



Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text
Exodus 40:1-38

Topic
The Tabernacle was completed and the Creator of the universe
took up residence there above the Ark of the Covenant

Title
*“Phenomenal Cosmic Power...
Itty-Bitty Living Space”*

If you ever find a lamp with a Genie in it, better pass on your three wishes. It never works out the way you want.

I'm sure you read about the blonde, the brunette, and the redhead who were marooned on an island when their cruise ship was struck by a rogue wave.

One day, the three of them were walking along the beach and discovered a lamp. They rubbed and rubbed, and sure enough, out popped a Genie.

The Genie said, "Since I can only grant three wishes, you may each have one."

The brunette said, "I've been stuck here for years. I miss my family, my husband, and my life. I wish to go home."

POOF! The brunette got her wish and was returned to her family.

Then, the redhead said, "I've been stuck here for years as well. I miss my family, my husband, and my life. I wish I could go home, too."

POOF! The redhead got her wish and was returned to her family.

The blonde started crying uncontrollably. "My dear, what's the matter?" asked the Genie.

The blonde whimpered, **"I wish my friends were still here."**

Some of my favorite *X-Files* episodes were the dark comedies. In one, Mulder encountered a Genie. With his first wish, he asked for peace on earth.

The Genie granted Mulder's wish by exterminating the entire human population of the earth, except for him.

With his second wish, Mulder undoes his first wish. He then writes down his third wish to be very specific. However, just before making the final wish, Scully helps Mulder realize that the power of a Genie should not be used to force people to be good, and so he ultimately wishes for the Genie to be free.

From Barbara Eden to Robin Williams, the famous line from Disney's *Aladdin* rings true: "Phenomenal cosmic power... Itty-bitty living space."

As we close-out the Book of Exodus, in verse thirty-four we read,

Exo 40:34 Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

The Tabernacle we've read so much about was a 15'x45'x15' tent. It was separated by a thick veil into two rooms - the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. The Holy Place was 15'x30'x15', while the Holy of Holies was a perfect cube of 15'x15'x15'.

God's phenomenal glory dwelt in that cube as He accompanied His chosen people on their journey to, and then into, the land He had promised to give them.

God is omnipresent. He wasn't confined to that tiny space. But it is an amazing truth that His presence was there in a special way - to suggest that on the earth He dwelt among His people, in the Tabernacle.

Where does the omnipresent God dwell on the earth today?

1Co 3:16 Do you not know that **you** are the temple of God and that **the Spirit of God dwells in you?**

In saying, "Jesus Christ is in you," Paul wasn't speaking poetically or metaphorically.

He truly meant that Jesus Christ is literally, practically dwelling within each believer individually; and in us corporately as we gather.

Many other verses confirm the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ actually dwells in His believers:

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me...**

Eph 3:17 that **Christ may dwell in your hearts** through faith...

Col 1:27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.

How can Jesus dwell within us? By the Holy Spirit Whom He sent after His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into Heaven. In Second Timothy 1:14, Paul says plainly, “the Holy Spirit... dwells in us.”

One thing ought to be obvious: In creating mankind, it was God’s desire to dwell among us.

God physically dwelt in the Tabernacle. He dwells spiritually in us as His Temple. In the future we read, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.”

I’ll organize my comments around two points: #1 God Was Willing To Live In A Tent For You, and #2 God Is Willing To Live In Your ‘Tent’ With You.

#1 God Was Willing To Live In A Tent For You

Tiny houses are all that right now. Have you seen them? If you haven't, here is an explanation from Wikipedia:

The tiny house movement (also known as the "small house movement") is a description for the architectural and social movement that advocates living simply in small homes. There is currently no set definition as to what constitutes a tiny house; however, a residential structure under 500 square feet is generally accepted to be a tiny home. Frequently, the distinction is made between *small* (between 400 square feet and 1000 square feet, and *tiny* houses (less than 400 square feet.

The tiny house movement promotes financial prudence, eco-friendly choices, shared community experiences, and a shift in consumer-driven mindsets.

Families with kids are experimenting with living together in a space not much larger than the average den. I will say that some of the tiny houses are super-cute and very creative. My favorites are the transformed two-story shipping containers.

The entire Tabernacle was 675sq.ft., with the Holy of Holies only 225sq.ft. There wasn't much furniture in the Holy of Holies, either - only the Ark of the Covenant with its lid, the Mercy Seat.

Obviously God's glory wasn't only within the Tabernacle, because the pillar of cloud or fire could be seen throughout the camp, hovering above it.

But it communicates, powerfully, that the Creator of the universe, the God of gods, desired to tabernacle with mankind, and He condescended to do it.

We read in Second Chronicles 2:6, “who is able to build Him a temple, since heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him?” Yet they did build Him the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, and God blessed both of them with His physical presence.

I’m not certain how theologically correct it is to say it, but the visual we get is that God is willing to live in a tent with you in order to have fellowship.

The focus of this final chapter is the Tabernacle being set-up by Moses exactly as specified. And that in itself suggests something great. So often we read the record of Israel’s failures to obey God. But not here; not this day. This was a glorious day in which what was commanded was implemented.

Exo 40:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

Exo 40:2 "On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.

The Tabernacle and its furnishings were prepared in about six months, and the Tabernacle was set up about six months later; thus approximately one year had passed since the Israelites’ deliverance from Egypt.

First we see the placing of the furniture:

Exo 40:3 You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony, and partition off the ark with the veil.

Exo 40:4 You shall bring in the table and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and light its lamps.

Exo 40:5 You shall also set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the Testimony, and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle.

Exo 40:6 Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.

Exo 40:7 And you shall set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water in it.

Every piece of furniture had its exact placement. You'll remember from our previous studies that they each prefigured Jesus or His ministry. They told a story about redemption.

Today, under the New Covenant, there is no special furniture. Instead **we** are described as living stones in the earthly Temple - fit together perfectly by God to bring Him glory.

Exo 40:8 You shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen at the court gate.

After the Tabernacle and its furniture, they were to set-up the tent wall that surrounded it - called the Court or the Courtyard.

Exo 40:9 "And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that *is* in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy.

Exo 40:10 You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar. The altar shall be most holy.

Exo 40:11 And you shall anoint the laver and its base, and consecrate it.

Under the Old Covenant, both people and objects were anointed with the specially prepared anointing oil to set them apart as belonging to the Lord. There is no real counterpart to this under the New Covenant. According to one source,

Only four New Testament passages refer to the practice of anointing with oil, and none of them offer an explanation for its use. We [must] draw our conclusions from context.

- In Mark 6:13, the disciples anoint the sick and heal them.
- In Mark 14:3-9, Mary anoints Jesus' feet as an act of worship.
- In James 5:14, the church elders anoint the sick with oil for healing.
- In Hebrews 1:8-9, God says to Christ as He returns triumphantly to heaven, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever," and God anoints Jesus "with the oil of gladness."

We therefore shy away from anointing material objects with oil; or in declaring objects holy. We certainly do not see relics, for example, as having any intrinsic power.

Think of it this way. In movies like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the Ark of the Covenant itself held mystical powers. The Nazi's wanted to unleash it on the Allied forces. I love that movie, but I always think it comical that the way Indy saved himself and his companion was by simply keeping their eyes closed while the lid was off the Ark.

The power of the Ark was in the presence of God that attended it. It wasn't a WMD that could change the course of war.

We occasionally anoint people with oil - sick people, who "call for the elders of the church," as it says in the Book of James. I see no Scriptural authority for, say, anointing a house with oil, to either bless it, or as some do, to ward-off demonic activity. It's just not something we can support from the New Testament.

It borders on superstition, and can therefore be dangerous.

Exo 40:12 "Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them with water.

Exo 40:13 You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.

Exo 40:14 And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with tunics.

Exo 40:15 You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me as priests; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations."

Nothing new here - except this. Moses acted as Israel's priest until the priesthood could be established. Moses was a Levite, so he qualified. Add it to his rather substantial spiritual resume.

Exo 40:16 Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

What a marvelous declaration. He did it, and it was "all," and exactly, what God commanded him.

It was so stupendous; so monumental; that the next set of verses records each component actually being set in place.

Exo 40:17 And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first *day* of the month, *that* the tabernacle was raised up.

Exo 40:18 So Moses raised up the tabernacle, fastened its sockets, set up its boards, put in its bars, and raised up its pillars.

Exo 40:19 And he spread out the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent on top of it, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Exo 40:20 He took the Testimony [i.e., the tablets of the Ten Commandments] and put *it* into the ark, inserted the poles through the rings of the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark.

Exo 40:21 And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, hung up the veil of the covering, and partitioned off the ark of the Testimony, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Exo 40:22 He put the table in the tabernacle of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil;

Exo 40:23 and he set the bread in order upon it before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Exo 40:24 He put the lampstand in the tabernacle of meeting, across from the table, on the south side of the tabernacle;

Exo 40:25 and he lit the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Exo 40:26 He put the gold altar in the tabernacle of meeting in front of the veil;

Exo 40:27 and he burned sweet incense on it, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Exo 40:28 He hung up the screen *at* the door of the tabernacle.

Exo 40:29 And he put the altar of burnt offering *before* the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the grain offering, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Exo 40:30 He set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water there for washing;

Exo 40:31 and Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and their feet *with water* from it.

Exo 40:32 Whenever they went into the tabernacle of meeting, and when they came near the altar, they washed, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Exo 40:33 And he raised up the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the screen of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.

If you've ever put something complicated together, from instructions, you know how difficult it can be. Do you think the folks who write the instructions put the things together? Doesn't seem like it.

It seems that Moses did all the work of setting-up the structure by himself. The last few verses spoke of Aaron and his sons washing, but there is no mention of them, or anyone else, helping Moses raise the Tabernacle, arrange the furniture, or set-up the linen fence.

Could it really have been a one-man job, this first time? I think so; and I think it was a reward to Moses that he was called to do it by himself.

Exo 40:34 Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

Exo 40:35 And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

The moment the last peg was pegged, so to speak, God visited the Tabernacle in a powerful way. He approved it by His presence in it, and upon it. It may have been itty-bitty, a tiny house; but He was willing to dwell there among His people.

It shouldn't seem strange that Moses couldn't enter the Tabernacle, for at least two reasons:

1. For one, God's glory was so visible that you didn't need to be in the Holy of Holies to appreciate it.
2. For a second reason, with the Tabernacle in place, a new economy would begin, in which only the priests could minister in the Tabernacle; and only the High Priest could annually go into the Holy of Holies.

Things were indeed about to change for Israel. They were about to worship God in the new way He had prescribed, in the Tabernacle. And they were also about to embark on their march to the Promised Land.

Exo 40:36 Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys.

Exo 40:37 But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up.

Exo 40:38 For the cloud of the LORD *was* above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

Have you ever had to follow someone to get to your destination? It was common in the ancient world - before GPS. Invariably the car you were following would blow through a yellow light, leaving you in the dust with no idea where you were going.

The Israelites followed God, and I'm guessing He gave them time to muster with our leaving them in the dust.

As beautiful, and as precise, as the Tabernacle was, it was just a pile of materials without the presence of God in it, and above it. Outward form, no matter how costly and beautiful, is not enough; **inward filling is needed.**

#2 God Is Willing To Live In Your 'Tent' With You

The Tabernacle, and later the Temple, was temporary. God had something better in mind as a dwelling place - **You.**

It's still a temporary dwelling, however. Your current physical body is likened to a **tent**. In Second Corinthians, the apostle Paul says, "For we know that if our earthly house, *this tent*, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (5:1).

We will one day be resurrected from the dead in a glorious heavenly body; or be transformed into our heavenly bodies at the rapture. For now, you're to think of it as a tent.

Here is another passage about His currently indwelling your tent. It has a tie-in with the Tabernacle.

Col 1:26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

Col 1:27 To them [the saints] God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

I like a good mystery - especially one I can't figure out. I still remember my jaw dropping when it was revealed that Bruce Willis was dead in *The Sixth Sense*.

In the New Testament a “mystery” is something previously concealed and unknown which is now revealed. This particular “mystery” was hidden “from ages and from generations.”

- “Ages” refers to the periods of history prior to the first century.
- “Generations” refers to all the people who lived in those periods.

The mystery is that non-Jews could be saved apart from the Tabernacle. From the time of Abraham until the first century if you wanted to know God and have a relationship with Him you had to either be a Jew or convert to Judaism. Paul was going around preaching Jesus Christ to Gentiles with no requirement that they first convert to becoming Jews. It was for that message of grace the Jews had him arrested and for which he was in prison in Rome.

What a rich and glorious truth this is! That you can come to God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ apart from any works of righteousness and certainly apart from any and all religion, rites, and rules.

With regard to our study in Exodus, **you need no Tabernacle with its rites and rituals, because you are the Temple within which God resides.**

The Israelites could see God's glory. In a sense, folks should see God's glory in us.

1Co 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

1Co 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

You were bought. At the Cross, Jesus paid the penalty for your sin, buying you out from slavery.

You are no longer your own, but are now the Temple of God. Think of it this way: God bought you, and so you belong to Him, and He has let a tenant move in with you - the Holy Spirit.

Therefore you are able to glorify God in your body and spirit.

Since the Holy Spirit is God, we're not saying He is confined to your physical body. Nevertheless He is present in us, to influence us for God.

As His Temple, I should think of myself as holy. I'm *not* holy - I still have this body of flesh. But the presence of the Spirit is transforming me day-by-day into the image of Jesus. I should think of myself as God's holy Temple - set apart for Him.

How do we use our bodies as God's Temple? By walking in His leading, and according to His Word. When we simply obey God, it brings glory to Him - and it is noticeable by both believers and nonbelievers. They see the goodness of God; the power of God; the love of God.

In other words, they see His phenomenal cosmic power in our itty-bitty lives.