**Home group questions on Exodus 35-40**

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**Summary of sermon**

That God arrives in glory, to live among his people at the end of Exodus 40 is an incredible privilege. The initial stage in God’s work of reversing the fall and renewing creation is hereby completed, as he dwells among his people again. But it could not be taken for granted, given Israel’s gross idolatry in chapter 32. Three things have changed to put God’s plans back on track:

1. He has fully forgiven Israel, as indicated when Moses picks up in 35.1-3 where God left off in 31:12-17, talking about the Sabbath. It is as if the events in between didn’t happen.
2. The people display earnest repentance, both by taking off their jewellery (33.4-6) and by perfectly obeying all of God’s commands in building the tabernacle, which itself represents a work of new creation. The seven sets of ‘as the LORD commanded’ in 39:1-31 and 40:17-32 echo Genesis 1-2. So does the language of finishing/completing, seeing and blessing the work in 39:32 and 42-43, plus 40:33.
3. As a result of 1 + 2, God is eager to dwell with his people – seemingly impatient, even. His glory fills the tabernacle as soon as it has been put up, *before* Moses has chance to anoint and consecrate it or the priests – that doesn’t happen until Leviticus 8.

We should rejoice at God’s grace and generosity, displayed in these things. Israel’s obedience is also commendable and an example to us. However, over time Israel increasingly turned back to idolatry, so that God eventually destroyed the temple (which had replaced the tabernacle), undoing his work of new creation. Yet Jesus has made the perfect dwelling place for God in his human body, through his perfect and unending obedience (cf. John 1:14, 2:19-21; Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 5:7-10). Jesus, in his human nature, has become something more beautiful than the tabernacle and we are made like him. Through faith, his perfect righteousness and obedience is credited to us (cf. Romans 10:4; Philippians 3:9). Since we, as the church, are Jesus’ bride, all that is his become ours! So Jesus has become the true and lasting foundation of God’s new creation, and we are made new creations through our union with him (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17).

The main application of this is simply to be amazed that God should see us as something more beautiful than the tabernacle, in Christ. Also, we should rejoice that God dwells in us even more eagerly than in the tabernacle, by his Spirit. Finally, we should find great security in knowing that Christ’s perfect obedience is the basis of all this – not our obedience. Our obedience is a right and necessary response to such grace (not least because it is how we become the kingdom of priests and holy nation that God’s people are still called to be in Exodus 19:4-6 and 1 Peter 2:9-10), but it in no way contributes to our status in Christ.

**Questions:**

1. How are you tempted to think God sees you on days when your sin, weakness or inadequacy are more obvious to you?
2. What do Exodus 35-40 show us about God’s forgiveness – bearing in mind Israel’s idolatry in chapter 32?
3. What do Exodus 35-40 show us about Israel’s repentance and obedience?
4. How is Israel’s earnest repentance and obedience a commendable example for us?
5. What does Exodus 40 show us about God’s response? (N.B. God has provided all the plunder (Exodus 12.36) and the skills (35:30-36:1) need to build the tabernacle, so even Israel’s obedience is underpinned by his grace, yet he generously blesses the work. It is also amazing that he involves them in his work of new creation!)
6. Why could the obedience of fallen human beings never be enough to secure God’s presence among his people – whether that’s ancient Israel’s obedience or ours?
7. How did Jesus become the perfect dwelling place for God in creation?
8. How does God see us through our union with Christ?