

The Shadow of Heavenly Glory

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Good morning, it's good to be back with you guys. Whenever you travel, it's nice to come home and not live out of the suitcase anymore and sleep on your own bed and stuff, but even more than that, it's so good to be back with my church family to worship with you all.

Just from times hearing people pray during the pre-service prayer and hearing your singing, worshipping together, my heart's already full, and I'm very encouraged from this morning.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Sean. I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church, and if you would please turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 39. We will be there for our service this morning.

If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to bring you a copy that you can use and that you can take home with you if you'd like. We'll be in Exodus 39, starting in verse 32, going all the way to the end of the book, actually.

We are done with Exodus today. Exodus 39 to 40.

[1 : 08] We're in the, I know some of you guys are probably wondering, we were in chapter 34 last week, but we're doing chapters 39 and 40 this week. That's because we already covered chapters 35 to 39, which detailed the construction of the tabernacle along with the instructions that were given for the construction of the tabernacle because they repeat each other almost word for word.

And so that's why we're actually not skipping it. We've already covered it, and we're going to chapter 39 today. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do long for your glory.

To be filled more and more with your Holy Spirit. To be controlled more and more by your word. To be used more and more by your power.

To proclaim your name. To be conformed to the image of Christ. We long for more of you, Father. And as we've been singing, as we've been praying this morning, we cry out for more of you now. Meet with us. Speak to us. Change us. As you promised in your word, as we exhort one another and address one another with singing, as the word of Christ dwells more richly in us, you said we would be filled with your spirit.

[2 : 50] So do that now. Now. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. If you are willing and able, please stand for the reading of God's word from Exodus 39, 32 to 40, 38.

Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished. And the people of Israel did according to all that the Lord had commanded Moses. So they did. Then they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its utensils, its hooks, its frames, its bars, its pillars, and spaces.

The covering of tanned ram skins and goat skins and the veil of the screen. The ark of the testimony with its poles and the mercy seat. The table with all its utensils and the bread of the presence.

The lampstand of pure gold and its lamps with the lamp set and all its utensils and the oil for the light. The golden altar, the anointing oil, and the fragrant incense.

[4 : 00] And the screen for the entrance of the tent. The bronze altar and its grating of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils. The basin and its stand, the hangings of the court, its pillars and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the court.

Its cords and its pegs and all the utensils for the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting.

The finely worked garments for ministering in the holy place. The holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons for their service as priests.

According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses, so the people of Israel had done all the work. And Moses saw all the work and behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded.

So had they done it. Then Moses blessed them. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, On the first day of the first month, you shall erect the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.

And you shall put in it the ark of the testimony, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. And you shall bring in the table and arrange it, and you shall bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps.

[5 : 05] And you shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. You shall set the altar of burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and place the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it.

And you shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen for the gate of the court. Then you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its furniture, so that it may become holy.

You shall also anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, so that the altar may become most holy. You shall also anoint the basin and its stand and consecrate it.

Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shall wash them with water, and put on Aaron the holy garments. And you shall anoint him and consecrate him, that he may serve me as priest.

You shall bring his sons also and put coats on them, and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests. And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations.

[6 : 10] This Moses did according to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did. In the first month, in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected.

Moses erected the tabernacle. He laid its basis and set up its frames and put in its poles and raised up its pillars. And he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent over it, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

He took the testimony and put it into the ark and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark, and he brought the ark into the tabernacle and set up the veil of the screen and screened the ark of the testimony as the Lord had commanded Moses.

He put the table in the tent of meeting on the north side of the tabernacle outside the veil and arranged the bread on it before the Lord as the Lord had commanded Moses. He put the lampstand in the tent of meeting opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle and set up the lamps before the Lord as the Lord had commanded Moses.

He put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil and burned fragrant incense on it as the Lord had commanded Moses. He put in place the screen for the door of the tabernacle and he set the altar of burnt offering at the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting and offered on it the burnt offering and the grain offering as the Lord had commanded Moses.

[7 : 32] Moses, he set the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it for washing with which Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet. When they went into the tent of meeting and when they approached the altar they washed as the Lord commanded Moses and he erected the court around the tabernacle and the altar and set up the screen of the gate of the court so Moses finished the work.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle and Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle the people of Israel would set out but if the cloud was not taken up then they did not set out till the day that 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.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. Most people associate the book of Exodus only with the story of Israel's Exodus from Egypt with the ten plagues the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea but that dramatic escape from slavery in Egypt was over at chapter 14 25 chapters ago.

[9 : 08] The book did not end there but has continued to this point because Israel's slavery in Egypt was not the ultimate drama of the book. There is still deeper more fundamental drama going

on in this book.

Israel's slavery in Egypt was merely a symptom of their exile from the presence of God due to Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden. Escaping Egypt and crossing the Red Sea is great but until Israel's separation from the presence of God is addressed this drama is not resolved.

So our passage this morning brings that drama to its fitting climactic conclusion. Similarly for us much like the lives of the Israelites our lives are also full of much drama.

Most of you can probably think of a conflict or a problem in your life off the top of your head.

Psychologically we deal with anxiety panic attacks various mental illnesses depression bipolar disorder gender dysphoria socially we deal with wars and rumors of wars overseas prejudice and injustice on the streets bullying on the screens loneliness and abuse in our homes even physically we deal with various pains and sicknesses like arthritis diabetes pinched nerves migraines cancer and even natural disasters like droughts and wildfires and earthquakes and storms but all of these problems in our lives and in our world are symptoms they are ramifications of a central underlying drama and then that drama namely is humanity's sin and humanity has consequence separation from God and the fall of the world in general as a result of it it's because the world is not rightly ordered in its relationship to God that there's so much disorder in it and chaos in it it's tempting to think that all our problems are due to that sickness or that toxic individual or that stubborn mental problem but the most fundamental problem that we must address is the problem that lies at the root of all our problems it's sin and its consequence separation our separation from God and this passage offers us a solution to that and brings this drama to a conclusion this passage teaches us that we are newly created as the tabernacle for God's glory by the atoning work of Jesus Christ tabernacle is just the word for tent the dwelling place for God and I'm going to talk first about the new creation then about the new tabernacle and finally about the new mediator the first section of this passage that we read in chapter 39 verses 32 to 43 it begins with this summary statement that all the work of the tabernacle of the tent and meeting was finished and the people of Israel did according to all that the Lord had commanded

Moses and then in verse 43 that same section ends with the same summary in verse 42 according to all that the Lord had commanded Moses so the people of Israel had done all the work the fact that Moses and the Israelites completed the work of building the tabernacle exactly according to the specifications that God had given them is something that will be repeated and highlighted all throughout chapter 40 as we read this is because earlier in chapter 25 verse 9 God had said to Moses exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and all of its furniture so you shall make it God showed Moses the blueprint on Mount Sinai the pattern of the tabernacle and Moses was supposed to supervise the work to ensure that it was built exactly according to that blueprint and that's because the earthly tabernacle as Hebrews 8 5 tells us is intended to be a copy and a shadow of the heavenly tabernacle the dwelling place of God so the tabernacle is almost like a miniature replica a scale model of the heavenly reality this is why the Israelites are to follow the instructions given by God to a T this is why

[13 : 51] Moses takes seven chapters to relay specific instructions concerning the tabernacle and then he takes them another six chapters to relay to follow those instructions painstakingly word for word and build the tabernacle this conveys the truth that the tabernacle is not an invention it's not an innovation but an imitation of the heavenly dwelling place of God people say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery when you can improve on something then you innovate but when you cannot improve on something you imitate it God is the architect and the designer and the engineer behind the tabernacle Moses is merely the project manager and the Israelites are merely the construction workers the construction worker does not get to go off script and alter the design of the house that they have received from the architect and the engineer likewise

God is the originator God is the creator and the Israelites must remember that they are servants doing the Lord's bidding that's the point that is being driven home these verses also emphasize the importance of obedience in general Moses and the Israelites had to do all that the Lord had commanded them the same is true for us James 2 verse 10 says whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it you don't have to break every law of the land in order to become a lawbreaker you only have to break one to be fined or jailed or otherwise punished as a lawbreaker God's law is an interdependent whole that has a single author and lawgiver behind it it's not like if you break law one point A then you offend person A but if you break law one point

By you offend person B because there's only one author and one lawgiver one authority behind it if you break one part of the law if you fail at one point then you offend the living God and you have broken the whole you have become guilty just as one drop of black ink in a clear glass of water contaminates the whole sin one sin brings guilt and condemnation this truth has two very important implications for us as Christians one is that we should strive to obey all that God has commanded us we don't have the luxury to pick and choose the commands we like and commands we don't like that's not our prerogative we are servants and we have to do all that the master has commanded this God his way is perfect the word of the Lord proves true so as Christians we have to strive to obey everything that God has commanded every word because we are servants who ought to do all that the master has commanded this God his way is perfect the word of the Lord proves true we can't improve upon God's word whenever we veer away from the commandments of God big or small we are falling short of his glory and hurting ourselves so are we living in submission and surrender

Jesus says in Matthew 5:48 you therefore must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect for it is written it says in Galatians 3:10 curse be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them God does not grade on a curve life is either a pass or a fail and passing grade is perfection so don't settle for being a somewhat obedient Christian or an above average Christian you should imitate Christ work hard to become more like Christ in every way and seek to obey God in everything but we have to remember that truth with a second truth because if not we would be depressed and dejected because God's standard is perfection and we have all fallen short of that we must rely not on our own righteousness but on the perfect righteousness of Jesus for our salvation

Hebrews 10:14 says that by a single offering Jesus has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified we must not delude ourselves into thinking that we can be good enough for God on our own accord that we can meet his standards with our own good works we are atoned by Jesus' death and justified by his resurrection apart from the perfect righteousness of Christ being imputed to us we have no hope of salvation so repetition of the summary statement that the people of Israel did according to all that the Lord had commanded Moses highlights the importance of obedience but these summary statements also serve another function in chapter 39 verse 32 it says thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tenth meeting was finished which is similar to Genesis 2:1 referring to God's seventh day of creation thus the heavens and the earth were finished if that were the only parallel we probably wouldn't think that it's an intentional allusion but there's more verses 42-43 say this according to all that the Lord had commanded Moses so the people of Israel had done all the work and Moses saw all the work and behold they had done it as the Lord had commanded so had they done it then Moses blessed them similarly it says in Genesis 1:31 [19:53] God saw everything he had made and behold it was very good in Genesis 2:3 he says God blessed the seventh day Moses seeing and then beholding and then blessing followed the sequence of God's actions at the end of his creative work after seven days of creation in this way the construction of the tabernacle is patterned after the creation of the world and serves as a type of a new creation that points to the ultimate new creation in Jesus Christ the tabernacle is a step toward unbroken fellowship that Adam and Eve once enjoyed at the beginning of the created world the new creation motif has surfaced several times already throughout this book through the use of the number seven which mirrors the seven days of creation the feast of unleavened bread was to be observed for seven days and the Passover celebrated on the seventh day Israelites were to observe the seventh day of rest the Sabbath day just as God rested on the seventh day they were to let the land rest and lie fallow on the seventh year and also on the seventh year they were to emancipate all of their Hebrew slaves free them from their work and when the glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai the cloud it said covered the cloud of God's glory covered it six days and on the seventh day

God called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud there were seven lamps on the golden lampstand within the tabernacle and the consecration and ordination of priests took seven days in addition to all of this I mentioned several weeks ago that throughout the tabernacle narrative we find the phrase the Lord said to Moses exactly seven times six times it is connected to various instructions regarding the tabernacle but on the seventh time it's connected to the Lord's instruction regarding the Sabbath interestingly enough in chapter 40 verses 16 to 32 after the summary statement in verse 16 it says that this this Moses did according to all that the Lord had commanded him the

phrase as the Lord commanded as the Lord had commanded Moses also occurs exactly seven times throughout the narrative forming another parallel so all of this is also similar to how in Genesis 8:13 after the flood of judgment of the sinful world

God brings about the waters to recede and that happened on the first day of the first month new creations surfaced from the flood judgment on the first day of the first month and not surprisingly in Exodus 40 verse 2 it is on the first day of the first month that the tabernacle is set up it's erected because the old creation is fallen God is bringing about a new creation where he will have unbroken fellowship with his people once again the tabernacle points to the ultimate new creation that is brought to fulfillment by Jesus it says in Galatians 6:14 to 15 that the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ brings about a new creation 2 Corinthians 5:17 says therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation the old has passed away behold the new has come from the destruction and debris of our own sinful lives God brings forth a new creation for us so for those of you who are discouraged and dejected from the sin in your own life if you're not yet a Christian and wondering if God can make something of your life he can he can bring about a new creation in your own life and make you a new tabernacle for his presence speaking of the tabernacle after Moses finishes setting it up it says in chapter 40 verse 34 then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle when Yahweh the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai in Exodus 24 to confirm the covenant that he had made with Israel the same language was used to describe the appearance of God he said that the cloud covered the mountains in the same way that the cloud now covers the tabernacle it also says that the glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai in the same way that the glory of the Lord now filled the tabernacle the filling here represents the indwelling of the tent of meeting God himself coming to dwell there make it his dwelling place so the tabernacle represents the new portable Mount Sinai it's a miniature portable Mount Sinai that's going to now travel with Israelites God has now moved into the Israelite camp if you recall from chapter 33 prior to the completion of the tabernacle or the tent of meeting the Israelites had another more temporary tent of meeting to which Moses would go to meet with the Lord a distinguishing feature of that temporary tent of meeting was that it was outside the camp far away from the camp at that point that signified that Yahweh was inaccessible to the Israelites he could not come into their sinful camp but now that the tabernacle has been completed and some of the sacrifices have been offered the God himself enters the tent and dwells in it previously at the tent of meeting the temporary tent of meeting Moses went into the tent and God spoke to him from the outside by the entrance but now it's the Lord who himself enters the tent to the tabernacle previously the temporary tent was far away from the camp but now the tabernacle is at the very center at the middle of all surrounded by all the other tents of the Israelites so this represents progress in Israel's relationship with Yahweh it's a new level of intimacy and communion then verses 36 to 38 give us more detail about what the disappearance of God in a cloud was like throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle the people of Israel would set out but if the cloud was not taken up then they did not set out till the day that 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 once again as we have seen numerous times throughout Exodus the cloud of the Lord is associated with the fire of the Lord even in chapter 24 when the Lord descended upon

[26:42] Mount Sinai it said that the cloud covered the mountains but then the appearance of the glory of the Lord it said was like a devouring fire on top of the mountain the cloud of glory that is filling the tabernacle is probably the same as that cloud and fire the same as the pillar of fire and cloud that we saw earlier in Israel's wilderness journey it said in Exodus 13:21-22 and the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light that they might travel by day and by night the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people if you were here with us when we were preaching in Exodus 13 you know this already people often think of these two pillars as two different pillars but they're actually one and the same pillar because it tells us in Exodus 14 that the pillar of cloud was what was lighting up the night and so in Exodus 14:24 it says that the

Lord was in the pillar of fire and of cloud a singular pillar of fire and cloud it's the one and the same pillar during the day and during the night but during the day it's the cloud that is the most visible and during the night it's the fire that is the most visible so it's probably a column of fire with plumage of smoke emanating from it so it's not wrong to describe the pillar of smoke as a pillar of cloud because after all they're made up of the same thing it's water vapors sticking to dust and particles in

the air so really smoke is just dirtier or darker cloud and so the pillar of cloud and fire represents the very presence of God of that that never leaves the Israelites when the cloud remained on the tabernacle the Israelites camped but when the cloud lifted and departed they followed the cloud and let the cloud lead them on their journey by day or by night in cloud and fire the Lord dwelled with his people and in this way he led them throughout all their journeys all the way to the promised land that this tabernacle reveals the way God intends to relate to his people and to relate to us he's not in some remote place far away he's nearby nor is there a time in the day or a day in the year when he takes a break or goes off duty

God is with us by day and by night vigilantly watching over us and intimately caring for us God desires communion with us as the chorus of the hymn in the garden says he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own and the joy we share as we tarry there none other has ever known in order to walk ever more closely with us God sent his only son Jesus to dwell among us and it's in Jesus that we see the embodiment of the pillar of cloud and fire this manifestation of God Jesus is the one who baptizes us with spirit and fire it says in Luke 3:16 just as in the old testament when the tabernacle was completed the cloud covered it and his glory filled it just as when Solomon later completes the temple of the Lord the cloud covered it and his glory filled it when

Jesus glory as the son of God is briefly unveiled at the transfiguration it says in Luke 9:34 that a cloud that a cloud came and overshadowed them it covers them and after his resurrection and ascension when Jesus sends his holy spirit to his people in Acts 2:3 what appears is divided tongues as a fire resting on each of the believers the God who indwelt the tabernacle as the cloud and fire now dwells in us as God's people in Jesus through the holy spirit the God who filled the tabernacle now fills us as his people because we as the people of God are the ultimate tabernacle the dwelling place of God that's why in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19 we are described as God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in us and that's why we are commanded in Ephesians 5:18 to be filled with the spirit so do you aspire to be filled with the spirit more and more do you seek to manifest the glory of God in our lives more and more if we live in obedience in submission to God and if we are directed and led by his spirit and we become more and more like

Christ in the same way that the tabernacle displayed the glory of God to the watching world we too would display the glory of God to our neighbors we too would proclaim the name of Christ we should not be like the rest of the world that is not the dwelling place of God in this special sense we should be set apart for him consecrated to him distinguished from it by our obedience and allegiance to him how differently would we live if we live with daily awareness that we are the very dwelling place of the living God but the book of Exodus presents us with a problem at its conclusion and it ends with a cliffhanger it tells us in verse 35 Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle it's easy to overlook this but this is kind of a big problem remember

[32 : 39] Moses is the privileged prophet with whom the Lord would speak face to face as a man speaks to his friend if Moses their mediator the one guy who didn't commit idolatry like the rest of the Israelites cannot enter the tent of meeting when the Lord is present there how are any of the Israelites supposed to meet with God how are any of God's people supposed to have communion and fellowship with God thankfully Exodus is not the last book that Moses wrote and in the sequel the book of Leviticus Moses spends seven chapters describing the various sacrifices that the Israelites were to offer the burnt offerings the grain offerings the peace offerings the sin offerings and the guilt offerings and then he describes the elaborate seven day process of consecrating and ordaining Aaron and his sons as priests so even though in verses 29 to 31 of our chapter Moses offers some offerings and they do wash their hands and feet the priest candidates this is not the full process instituted by God for their consecration and ordination before they can enter the tent of meeting it is only after in Leviticus

Aaron offers his sin offering and burnt offering and makes atonement for himself and for the people that as it says in Leviticus 9:23 to 24 Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting and when they came out they blessed the people and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people this cliffhanger in Exodus points to the necessity of atoning sacrifice before people can enter into God's presence and have fellowship with him even the priests even Moses and Aaron needed to make atonement for their sins and not once but they had to do this repeatedly because of their weaknesses and because of their sinfulness but this atoning sacrifice of the high priest points to the

ultimate atoning work of Jesus our great high priest it says in Hebrews 7 27 that Jesus has no need like those high priests to offer sacrifices daily first for his own sins and then for those of the people sins he did this once for all when he offered up himself brothers and sisters this is why we don't need to offer sacrifices this is why we don't bring goats and bulls to our worship this is why none of us who put his faith in Jesus has to perish because Christ's blood has been shed on our behalf so this is the amazing grace of God here that even though the Israelites just a few chapters ago they all prostituted themselves with idols and worshipped the golden calf in the place of the living God God graciously forgives them and God gives them a process to be able to enter into their into his presence again and because that pointed ultimately to the grace that we'll receive and the mercy that we'll receive in Jesus in his sacrifice our only chance this is our only chance no matter how hard we try to live a good life even if we were to put together all of our righteousness and all of our good deeds in this room together it would not suffice our only chance of being in relationship with God living in harmony with him and being in fellowship with him again is through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross because Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for sin because Jesus defeated sin and death and was raised from the dead we can be forgiven we can enter into the holy of holies live with God walk with him hear from him and be filled indwelt by the very spirit of God the very presence of God and it's my prayer for you all this morning that we will all be filled more and more with that glory and with that spirit so we can live in conformity to Christ and his will let me pray for us together heavenly father thank you for not giving up on us for persistently pursuing us in your love for sending your only son

Jesus for deigning to make us sanctifying us as your dwelling place Lord help us as a church not to take that privilege for granted but to live holy lives set apart for you knowing what what privilege we've been given to be filled with the spirit of God to walk with you to commune with you the almighty God Lord renew a sense of wonder in our hearts and fill us more and more with your glory that we might be the radiance of your glory in this world that we might point people all around us to the glory that is found in Jesus so that you might be glorified more and more in our midst thank you for meeting with us and for being here with us now in Jesus name we pray amen