

Exodus 25

Creation and the Tabernacle

- I. The Tabernacle is in some sense a reestablishment of Creation
 - a. Moses, like Noah, found God's favor
 - b. Both Noah's ark and the Tabernacle are portable sanctuaries
 - c. The Flood waters are roughly equivalent to the wilderness
 - d. Both the ark and the Tabernacle are islands of order in the sea of chaos.
 - e. The Tabernacle is arguably re-creation.
- II. The Creation of the World
 - a. Sanctuaries in the ancient world are models of the world
 - b. They are orderly and bristle with God's presence.
 - c. God's reign is made visible in the sanctuary or Tabernacle
 - d. God's spirit supervises the building of the tabernacle.
 - e. The dedication is on the liturgical first day of creation
 - f. It follows accordingly that worship is creational work.
 - g. There are seven divine speeches in Exodus 25-31, culminating with the Sabbath command.
 - h. In all of this we are re-visiting the importance of order, shape, precision, and obedience.
 - i. As with creation, God declares the final product as "very good"
 - j. There is a move from microcosm to macrocosm that enact God's plans to re-create the world.
- III. Other considerations
 - a. Note the move from mountain to tabernacle—permanence to portability
 - b. Note the importance of place. Time is not the only hallowed dimension. Space also. All this anticipates redemption and incarnation.
 - c. Important quote: "The use of a sanctuary (tabernacle), namely a specific place for worshiping, for Israel and for any religious community, is thus not unimportant, as if "under any green tree" would do. To summarize its important: a) a sanctuary brings order to the worship of God. An undifferentiated proliferation of worship sites leads to a lack of discipline and focus, which may issue in an "anything goes" attitude, a sure recipe for idolatry. B) A sanctuary provides a tangible aspect for the divine presence. In their humanity, God's people have a need for concreteness in their relationship with God; a purely spiritual worship is incomplete and left unrelated to body

and life. God's condescension interrelates with people in the entirety of their lives. C) A sanctuary provides a point of assurance of the divine presence and a point of stability in the midst of the unstable wilderness. God promises to be present in a given place ; the people thereby may have confidence that they can experience the presence of God there. God can be relied upon to be a stabilizing and beneficent presence."

IV. Discussion Questions

- a. The establishment of the Tabernacle appears to be a covenant within a covenant. What is your sense of the consequences of breaking this covenant?
- b. Why are Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu and the other elders now included with Moses on the mountain?
- c. In the meal that they have on the mountain there are elements similar to the Lord's supper including proclamation of the word, communion, atonement, presence, vocation, sharing of life by sharing food. Do you find this comparison between communion and this meal convincing?
- d. The volume of material devoted to worship instructions suggests the importance of worship. What today is the importance of worship? Why are we able to dispense with the kind of precision seen here? Or are we?
- e. The tabernacle signals a new development in God's presence. He will now be portable. Why is this significant?
- f. In the establishment of the Tabernacle God is providing the detail appropriate for the worship of God. The forms of divine worship are not to be fundamentally a matter of human innovation or effort. Is this conformity to God's desire in place today?
- g. The shape and design of the Tabernacle embodies an active hope on the future that God is creating with the people. Comment.
- h. What does all this have to do with the Golden Calf?
- i. What, if anything, can worship planners today take from these chapters and the establishment of the Tabernacle?