

THE TABERNACLE

Exodus 26:1 – 27:21
Keyverse 26:30b

„Set up the tabernacle according to the plan shown you on the mountain.“

We thank God for the Study of the book Exodus, which teaches us to live as his people. Chapters 25-31 are the building plan for God's dwelling among His people. In the last lesson we learned about the Ark of the Covenant, the table and the lampstand. The ark of the covenant with the law and the atonement cover was the place where God would meet His servant and speak all the words for the Israelites. Today we want to concentrate on the tabernacle, the altar of burnt offerings and the courtyard. It is noteworthy that God describes the sanctuary from the inside out. This shows that God planned and prepared for his people the way to come into His presence and to enjoy the heavenly glory. Because it was God's plan, Moses was to set up the dwelling exactly as he had seen it on the mountain.

We no longer have an ark and a tabernacle. Through Jesus Christ, God opened the new and living way for sinners to come to Him and dwell among them. But the building plan of the tabernacle is all the more important for us to understand what it really means to believe in Jesus. May God bless us to sanctify our lives daily through repentance so that God can dwell among us. May God help us by forming one-to-one Bible study teams to invite young people to the heavenly glory of God and to raise up the dwelling of God among this generation.

1. The Tabernacle (26:1-37)

Verse 1 says: "Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim woven into them by a skilled worker." This section describes the tabernacle, the actual tent. God calls the tabernacle the "dwelling". 25:8 says, "And they shall make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them". That God wanted to dwell among His people was God's one-sided grace. The initiative came from God. He had decided to be their God and to make them his people. He even wanted to live among them. So that he could dwell among them according to his grace, they had to set up the dwelling in a certain way.

According to verses 1-14 the dwelling was covered with four layers: curtains of twisted linen, curtains of goat hair over it, coverings of ram skins dyed red and finally coverings of another animal. These coverings are described from the inside out. The deepest layer were ten curtains of finely twisted linen, with blue, purple and scarlet yarn. Cherubim were woven into them by a skilled worker. The colors blue, purple and scarlet reflect God's majesty, the priesthood and the heavenly glory. The cherubim were heavenly creatures who stood in the presence of God. Whoever entered the Tabernacle saw the curtain with these heavenly, kingly colors. In other words, the Tabernacle was an image of the kingdom

of heaven. To enter the Tabernacle meant to enter the heavenly realm of God's glory. Who does not want to enter the heavens? Everybody is longing for this glory. Therefore, we should search for and understand which way God has opened for human to enter his heavenly glory.

The inner layer of curtains reveal the heaven. But sinners cannot enter this glory directly. Therefore, over these ten curtains there were three more layers. The second layer were curtains of goat hair. They were joined to each other by loops and gold clasps, so that they formed one big curtain. The goat hair reminds us of the goat that had to be offered on the day of atonement and who had to bear the sin of the whole people (Lev 16). The high priest was to put his hands on the bull, layd all sins and transgressions of the whole people on him and sent him into the desert to „Asasel“, that is to the devil (3 Moses 16:21). Sinners need a representative who bears all their sins and takes it away so that they can enter into God's glory. The third layer were ram skins dyed red. Rams were to be sacrificed at the appointment of the priest. Red is the color of blood. Without shedding blood there is no forgiveness. When an offering pours out his blood dirty sinners become holy priests who can enter God's presence and serve the holy God in his heavenly glory. The outermost layers were made of the skin of another animal. This material was water-repellent, strong leather, out of which shoes were also made (Hez 16:10). The material was suitable for the outermost covering, but outwardly it was grey and unimpressive. The Tabernacle was full of heavenly glory, but this heavenly glory was hidden.

The description of the Tabernacle - the heavenly glory, the representative offering, the blood that was shed and the unimpressive outward appearance – reminds us of Jesus Christ. John 1: 14 says: „The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.“ In Jesus Christ there is the heavenly glory. Whoever lives in Jesus Christ, lives in the presence of God and receives heavenly joy and power of the kingdom of God. But also in Jesus this heavenly glory is hidden.

Jesus was the most despised and rejected, full of pain and sufferings. He was so much despised that we hide our faces from him. We esteemed him not (Isaiah 53:3). But he took up our pain and bore our suffering. He died on the cross for us, bearing all our sins and shed his blood as the most perfect sacrifice. In this way he opened the way for sinners into God's glory Those who accept him as their saviour by faith can come into God's glorious presence.

Apostle John was an ambitious young man. Even though he followed Jesus, Jesus' work was not spectacular enough for him. Once he wanted to call fire down from heaven to destroy the Samaritans (Luke 9:54). Another time he demanded a seat next to Jesus in his glory (Mark 10:37). But he finally recognized the glorious God in the outwardly insignificant Jesus. He confessed that God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son as a substitutionary offering, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life in God's radiant glory (John 3:16).

So is God's work, which leads sinners to God's glory, outwardly insignificant and full of suffering, but it is God's way to life. Dr. Samuel Lee devoted himself to discipleship ministry through one-to-one Bible study. Through Bible study, personal fellowship, shepherd- and

messenger training, he helped unworthy sinners to know and follow Jesus. For many, this kind of servanthip was too laborious. They wanted less effort and more of their own glory. But when we look at the structure of the tabernacle, we realize that there is the life-giving work of God in this servanthip. Disciple making through one-to-one Bible study and personal training is the way to lead a sinner into God's glory. The life-giving devotion for one man transforms one dirty, miserable, hopeless sinner into a royal priest who does his holy service in the glory of God's presence (1 Peter 2:9).

A young woman studied hard and was successful in school and in college and won many academic awards. She also came to Bible study to disprove the naive faith of Christians. But through Bible study, she realized how empty and desperate she was in spite of all her successes. Through John 3:16 she received God's love in Jesus, who died for her to bring her into his glory. She decided to devote her life for world mission. Her key verse became Mark 6:37a: "You give them something to eat." and through her many young men and their families were led into God's presence and into the priestly ministry.

The glory of the world is like a beautiful covering, under which there is only emptiness, despair and fear of death. On the other hand, Jesus and his work are outwardly insignificant like a grey covering, but there is radiant glory behind this inconspicuous facade. Whoever enters into Jesus knows that Jesus' humility and life giving is the way that God has prepared for us to a blessed and fruitful life as his holy nation and as a royal priesthood. Let us no longer be deceived by external glory, but serve Jesus' manger ministry through Bible study, disciple making and shepherd training, and experience the transformation of young men into a royal priesthood.

Let us read verses 15 and 16: " Make upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle. Each frame is to be ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide." The tabernacle itself under the curtains and coverings was made of frames of acacia wood. The frames stood on silver bases and were stuck together with projections and held by crossbars. On the south and north sides there were 20 frames, on the west end 6 frames, plus two corner frames. The dimensions of the tabernacle were 15 x 4 meters, and the height 5 meters (one cubit corresponds to about 50 centimeters). The frames were overlaid with gold, so that the tabernacle shone golden from the inside under the blue, purple and scarlet sky with the cherubim. The entrance was on the east side, in front of which hung a covering of purple and scarlet, the work of a weaver on five posts overlaid with gold.

Let us see verse 31: „Make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim woven into it by a skilled worker.“ This curtain hung on four posts and separated the front part of the tabernacle from the rear part. Verse 33 says: „Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the covenant law behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.“ At the back of the Tabernacle, the Most Holy Place, stood the ark of the covenant law. In front of the curtain stood the table with the bread of the Presence, the lampstand and the altar of incense. The priests went into the front part of the table every morning and evening, brought the incense and kept the lampstand burning. They also went in when a sin offering was made for the priests or for the whole community. Every Sabbath the bread of the Presence was renewed. But only the high priest went into the Most Holy Place, and only once a year, on the day of atonement. No one else was allowed to enter. God appointed the high priest for

this crucial duty. Whether the people received forgiveness or not, depended on how the high priest performed his duty. We thank God that we have an eternal high priest, Jesus Christ. He entered the sanctuary once and for all through his blood. When he died on the cross at Golgotha, the curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place was torn in two, from top to bottom. The access to the Most Holy Place is open. The sinners no longer need a high priest or a sacrificial animal. The new and living way that has opened is our faith in Jesus Christ, who created atonement through his blood once and for all. Jesus says: "The one who believes has eternal life." (John 6:47). But we must not misunderstand the new way. God has not become less holy. Nor have we become less sinful. Not the rear part of the tabernacle has disappeared, but the front part (Hebrews 9:8). His whole community should be holy. Some believers have lost the fear of God, but still appeal to be saved through Jesus. But their practical lives do not correspond to God's holiness. As long as they do not repent of their sin, they do not live in God's presence. We come to the Most Holy Place only through purification in repentance. How can we find this way to life when we no longer have a visible tabernacle, a human high priest and a curtain? Let us read verse 34: " Put the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant law in the Most Holy Place." In the Most Holy Place is the ark of the covenant law. God's word is the key factor for a holy life pleasing to God. God's word tells us what to repent of and how to live in the most holy presence of God. A holy life is a life with the word of God.

The plan of the tabernacle shows us how the holy God can dwell among his people. From God's side, he has prepared everything so that sinners may be atoned for by the blood of the vicarious sacrifice and come into his presence, and he has joyful fellowship with them. For this purpose, he had built the tabernacle so gloriously and carefully. Let us read verse 30b: "Set up the tabernacle according to the plan shown you on the mountain." It is crucial that we set up the tabernacle according to the plan that God shows us. If Moses did not obey in detail, God could not dwell among his people. For example, if he left out the curtains of goat hair, there would be no vicarious sacrifice. Then all effort would be in vain, and no one would enter the heavenly glory. Builders should build according to the architect's plan, otherwise the house will not be durable. All the more so, when God gives us the plan for his tabernacle among men, we should set it up according to the plan that God shows us. What is God's way of setting up the tabernacle? God's way is the sanctification of our lives and our obedience to his calling.

First: The sanctification of one's own life. Building God's tabernacle in our heart means, living a holy life on a daily basis. We are God's tabernacle, the temple, in which he lives. Through our faith in Jesus Christ the holy God inhabits our heart. In the world we are constantly exposed to all kinds of temptation. This the same for children and teenagers. In order for us to have the holy God inside of us, we have to sanctify our everyday life through repentance. „If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1,8.9) Luther said in his 95 theses, that a believer's whole life should be a repentance. Building God's temple means taking care of and sanctifying our everyday life. We can do that for example through our testimony writing. Those who struggle with God's word through writing testimony, experience, how God heals them step by step and changes them to be a temple and house of God. Let's take care of our spiritual life and help our sheep and children, to struggle with God's word and build God's house in their hearts.

Second: The obedience to one's calling. Building God's house means, building Bible study teams at the university. Over the last 50 years Europe UBF experienced, how God blessed us, when the lay missionaries and shepherds devoted themselves to Bible study with students. Through UBF many students resisted the spirit of the times and wrote God's story in this generation. One missionary in Russia experienced, how all of his Bible students left. His shepherd helped him with Mark 11:22 to build God's house through Bible study and disciple making ministry. This missionary obeyed God's calling, even when he became very ill, and God raised up disciples and house churches, who are a house of God for Russia and world mission. Verse 30 says, "Set up the tabernacle according to the plan shown you on the mountain." This year, through 37:10, John 17:21 and John 1:4, we can renew our pioneering spirit and make a decision for the next 50 years, to build God's house through bible study in Europe and even in the Muslim countries. May God raise 100.000 Bible teachers and 5 million prayer coworkers through 10,00 Bible studies live in this generation among us and renew Germany as a shepherd nation and Europe as missionary sending continent.

2. The altar of burnt offering and the courtyard (27,1-21)

Lets read 27:1: „Build an altar of acacia wood, three cubits high; it is to be square, five cubits long and five cubits wide.“ The altar of burnt offering was located in front of the tabernacle in the courtyard. It was 2.5 m² and 1 ½ meters high. The altar was wooden with copper on top. In Leviticus 6 we learn that the fire on the altar was always burning. God wanted the altar to be covered in copper, because it is a heat-resistant material. On the four ends there were four horns symbolising power and that were painted with the blood of the animals. What power did the altar have? It was the power of forgiveness, and Luke 1:69 refers to "the horn of salvation". On the altar the sacrifices that the Israelites brought were burned,. Whoever wanted to go to the tabernacle had to pass the altar of burnt offering. Nobody could come to God without offering. Everybody is a sinner. Everybody is under God's righteous wrath. God's wrath is like the fire of the altar. Some people think that sin is not that bad, although they themselves suffer under it. Their conscience tells them, that God cannot tolerate their sin. We have to know that sin is not harmless.

Let's read Rom 1:18: „The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.“ Sinners cannot survive when God's wrath is being revealed. Sinners should actually burn. But God directed his wrath to the sacrifices, which were slaughtered and then burned on the altar. Whenever the Israelites saw the smoke of fire from the God forgave their sin and they were spared from the fiery wrath of God. That's why they could come, and with gratitude sacrificed their firstborns and best animals by placing their hand on the animal's head. Our relationship with God is expressed by coming to him like a child to the father, trusting that his wrath will not strike us, but that he has placed all his anger on his Son, Jesus. May we know that God is gracious to us, no matter how serious our sin is.

Verses 9 – 19 describe how the courtyard should be built. The courtyard's size was 50 meters to 25 meters. The walls were made of curtains that stood on posts with silver hooks and bronze bases. They were 2.50 m high, so no one could climb over the walls. There was only one entrance on the east side. In front of the entrance hung a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen. The curtain gave the Israelites a clue as to what glory God had prepared for them, and invited them to go inside and seek their God. At the entrance, the priests and the Levites made sure, that those who came had pure

sacrificial animals with them and helped them to make their sacrifice in accordance to their regulations.

Let's read verses 20-21: „20 "Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning. 21 In the Tent of Meeting, outside the curtain that is in front of the Testimony, Aaron and his sons are to keep the lamps burning before the LORD from evening till morning. This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for the generations to come.“ The lamp should be kept burning all night. There was always light in the tabernacle. God is light and there is no darkness in him (1.John 1:5). There is no darkness in the church of God, either. God's light in the faithful drives out all darkness. Who bore the responsibility for the continuous burning of the light? It was the priests. This rule remained in place, even at the time of the judges. At that time, darkness seemed to take hold. But God did not allow the lamp with the light of God to go away. Even when the high priest was spiritually blind and his sons were corrupted, the lamp of God did not go out. God's lamp burned in a little boy, Samuel, the son of Hannah, who was willing to listen Gods word and teach it as it is. Even in the greatest spiritual darkness, God's lamp burns continuously. God has at all times his remaining ones, who, through their faith, bring the very purest oil that keeps the lamps burning. Jesus is the light of the world. Through him, those who believe in him are also the light of the world that dispels all darkness and builds up God's dwelling.

Today we have learned to build God's dwelling in God's way. God gave his people an accurate plan so that he could dwell among them and they could enjoy the glorious fellowship in his heavenly glory. Through the faithful spiritual struggle with the word of God, let us sanctify our lives daily, and through the obedience to his calling form 1:1 Bible study team, let us build his dwelling in Europe and in the Muslim world.