

A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS

Exodus 25:1 – 31:18

Key Verse 29:44

"So I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests."

In the previous lesson we learned the hope of God who saved a slavish people Israel and made a covenant with them to establish them as a kingdom of priests for all nations. A people, being changed from miserable slaves to a kingdom of priests, are the unimaginable grace of God. God gave them His commandments to help them to live as a holy people. He made a firm covenant with them by accepting them as his own people. After the covenant was made, God came to Mount Horeb in a thick cloud and gave Moses instructions to build the tabernacle where he himself would dwell in the midst of his people. We learn what it means to live as a holy priest and to build God's holy place. Let us come to the throne of grace and life as God's holy people, as a kingdom of priests for this generation.

1. The Tabernacle (25:1 - 27:21)

Let us look at 25:2: "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give." God asked Moses to raise an offering for God from everyone who gives it voluntarily. This offering revealed their heart whether they loved God and wanted to live practically in the covenant with God. Let us read verses 3 to 7: "These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows ; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece." God gave them the exact list of materials used for this building. It is remarkable here that God did not simply give them a sanctuary, but let them build it themselves and collect the materials for it. In this way, they themselves should actively and joyfully contribute to the fact that God could live among them.

They had taken all these materials with them as bounty from Egypt. God had entrusted it to them and now they had the chance to give a share back to the Lord out of joy and gratitude. If we use the gold or the spices that God has entrusted to us only for ourselves, they bring us many headaches, but what we give back to the Lord and use it for him, it gives us the true joy

of the Kingdom of Heaven.

God did not turn the Israelites into beggars who always want to receive, but helped them to live a practical giving life by collecting a voluntary offering. When UBF coworkers in Korea obeyed the Great Commission and actively gave for world mission, even though they had nothing, Korea was changed from a Third World country to a kingdom of priests for the whole world. When a young man overcame his love for money and sacrificed his savings to build the house of God, he became a source of blessing for his entire school. Therefore, God wanted to teach the Israelites to give back to Him, what they had received from God and thus build the sanctuary.

God has also given us a task to form 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams to build the sanctuary of God in this generation. This does not happen automatically, but by bringing our offering of prayer and inviting and one-to-one Bible study to God. It is our great privilege and joy to build the sanctuary of God with our offering.

Let us look at verse 8: "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them." This is the greatest grace for sinful people that God wants to dwell among us. God cannot actually be with sinners, because sin causes the wrath of God. But God decided to humble Himself in order to dwell among His people.

Do you know the country Liechtenstein? Liechtenstein is a small principality. In former times the prince lived in far away Vienna and nobody knew where Liechtenstein was. But then he decided to move to Liechtenstein. So he showed his respect and love for his people and the small country began to flourish. It is exactly the same when God is not only our Lord, but when he dwells among us. He participates in our life and suffering because we are so important to him. We can rest safely under his caring wings.

We call this the Immanuel grace of God. John was so amazed at the fact that God wanted to dwell among His people and said in John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." The fact that God dwells among us in Jesus is indeed an incomprehensible grace.

Verse 9 says: "Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you." This shows that we can only build the sanctuary of God through obedience, not in our own way, but in God's way. If someone is not going to the worship service with the argument, he can worship God in nature or elsewhere, he must learn to worship God in God's way.

The following verses describe the various items of the sanctuary. The first item mentioned here is the ark, which was at the center of the sanctuary. It was a 1.25 meter long and 75 cm wide box made of acacia wood, which was covered with gold. The ark had two long poles with

which it could be carried by the Levites. Later, the tablets of the law were kept inside. This shows that the Word of God is at the center of our relationship with God.

The basis of our life of faith is not a beautiful feeling, but the Word of God. By studying and obeying the Word of God through one-to-one Bible study, writing testimonies, and Sunday worship service, we can live and grow as God's people. Through God's Word we receive life, love, wisdom and power.

At the top of the ark there was a lid called the throne of grace. It was a gilded plate with two cherubim on it. The cherubim were made of chased gold. The presence of the cherubim shows the holiness of God. The throne of grace on top of the Ark teaches that we cannot enter the holiness of God without the grace of God.

In the Old Testament, once a year the throne of grace was sprinkled with the blood of a sacrificial animal. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice that opened the way for us into the sanctuary. Through the grace of forgiveness of Jesus, we may come with confidence to the throne of grace of God.

Let us read verse 22: "There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites." We cannot actually meet God. But God says: "I will meet you". God should condemn us because of our sin. But God meets us when we come to Him with repentance and faith in Jesus and He accepts us as His beloved children. 1 John 1:8-9 says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

God invites us to come to the throne of grace. Matthew 11:28 says: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.". Many people try to escape from their burden and restlessness by enjoying various pleasures. But unfortunately their problems are not solved at all and the next day they only feel worse. Some try to forget everything by taking drugs or surfing the internet for hours and hours and looking for a sense of achievement in games or social media. Others look for a way out through yoga or psychiatry, but they can't help them fundamentally. I used to try to enjoy the fun by going to pubs. This gave me a short-term joy. But the next day I felt even more miserable. But since I met Jesus through bible study, I could experience true joy and peace in Jesus, which is much deeper and more lasting than any joy in the world. When we come to the throne of grace with repentance through the Word of God, we experience the true joy and peace that comes from the restored relationship with our Creator God.

Verses 23 to 40 describe two other instruments that were in the tent, the table with the shewbreads and the seven-armed candlestick. The table with the shewbreads shows the daily care of God. The lampstand indicates that there is always light with God.

Let's take a look at 26:1, "Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim woven into them by a skilled worker." Chapter 26 describes the construction of the tabernacle, which was also called the "tent of encounter" or God's dwelling place. The dwelling place was composed of four layers of ceilings. The lowest layer consisted of 10 carpets of twisted fine canvas, dyed with blue and red purple and scarlet, in which cherubim were artfully woven. The colours blue, purple and scarlet reflect the majesty of God, the priesthood and the heavenly glory. Whoever entered the tabernacle saw an image of the kingdom of heaven. However, this image could not be seen from the outside. It was covered by a tent of goat hair carpets. 11 carpets, each 15 meters long, completely covering the other ceilings. They remind us of the goat that was sent into the desert every year loaded with the sin of the Israelites. Above it there was a blanket of red ram skins. It commemorates the sacrifice and blood for our forgiveness. On top was a blanket made of the skin of sea cows, which was stable and weatherproof.

If you look at the tabernacle from the outside, it was grey and inconspicuous. But if you went in, you could see the gold and the cherubim and the wonderful items. It was full of the glory of God. In this respect, the tabernacle is a picture for Jesus. Jesus was the most despised, full of pain and sickness. That is why he was respected for nothing. But when we get to know Jesus more deeply and develop our relationship with him, then we realize how beautiful Jesus is. Our Lord Jesus carried pain and sickness for all of us. He became the vicarious sacrificial lamb. By his grace we have forgiveness and can now see the glory of the kingdom of heaven. In Christ Jesus are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

In our shepherd life we experience a similar truth. From the outside it looks ordinary and sometimes exhausting. Why do we have to deal with the burdens of others? It is associated with self-denial and humility. But when we step into the shepherd's life, we experience that it is full of glory. By humbling ourselves and serving humbly, we experience the glory of God and true joy, and even actively participate in God's glorious work of salvation and change, experiencing God personally.

The side walls of the dwelling place were built up from 20 gilded boards, each 5 meters high. They stood side by side on silver feet. So, they show us a beautiful picture of co-working.

In the middle of the sanctuary a curtain was hung in the holy colors and decorated with cherubim. He separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. In front of the curtain were the candlesticks and the table, and behind it was the Ark of the Covenant with the throne of grace. This was the Most Holy Place, which the high priest entered once a year to make atonement.

Verse 30b says, "So you shall set up the tabernacle as you saw it on the mountain". God has prepared everything so that he can dwell among his people. But it is important that we follow

God's plan exactly, because God must be worshipped in God's way. God's wisdom is 1) the sanctification of life through daily penance and 2) obedience to God's calling.

When students from Korea sanctified themselves and obeyed the world mission command, God used UBF preciously for world mission for the past 50 years. God gave us Ezekiel 37:10 as a key verse, to preach the word of God through building 10.000 bible study teams. God wants to raise the next generation and use them as a mighty army of God.

Chapter 27 describes the huge altar of burnt offering. It was located in front of the entrance of the dwelling place and measured 2.5 by 2.5 meters and was covered with copper. It served to bring the sacrifices to God. This teaches us that the only way to God is through sacrifice. Without sacrifice no one can come to God. Some people take sin lightly. But sin is not harmless. Sin has severe consequences and disrupts our relation to God. Because of sin, people are miserable and live are under God's wrath. No one can escape the wrath of God. But God directs his wrath on the sacrifice. Therefore, the Israelites gladly came to the altar with their best animals, laid their hands on the head of the animal, which was then slaughtered and burned as a substitute. Now they were celebrating and living as God's children. God is gracious to us because He has thrown our sin and all wrath upon Jesus who is sacrificed in our place.

The forecourt around the tabernacle measured 50 meters in length and 25 meters in width and was separated by a 2.5 meter high canvas. It was the Holy District that belongs to God and where the Israelites were allowed to come to worship God and live as His people.

The tabernacle is the place where God dwells among us and where God wants to meet us. Through the sacrifice of Jesus we may come to the throne of grace of God, repent of our sin and live as God's people. It is the wonderful privilege that we can build a tabernacle through our one-to-one bible study, so that God's house can be erected in each of our countries.

2. The holy priesthood (28,1 – 31,18)

Chapter 28 deals with the ministry of the priests who served before God. Let us read 28:1, "Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Itamar, so that they may serve me as priests." Aaron was an ordinary sinner from among the Israelites. It was he who made the golden calf. Nevertheless, God chose Aaron and gave him the priesthood by his grace. God also chose his descendants to inherit this sacred task. God has called us royal priests. God's election is His unilateral and undeserved grace. Verse 2 says: "Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honour." For the priesthood he received beautiful and glorious priestly garments, made in the colors of the sanctuary, so that he could reflect God's glory. God gave us the holy

garments of his righteousness completely undeserved. Let us take off the old garments of selfishness and live as God's holy priests.

When we look at the clothes of the priests, the breast pocket with the 12 gems catches our attention. Let us read verses 17 to 20: "Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl; in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald; in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; in the fourth row a chrysolite, an Onyx and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings." 12 different precious stones represent the 12 tribes of the Israelites. Each was individually different, but very precious to God. The priest always carried them on his heart as a sign of his intercession. This teaches us the important task of the priests, namely to intercede for the whole people. Jesus carried his 12 disciples on his heart and prayed for them to raise them as leaders for all mankind.

As royal priests, it is our sacred task to carry the names of our bible students and the names of our co-workers before God in prayer. God wants to hear this prayer graciously and remember them and save them. Every bible student is like a precious gemstone before God. Not all stones are the same, but each has a different color or structure. In the same way we may know that each bible student is individual and unique. Sarah Grace is like a precious diamond. Judith is like an onyx. And H. Martin is like a precious jasper.

As royal priests we should wear the holy garments to fulfill our priestly task.

The ordination of the priests required a seven-day ceremony. There were three steps: Washing, dressing with new clothes and anointing. Then a bull and two rams were sacrificed. Much blood was shed. This means that sinners are sanctified to serve God. Consecration means to give their whole life to God. Now they could serve God in holiness and righteousness all their lives.

The daily offering consists of two one-year-old sheep. One sheep was offered each morning and each evening. 730 sheep a year shows that the relationship with God is very precious. Let us read 29:44-46. It is God's precious privilege that He has chosen us and sanctified us as His priests. It is also the precious mission that God has entrusted to us. Every evening the lamps were lit and in the morning they were extinguished. An incense offering was offered. Chapter 30 describes the incense altar. It was only 50 x 50 cm, but it stood directly in front of the curtain, the closest to the Ark of the Covenant. According to Revelation, the prayers of the saints are offered to the Lord in golden bowls and are a fragrance before God. Prayer looks inconspicuous and small, but it reaches the heart of God. In prayer we are close to God. In prayer we may bring our thanksgiving and repentance to God. We may experience God's comfort and love. We may also bring our intercession to God, like Monika, who prayed for Augustine for years until he was changed into a man of God. Every morning, through the daily bread and early morning prayer, we first want to give our heart to God and listen to His Word.

After the day's work, we may first come to God and meet Him and be ready to form many one-to-one Bible study teams for faculty-based pioneering. God does not want us to be superman, but men and women who faithfully keep the lamp of prayer burning.

A poll tax should be imposed on the counting of Israelites. Each person should give 20 grams of silver to redeem his life. The value was not high. Everyone who is counted belongs to God's army. He is important and valuable before God, so everyone should give the same amount, regardless of wealth or status. Without atonement money, they would experience a plague like the one of King David. Of course, we cannot buy our way out with silver. Jesus is the one who paid the true atonement for us.

Between the altar and the tabernacle stood a large copper basin with water. The copper basin served the priests for purification before they served the Lord. The copper basin teaches us to wash our sinful feet daily so that we can be used by God.

God called the craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab and all those who volunteered for service. They were to make the shrine and tools according to God's plan and direction. In addition, God gave them wisdom and understanding, above all His Spirit, so that they could make everything in such a way that it honors and glorifies God.

God has chosen us as His holy people and as a kingdom of priests. It is God's wonderful grace that he wants to dwell among us and that he builds his sanctuary through us. God also wants to build His shrine in Europe by forming 10,000 one-to-one teams with the students. He wants to establish Europe as a kingdom of priests as a blessing for world mission. In obedience to God's command and with holy fear, let us build the sanctuary of God in our generation and be used as God's holy priests.