulous steps involved in the consecrating of the priests for their ministry. The whole occasion is dominated by the shedding of innocent animal blood to “cover” the sins of the priests and the people – each sacrifice pointing forward to the

Ultimate Sacrifice that was to come (as in John 1.29). “And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and [the tabernacle] shall be sanctified for my glory ... I will sanctify ... I will sanctify ... And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I [am] the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I [am] the Lord their God” (from 29.43-46).

In Chapter 30 we read of the altar of incense, for “a perpetual incense before the Lord” but with “no strange incense thereon” (from vv.8-9); of the giving of half a shekel by each man as “a ransom for his soul”, as “atonement money” (vv.11-16); of “a laver of brass” (vv.17-21); of the “holy anointing oil” (vv.22-33); and of the “perfume, pure and holy” (vv.34-38).

All the works are to be overseen by Bezaleel and Aholiab, whom the Lord has called, and has filled “with the spirit of God, in wisdom, understanding, knowledge and workmanship” (31.1-11). Meanwhile the people are to keep the sabbath faithfully as “a perpetual covenant”, as a sign that the Lord sanctifies them, and that He made heaven and earth in six days, and rested on the seventh (31.12-17). Finally the Lord gave to Moses the “two tables of testimony, written with the finger of God” (v.18).

And so for us in this Advent season, being blessed members of the New Covenant of grace by the gift of faith in Jesus Christ, we are confronted afresh in these Exodus chapters with the absolute holiness of Almighty God: He is just as holy today as in Moses’ day – oh that more people, within and beyond the Church, would realise that!

But praise God, His holiness is now seen in the fuller context of Christ, in whom all those tabernacle instructions are being fulfilled (Matthew 5.17-18). Now, for all those “in Christ”, no veil bars the way into His holy presence, and no tinkling bells are needed to warn Him of our approach. Instead we have even been given boldness! – “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus”, and by His blood alone (Hebrews 10.19 / John 14.6).

So we take up our place again alongside that heavenly host, singing our Christ-redeemed hearts out, “Glory to God in the highest!”

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