

March 23

Scriptures: Read Exodus 40

Key Verse: “Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” (Exodus 40:34)

Overview

Now that all the required material for the tabernacle and tent and every piece of furniture was ready and made according to the Lord’s instructions, it only required assembling. But before that could happen Moses was waiting to hear from God, so that everything would be done in His way and in His prescribed timing. Sometimes servants of the Lord tend to be anxious to see things happening in His work, and rush excitedly into action without first hearing from God and getting the “go ahead”. Before any important step be taken, we need to follow Moses’ example and wait on God. If we do not, the Lord’s blessing may be withheld.

In these chapters we have learned that the way of blessing is that of obedience and faithfulness. Moses did not have to wait long before the Lord gave him the appointed day as “the first day of the first month” (40:2), just two weeks before the Passover and almost one year after the Israelites had left Egypt (cf. Numbers 9:1-5). Then the Lord told Moses exactly how the tabernacle was to be set up; once everything was in its proper place, the items could be anointed with oil and thus sanctified for God’s service. To be sanctified and anointed by the Lord, we must first be found where the Lord wants us to be—in His will. Finally Moses was told the manner in which to consecrate the priests (40:3-15). Again it is stressed that Moses was obedient and “according to all that the Lord had commanded Him, so he did” (40:16).

We read that all the work of setting up the tabernacle is attributed to Moses, since he was the chief overseer. The Levites were responsible to set up the tabernacle (cf. Numbers 3:21-39), so here, for the first time, Moses was showing them how it was to be done and with much man-power it was probably accomplished in less than a day. Moses also, although not a priest like Aaron and his sons, showed them the proper way to serve the Lord in the tabernacle, since he was especially appointed and ordained by God to do so. Once they learned from him, he entrusted all the duties to them so he could attend to his own divine appointment of judging and leading the people of the Lord.

The newly erected tabernacle and tent was but an empty, useless shell until the Lord’s glory, veiled by the pillar of cloud, descended upon it, and came to dwell within. This awesome manifestation was a visible sign of God’s acceptance of their work and a clear indication of His presence among them. Rays of light from even Moses could not enter at that time (40:35). Our Lord Jesus, however, whom God caused to draw near, has “not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24).

Just as God promised the Israelites (Exodus 33:14), He now came fulfilling His desire and theirs, to dwell in their midst. What joy the people must have felt! It is still the Lord’s desire today that He dwell within us and be glorified, as our bodies are transformed into His temple by the new birth in Jesus Christ (John 14:23; 1 Cor. 6:19; Rev. 21:3) which gives the believer joy in their salvation. The Israelites were constantly reminded of their duty to honor, obey, glorify and worship God because of the tabernacle and the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night which signified His presence in their midst. By this pillar of His presence the Lord led His people through the wilderness until they came to Canaan, their long awaited destination.

The Lord has promised in His “Word that while we, His children, are in the wilderness of this world, He will guide, direct and be in our midst through His Spirit and Son, our Lord Jesus (Matt. 18:20; Luke 1:79).

Prayer

O Great God and Father, by faith we are in You and You in us. May the cloud of Your presence cover me and may Your glory fill me so that I will be all You intend me to be.