

The tabernacle completed

• *Magnificently and accurately made according to God's instructions*

• *The parts assembled*

• *The completed structure anointed with oil*

• *Aaron and his sons commissioned as priests*

The visible presence of God descends

• *Moses' prayer answered*

• *From now on the presence of God, in cloud and in fire, would be with them permanently*

Eventually all the materials of the tabernacle were fully made^{□1}. The workers then showed Moses everything they had done: the tent^{□2}, the items of furniture and their accompanying utensils^{□3}, and then the garments of the high-priest and of the other priests^{□4}. (It reminds us, although it is no more than a coincidence, of the day Jesus will present the church to the Father.) It was all magnificently and accurately made^{□5}. Moses checked every point. Everything had been done according to the pattern shown him on Mount Sinai. Then he 'blessed' them – that is, prayed that God would reward them for the good work that had been done^{□6}.

So now the materials of the tabernacle are complete. It is time for it all to be put together and put into operation. On the Israelite New Year's Day, symbolising something radical and new, the tabernacle is to be set up and put into position^{□1}. First the tent is raised up^{□2}; then the holy of holies is prepared^{□3}; then the furniture and utensils of the holy place^{□4}; then the two items in the courtyard^{□5}; then the surrounding court is put into position^{□6}.

After the materials have basically been put into position, it is all anointed with the sacred anointing oil^{□1}. Aaron and his sons are commissioned as the servants of God who will work in this tabernacle^{□2}. They must be washed^{□3}, clothed with the holy garments^{□4}, and anointed with oil^{□5}. Their priesthood will last 'for ever'^{□6} – that is 'endlessly, without intermission, during the time that is being considered'. ('Forever' is often like our word 'permanent', meaning going on without intermission, without an end being in view; it does not always have to strictly mean 'eternally'. The priesthood was not in fact eternal.) It was all done as God instructed^{□7}. Exodus 40:17–33 describes how the commands are followed. At this point everything was being done by Moses. He was God's mediator, bringing into being God's will. At this point he is prophet, priest and king over God's people.

When the tabernacle is fully erected and Moses has commenced its ministry, something dramatic happens! The visible presence of God comes down upon the tabernacle. This is the very thing that the people almost lost through their sin at the foot of Mount Sinai. This is

the very thing that Moses had prayed for. 'Let Yahweh go with us', Moses prayed, when God was threatening that He would not go with His people. God had said to Moses, 'You lead the people. My angel will go with you, but my plan to reveal myself in glory in the tabernacle I will leave aside'^{□1}. But Moses pleaded that God should turn aside from the judgement mentioned in 33:34–34:3. He had asked that God's glory should accompany them as they travel to Canaan and should be with them in the tabernacle. God had agreed and the work of tabernacle-building had gone forward. Now comes the great moment that Moses had been waiting for. The cloud of God's presence came down^{□2}; Moses could not enter the tent^{□3}. This presence of God would be their guide. They would follow where the visible presence of God led them. Exodus 40:3 6–37 gives an overview of the entire period. In the narrative of the Bible the cloud does not move till Numbers 10:11. The whole of Leviticus 1:1 to Numbers 10:10 takes place at Sinai. From now on the presence of

□1 39:32

□2 39:33-34

□3 39:35-40

□4 39:41

□5 39:42

□6 39:43

□1 40:1

□2 40:2

□3 40:3

□4 40:4-5

□5 40:6-7

□6 40:8

□1 40:9-11

□2 40:12

□3 40:12

□4 40:13a

□5 40:13b-15

□6 40:15

□7 40:16

□1 see 33:34-34:3

□2 40:34

□3 40:35

God, in cloud and in fire, would be with them permanently.

• *The gospel is a great contrast to the law*

• *Flexibility replaces rigidity*

The great lesson of the tabernacle



• *The glory of God will come down when the gospel is proclaimed obediently*

• *God honours faithfulness – then and now*

The law is a very great **contrast** to the gospel. It foreshadows the shape of things to come. We must not (for example) try to learn the lesson that the church is meant to be inflexible because the tabernacle was inflexible. The tabernacle was indeed utterly inflexible. There was a rigid system of sacrifices and every item of clothing, every peg, every pole, every covering had to be exactly as God had commanded. It was part of a very rigid system of law. It **symbolised** the gospel, but the church is to be led by the Holy Spirit not by the Mosaic law. The work of the Holy Spirit is supremely flexible and the life of the church is to be greatly flexible – the very point of Ephesians 6:15.

The great lesson of the tabernacle is not that the church is meant to be inflexible and under minute rules and regulations. Far from it! The great lesson of the tabernacle is that the power of the Holy Spirit is likely to come down upon the preaching of the gospel! The church is the new tabernacle, the dwelling-place of God in the Spirit. The glory of God came down upon the tabernacle when Moses was obedient to the tabernacle-law. Now the glory of God can be expected to come down when we are obedient in the proclaiming of the gospel. The glory of God descended on the anniversary of the day when they left Egypt. Their leaving Egypt was a dramatic event in their story. The descending of the glory of God in their midst was another equally dramatic event in their story. From this point on they needed only to follow God. He would lead them as His glory went from place to place.

God is likely to honour us when we do exactly as He says about His gospel. It would have been terrible if, after all this tabernacle- making, nothing happened. But Moses had been faithful, and the people had been faithful, so God honoured them by coming to them in obvious glory and power. The same is likely to happen in God's church. When we are faithful to God's gospel, God comes to us in obvious glory and power.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>		
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