

Exodus 40

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[0 : 00] Well I want to begin by telling you that a man told me not too many weeks ago that he forgets my Sunday sermons by the time he gets his car. To begin with two quick questions.

To get a bit of perspective. What's the book of Exodus all about? And if you've followed the series, and what have you learnt? It'd be a great mistake wouldn't it?

And certainly a great sadness if we got to the end of a series and somebody said to the preacher or the listener, what have you learnt? And you said, well, I don't know. So let's just move on for a minute.

What is this last section of chapter 35 to 40 all about? But these chapters, if you've read them before today, on tent building. So not many people who think of the book of Exodus think, ah, there's a really inspiring and great section at the end of Exodus on tent building.

If you made a film on the book of Exodus, what would you include? You'd make that big thing, wouldn't you, with the crossing of the Red Sea. And the plagues.

[1 : 26] And Sinai. And the drama of the Ten Commandments. You'd certainly get the golden calf in there. And all the idolatry. Maybe if it was an AD movie, you'd include the kind of orgy that seemed to follow.

But I doubt you would have anything. On chapters 35 to 40, you'd just leave them out. And yet they are here, aren't they, at the end of the book.

And they are actually full of helpful material. And that is what I want to focus on. So there's two questions. What is the book of Exodus about? And what does it mean for us?

Well, what is the book of Exodus about? Just think about where it begins. Children, where does the book of Exodus begin? Do you remember kids? Where does the book of Exodus begin? Marius, where does it begin? In Egypt.

And what other people of Israel they are? They are slaves, aren't they? They are slaves in the end of Egypt. Where does the book of Exodus end? Those of you who are in Sunday school, do you remember? Yes.

[2 : 26] It ends with them free. It ends with them free, doesn't it? And they are worshipping God in the tabernacle. And what happens in between? There is rescue. There is salvation. It is a book about slavery to worship.

It isn't just slavery to freedom. Freedom where you can do your own thing where you want to, whatever you want to do. But it is actually slavery to God.

There still stays in one way at the end of the book of Exodus. And God's people in the Old Testament may not have deserved to be rescued. And they may not have deserved to have come into fellowship with God.

And they may in some instances not even have wanted to be rescued. Or wanted to come into fellowship with God. But that is what God is working towards. And when you think about your own sinfulness.

And my heart. And your heart. And the tendency that we have to drift away from God. And to go against God. The book of Exodus is very significant.

[3 : 28] God is saving a people for himself. So the second question. What is this last bit about? Well the tent is the tent of meeting isn't it?

The tent is the meeting place. So God is arranging fellowship. So the key verse in the book of Exodus. If you just flip back those. It's really Exodus 19 verse 4.

Exodus chapter 19 verse 4. It's on page 60 of the Bible. Where God says you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians. And how I bore you on eagles wings.

And brought you where? To myself. So here at the end of Exodus. Is God planning to be at the very centre of his people. A tent where he will meet with them.

Now what did we see last week? Do you remember? We saw the golden calf didn't we? This incredible act of idolatry and rebellion. And when you deal with Exodus.

[4 : 27] In big chunks. Which I think is how the second half is to be dealt with. You see something absolutely remarkable. That God. Is sticking with sinners. God is sticking with sinners.

And so when you're tempted now and again. Partly because of the accuser of the devil. And partly because of your own frailty to think. He couldn't possibly stick with me after the week I've had. He might stick with that person over there.

Because they are godly. But I know I am not. He will stick with that other person. But not me.

Exodus tells us that at the end of the golden calf incident. God intends to meet with his people.

He sticks with sinners. And you may be plotting your sins. But God is plotting your joy. And so I want to say four issues in these last chapters.

That are all about God. And so if you get to your car this morning or the bus stop. And I ask you what was it about this morning. You'll be pretty safe to say. It was about God. The first thing is that God rules.

[5 : 30] Can you see that chapter 35 verses 1 and 2. 35 verses 1 and 2. Moses assembled all the congregation of the people of Israel. They were all there. Men and women.

Boys and girls. Little toddlers. And he said to them these are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do. For six days work shall be done. But on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath.

A solemn rest. Holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. Imagine you're gathering all the people of God together. There's been a tremendous type of idolatry.

And sadness. And grief. And stupidity. And tension. And you gather them all together. And you are given just one opportunity to start speaking to the people. What would you say to them? Why would you talk to them about the Sabbath?

Why would you bring up the Sabbath? I feel the Sabbath. And the answer to that question is he's not talking about the killer Sabbath. I've said this joke before. There's a man called the Holbeck in the Isle of Lewis.

[6 : 33] He's in the north of Scotland. And he goes through a walk on Sunday afternoon. And he sees a little rowing boat at the end of his guest house. And he begins trying to do the rowing boat. And the owner of the bed and breakfast runs down the garden.

And she says in a kind of highland voice. What are you doing? What do you think you're doing?

What do you think you're doing breaking the Sabbath? And he said I'm just taking a board out. And she said thou shalt remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

And she said Jesus was on a boat on the Sabbath. And the woman said not in Lewis he wasn't. You know the killer Sabbath.

You know where you basically sit in a suit or your smartest clothes. And you make sure that you do nothing enjoyable or pleasurable or happy for the whole day. So you can be as apparently faithful as you think you'll be.

And utterly miserable. And at the end of the day you can be quite proud. Because you stuck it out and other people haven't. We're not talking about the killer Sabbath. Which is just miserable and is the furthest thing from the Bible.

[7 : 35] We need a good biblical doctrinal Sabbath. And the biblical doctrinal Sabbath is that God has instituted the Sabbath day to teach his people there's more to life than this world.

That his people have got to stop for a day. And not just be obsessed with things. One preacher said to me once. Do you take a day off?

And I said well I kind of take a day off. And he says you work for six days with God's blessing. You work for seven days. You work with one day under God's curse. It's a great slide. But there's a Sabbath day to teach you not to be obsessed with things of school work.

And busyness. And materialism. That is why God says in 35 verse 2. Six days you work. Work hard for six days. But if you think that my plan for the world is that you should work and eat.

Work and eat. Study and eat. Study and eat. Work and eat. Work and eat. Work and eat. And die.

Then you couldn't be more mistaken. You couldn't be more naive. You couldn't be more deluded.

[8 : 39] The rest day you see. In Israel was designed to lift up the minds and hearts of the people. Or to God. The same today I hear. To God. And to remember that there is a plan which God has that is much bigger than your schoolwork.

Or bigger than your business. Or bigger than your job. And this plan goes beyond this world. And it is for an eternity with God. And God launched the Sabbath days near the beginning of Genesis. That's when he stopped creating. And it says he rushed it. Or he Sabbathed. And the first couple in creation. Adam and Eve. They had all the world to enjoy. Didn't they? But they had more than that. They had God to enjoy. But then they lost him in rebellion. And so God began to re-save his people.

And he began to re-save his people. And he begins to teach them all about the Sabbath all over again. And he began to teach them the Sabbath. To stop them from worshipping the world.

[9 : 39] Which would kill them in the end. But it's not enough to teach the Sabbath. Because you can teach the Sabbath. Can't you? But neither you and I have the ability to fulfil that.

There's nobody who can begin to bridge the gulf between what God says. And what we are to do. There's a massive gulf of disobedience. And that is where Jesus came in.

He dies to bridge the gulf between what we know. And what we fail to do. And then he said to people. Come and I will give you rest.

Come and I will give you Sabbath. So this short little section after Exodus 35. And immediately after. The idolatry of the golden calf. It's not a piece of ancient relevance.

It tells us this obsession with stuff and matter. And work and muddy and steady and progress and success. It will kill you. And God says I command you to stop and think about things in eternity.

[10 : 50] And to stop and to think about things of the kingdom of God. That's what God says here. It's very interesting. He asks them to stop and do nothing. Before he asks them to work on the tabernacle.

So it's not irrelevant. The Lord's day is not irrelevant. It's not Victorian moralism. This is God saying. If you worship the world. And you fail to recognize what is better and bigger than the world. You will die. And so it isn't just God being a killjoy.

It isn't just God being kind. Though he is being kind. He is actually laying down the rules. He is saying to the people. You are my people. And this is what you my people must do.

And you see he is actually the one who rules their days. And he rules their ways. He is saying to them. Your week is mine. Your six days are mine.

[11 : 49] Your seventh day is mine. Your life is mine. Your values are mine. Your priorities are mine. I am dictating to you. You are not dictating to me. For our days out there in the Christian life.

Where sin is quite active. And then we slowly but surely come back to the mercy of God. And then that word of God comes back to our mind.

And you remember that he is in charge of you. And you just drifted. You just wandered. You were just disobedient.

You were just stupid. And you have come back to the mercy of God. And he rules you. And there are days in the Christian life. When the Christian life is pretty easy.

And it is good. And that is when we slack it off. Holidays are often not great for me. And we get away from the pattern of a normal week.

[12 : 45] Some viewers said to me that when you go away with work. Those days are not easy for you. And we get away from those patterns. And those habits. Which do us good.

And we become slack. And the word of God tells us that if you become slack. And then disobedient. And you walk down that road. Away from God.

There will be death. Down that road. And so the word of God says come back to the rule of God. Because when you come back to the rule of God.

That is where paradoxically you find freedom. So here is God dictating the rules. The second thing about God. In the whole of chapter 35 verse 14.

And it has to do with the tabernacle and the tent. Is that he relates. He rules and he relates. That's what the tabernacle is for. It's that God is still planning to live amongst his people.

[13 : 40] Though they are sinful. Yet even related to them. Though they are wayward. The golden calf has been a terrible incident. And yet the mercy of God.

Is sufficient for all their sin. And here he is going ahead with the tabernacle. Isn't that encouraging? Isn't it encouraging there to read the three chapters of the golden calf.

And then you get to the next chapter. And you see here is a God who still persists with sinful people. And you see that God has not only forgiven them. But he's beginning to do a transforming work in their hearts.

Because this tabernacle is to be built, doesn't it? With metal and materials and oil. Which the people have in their possession. And they had lots of precious metal. Because they've been given a lot of it by the people in Egypt.

You can imagine them leaving Egypt weighed down and counting you with precious metal and bottles of oil. God was not asking them to do something that was beyond them.

[14:42] He was asking them to build a tabernacle from what they had in their possessions. And verse 21 of 35. Chapter 35. Do you notice that verse?

He says to them. And they came. Everyone whose heart was stirred by him. And everyone whose spirit moved him. And brought the Lord's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting.

And for all its service. And for the holy garden. So they came with men and women. Order and a willing heart. Both brooches. Earrings. Signet rings. Armlets.

I don't know what an armlet is. All sort of gold objects. Every man dedicating an offering of gold to the Lord. Chapter 36 and verse 3. And they received from Moses all the contributions that the people of Israel had brought from doing the work of the sanctuary.

They still kept bringing their free will offerings every morning. And then if you look at verse 5. And Moses said to the people. The people will bring much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do.

[15:46] So Moses gave command. And word was proclaimed throughout the camp. Let no man or woman do anything more than a contribution for the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. Moses says stop.

So God's heart. Do you remember that? God's heart was committed to the tent. And their heart was committed to the tent too. And as one commentator says. When the human heart is right.

The purse strings. Are released. Our wallet's open. And we give. And so here is God. Planning this wonderful tent of meeting.

In the middle of his people. And the people are saying. This is what we want. We want you in our midst God. I have seen this heart prompted generosity.

Again and again and again. In the Christian life. As you have. I just want you to imagine. This morning. That I am interviewing. At the front. Let's say. A family.

[16:46] Of migrants. They've come in the migrant crisis. They are total refugees in this country. They've come with nothing. And I'm talking to the husband and wife. They've got five or six children. They love the Lord Jesus.

They are godly trusting Christian people. They are staying. Amazingly. In a one or two bedroom flat. And they've got absolutely nothing.

And I ask them. About how they've come to the country. And how they are trusting the Lord. And they say. That they want to serve him. In a new place. And we finish the interview. And I absolutely guarantee.

From this congregation. And the people in our church. That things were pouring. Beds. Cupboards. Crockery. Catenary. Food.

Clothes. Blankets. White goods. Because the need would have reached your heart. And you would have responded. And I would have had you at some point.

[17:46] Stood at the front and say. Stop. We've got enough. That's what's happening here. Acts chapter 35 to 40. God is planning to relate to his people.

And his people want to relate to him. There's a two way. A key relationship. So the application is.

If you are a visitor here this morning. We are delighted that you're here. Maybe you're not a Christian. Do you know. That Jesus Christ. Came into the world. And the Bible says.

He tabernacled. The Bible says. He tempted. He camped. In this world. For three years.

Specifically. To form a relationship with you. Yes. To you.

And the question therefore. Is if his heart is committed to you. What's your heart like? Have you got to the point. As it says in John 1. Of receiving him.

[18:44] Because then you've got a relationship with him. That will never break. And for the bulk of us. Who are believers. We are being reminded. That as this tent is being set up. In the middle of the Old Testament people.

That God is a God. But it was a key relationship with sense. And therefore. Therefore. When we drift. And when we fade. And we wander. And we do all sorts of things.

He wants a relationship with you. So I wonder what your heart is like. Is it in that cool stage. That kind of compromise. Compromising stage.

The unbelieving stage. Are you in the drift? Because wonderfully this morning. You can come back. And you can walk in close. This fellowship. And joyful fellowship with him.

Because maybe you need to say to him. If your heart is keen to fellowship. And mine is not. Lord would you please help me. There is nothing. There is nothing.

[19 : 44] In all the world. That is more miserable. Than a backsliding Christian. There is nothing more miserable. Than a backsliding Christian.

And there is nothing more joyful. And nothing more fruitful. Than a person who is walking. With a heart drawn. Up to the Lord Jesus. Knowing that Jesus' heart. Is drawn down to him.

A God who relates. Thirdly. There is a God who ransoms. A God who ransoms. Here is the point of the tabernacle. And all the furniture of the tabernacle. There is a table.

There is a lamp stand. There are two altars. There is a priest. Who has got special clothes to wear. And all of this says to you. God ransoms. The ark of course.

There is a wooden box. It is coming in gold. On top of it. There is a golden lid. It is not a very big box. It is like your average. Kind of cardboard box. That you get. And it is made with wood.

[20 : 41] It is covered with gold. And there is a golden lid on top. And on the top. There are two cherubim. Two kind of angel figures. With wings. And in between. Is a seat. Called the mercy seat.

And God says. I will meet you there. Same time. Same place. Every year. It is a symbol of my presence. God says.

It is where I will meet with you. So the ark is very important. In the middle of the tabernacle. And then you have got the lamp. Stands. To give some light. Obviously. And then you have got the table. Which is where. The utensils were washed.

And you have got the altar. For sacrifices. It is a big altar. With a bronze top. And you have got the altar. For incense. Which is different. For thanksgiving. So it can be offered to God.

Thankfully for his mercy. And then you have got the priest. Standing there. Who has been carefully. Dressed. And very carefully prepared. For his role. In that particular world. Now I think. We can get very over familiar.

[21 : 36] With ransom. Can't we? I have sinned. Yes I have got forgiveness. We have got ransom. And I actually just want all my problems solved.

But it is good for us. Every now and again. To remember. That this ransom. Has come to us so freely. And so fully. And so where would we be without it? It is a very very sad thing.

When we meet some Christians. Who pretend that they know everything. And they care for nothing. And when it comes to this forgiveness. This ransom.

I want to ask you this morning. What would you do. If it was not available? So what would you do. If you came to see me this week. And you said. I've fallen. It's a terrible sin.

And I said. Well the Bible says. There's no forgiveness for that. Sorry. There is no answer. Sorry. You're going to have to carry that. Every day. Every week. Every year. For the rest of your life.

[22 : 35] That will kill you. There is no future for you. Apparently. There's a painting. In Washington DC. Of the prodigal son. And he's come home. But it's a very interesting picture.

The prodigal son. Has come home. To absolute desolation. There's no father. There's no welcome. There's no forgiveness. There's no ring on his finger.

There's no robes. There's no celebration. Because the prodigal son. Is bankrupt in the family. He's killed them off. He's destroyed them. And imagine. If we were clear.

And desperate. About our sin. And we came to God. And we say. God. I am asking. For forgiveness. And the answer comes back. There is nothing. That can be done. But the Bible tells us.

Gloriously. That we remind ourselves. Every Sunday morning. There is grace. And there is mercy. So abundant. That he is able to deal with. Whatever you've done. This week. And whatever you've said.

[23 : 33] This week. Whatever you've thought. This week. There is grace. To cover all our sin. And we have this tremendous gift. In the ransom of God. And it's all symbolised. In the furniture. In the middle of this tent.

These tent figures. Incidentally. It's the second time. Isn't it? We've dealt with the furniture. I don't know whether you've been reading. Through Exodus. But once you've kind of hit Exodus 25. It's not the best quiet time material.

Is it? 25 to 31. Furniture. Furniture. Furniture. Chapter 35 to 40. Furniture. Furniture. Furniture. Furniture. Unless you come. A big into interior decoration. These chapters are not going to mean. A great interior to you. Are they? Why are we being told twice. About the furniture? Well partly because it's vital information.

About forgiveness. It is partly because the Jews. Loved how things repeated. Important things repeated. They didn't have bold font. But mostly. We are being told.

[24 : 33] What God said to do. And then we are being told. That they do it. And that is not irrelevant. Just imagine.

The things that we hear. And sing in church. On Sunday by Sunday. We just went and did. That would revolutionise my life. On yours. And the people we mix with.

And our church itself. It's in the knowing. And the doing. Isn't it? And that is what we are watching. In Exodus. We are watching the knowing. And the doing. Which is so powerful.

So the tent is in place. The ark is in place. Symbolically. Where God dwells. The lampstand. Is lit up the tent. The altar. Is there for the offerings. The altar is there. For the instance.

And the priests. Are carefully prepared. And dressed. For their serious role. They've got bells. On the bottom of their hands. Do you know why. They've got bells. On their hands. Because when you walk.

[25 : 29] Into the Holy of Holies. You can hear them. Moving around. Other people know. They're still alive. And they've not been struck down. And if the bell stops. Ringing. Somebody's got to pull that rope.

That's around the ankle. Of the high priest. And pull them out. And on the headgear. On the headband. Of the high priest. Is written. Holy to the Lord. So it is a rich.

And a serious. And wonderful reminder. That God is a God. Who runs. And it was a very effective system. Because God planned it. But it didn't really atone. For sin. Did it? The Bible tells us.

In Hebrews 10. That you cannot pay. For human sin. With animal blood. The blood of bulls. And goats. And says. Hebrews 10. Just 10 verse 4. It just doesn't cover sin.

And that it's only when Jesus came. And lived a perfect life. And offered to do an exchange with sinners. And pay with his blood. And offer up his righteous self. That there is effective forgiveness.

[26 : 29] And that is when we can be completely set free. And as he set this offering of himself.

And God raised him up from the dead. And he entered into glory. The Bible says. He prays for his people.

He ever lives to pray for his people. And he's got sympathy with us. And he's able to save forever. He is the superior great high priest.

He's the ransom of one. Which is why in Mark 10. He says. I came. Not to be served. But I came to serve you. To give my life as a ransom for many.

For our God resides. He resides. Come to the last words. In the book of Exodus. Then the glory.

Then the clouds come at the tent of meeting. 14 verse 34. The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting. Because the clouds settled on it. And the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

[27 : 28] Throughout all their journeys. Whenever the cloud was taken up. Over the tabernacle.

The people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up. They would not set out. Till the day it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle.

By day. And fire was in it by night. In the sight of all the house of Israel. Throughout all their journeys. Do I need to remind you. That the cloud is a symbol of God's presence. The cloud going before them.

In the wilderness. The cloud settling on Mount Sinai. Jesus leaves on a cloud. He will come back on a cloud. And here unbelievably. The cloud of God comes down.

And enters the tent. It's a big tent. The size of this whole building cluster. But can you imagine that. The God of the universe. The God of the universe.

Into a tiny little tent. On a tiny little planet. In one of billions of galaxies. It's unbelievable. That he would do this. And he filled it.

[28 : 25] And you can't miss the point. Can you? Or the message. He comes down. Even though he is the God of the universe. And he fills the tent with glory. To the point where Moses doesn't even dare walk in anymore. And God decides whether they will stay.

Or whether they will move. And he shows himself to everyone. Of the Israelites. For the whole of their travels. And it's hard not to feel the force. Of the New Testament fulfillment here. Isn't it? We are told that those who are in Christ Jesus.

God by his Holy Spirit. Takes up residence. In his people. So Jesus says. Where two or three gather in my name. There I am.

By my spirit. In the midst of you. He says to the believer. In John chapter 14. The Holy Spirit will be in you forever. The residence of God. It's unbelievable.

He rules. He relates. He ransoms. He resides. And that's why it would be a great mistake. To read these verses.

[29 : 24] To say. Well that would stress all about furniture. Isn't it? Or to read it and say. Well I wonder what material I have. That I can give to the Lord. What sort of oil do you have? What sort of gifts do you have? That you can give to the Lord?

No. It's all about God. And so I want to close. By asking you some quick questions. Firstly. On the matter of God ruling. God rules all our days.

And rules all our ways. Or does he? So is there a part of your life. That is fighting his rule?

There may be a part of our lives. Where it is surrendered. A secret part of our life. Where you basically say to God. This is out of bounds. And if that is the situation you are in.

Let me tell you this. It is not. It is just not Christianity. Because the old saying goes. Which is very right. He is the Lord of all.

[30 : 23] Or he is not Lord at all. But every single part of us. However painful that may be. Has to be brought under the Lordship.

Of Jesus Christ. The rule of God. Secondly. Relating to his leading. The tent amidst this people.

Do you realise that Christianity. Is a two way relationship. That you can enjoy with God. Are you confident. Of his grace to you.

In the Lord Jesus. And the promises. And you were preaching this morning. And sincerely. Put your faith. In Christ.

He has come to relate to you. Do you know his grace to you. Are you enjoying that relationship.

Thirdly. God is a ransoming God.

[31 : 22] And he set up his altar. In the tabernacle of the Old Testament. And he has called.

Caused the Lord Jesus. To die on the cross. And so I want to ask you.

Since the Old Testament tabernacle. Has disappeared. Do you look to Christ. As your saviour. Your only hope. In life and death. Not only do you look on him.

As your saviour. But do you have peace. With God. Because of him. And the fourth question. Is this because God. Is a resigning God. And the cloud.

You imagine this movement. Of the cloud. Leaving the sky. And entering into the tabernacle. And that picture. Of the New Testament.

Of the Holy Spirit. Indwelling us. Is the presence of God. In your life real. You're able to say. By the grace of God.

[32 : 18] That the Holy Spirit. Has brought me. To an assurance. That I am at peace. With God.

And God is changing my life. Alright. Slowly. But God is changing my life. And he is directing my life.

And on the path of his word. That's real Christianity. Exodus. Exodus does not teach. Slavery to the promised land. That is a Bible theme.

But Exodus teaches. Slavery to God. And that is where. The Christian stands. In the world. We are slaves to God. You are not. In the promised land yet.

He will take us. One day to the promised land. But in the present. We are out of slavery. And we are in Christ Jesus. And because we are in Christ Jesus.

He is our ruler. And we relate to him. And he relates to us. And he has ransomed us. And we are forgiven. And he resides in us. By his Holy Spirit.

[33 : 17] We are in the magnificent position. Of having the whole. Of our journey changed. And all the parts of our life. Affected for good. Biblical Christianity.

Is no small thing. It is all or nothing. That's great. Thank you.