

How We All Can Contribute

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 25. We are entering the final section in the book of Exodus where it talks about the building, the instructions for the tabernacle and the actual construction of the tabernacle.

And it takes extended time to describe the specific dimensions of and the furnishings within the tabernacle. And then it spends more chapters later on describing almost in identical words, verbatim, that they did exactly what they were told to do.

And so we're gonna actually cover those two parts together and I'm gonna explain why it's repeated in the text as we go through this final section together. So we're gonna look at Exodus 25 verses one to nine and then Exodus 35 verses four to 29.

And then lastly, we're gonna look at Exodus 38 verses 21 to 31. So please have your Bibles open and ready to kind of flip through and follow along.

And let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, we want to lay aside our distractions.

[1 : 13] This morning, some of us are distracted by things that happen this week. Some of us are distracted by what's gonna happen later today or later this week.

And some of us are distracted with service here during our worship. But Lord, right now, as we come to your word, we want to sit at your feet and we want to listen.

We want to hear from you. So help us to incline our ears and our hearts as you speak to us from your word that we might stand in awe of you and your glory, that we might rejoice and delight in the great grace you have shown us in coming to dwell among us.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you are able, please stand for the reading of God's word.

I'm gonna first read Exodus 25, 1 to 9. The Lord said to Moses, Speak to the people of Israel that they take for me a contribution.

[2 : 30] From every man whose heart moves him, you shall receive the contribution for me. And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them, gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goat's hair, tanned ram skins, goat skins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones and stones for setting for the ephod and for the breast piece.

And let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

Going ahead to Exodus 35, 4 to 29. Moses said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, This is the thing that the Lord has commended.

Take from among you a contribution to the Lord. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the Lord's contribution, gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goat's hair, tanned ram skins and goat skins, acacia wood, oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, and onyx stones and stones for setting for the ephod and for the breast piece.

Let every skillful craftsman among you come and make all that the Lord has commanded. The tabernacle, its tent and its covering, its hooks and its frames, its bars, its pillars and its bases.

[4 : 09] The ark with its poles, the mercy seat and the veil of the screen. The table with its poles and all its utensils and the bread of the presence. The lampstand also for the light with its utensils and its lamps and the oil for the light and the altar of incense with its poles and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense and the screen for the door at the door of the tabernacle.

The altar of burnt offering and with 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.

The pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the court and their cords. 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.

Then all the congregation of the people of Israel departed from the presence of Moses and they came, everyone whose heart stirred 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 garments.

So they came, both man and woman, all who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects, every man dedicating an offering of gold to the Lord.

[5 : 32] And everyone who possessed blue or purple or scarlet yarns or fine linen or goat's hair or tanned ram skins or goat skins brought them. Everyone who could make a contribution of silver or bronze brought it as the Lord's contribution.

And everyone who possessed acacia wood of any use in the work brought it. And every skillful woman spun with her hands and they all brought what they had spun in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen.

All the women whose heart stirred them to use their skill spun the goat's hair. And the leaders brought onyx stones and stones to be set for the ephod and for the breast piece and spices and oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense.

All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done, brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord.

And finally, chapter 38, verses 21 to 31. These are the records of the tabernacle. The tabernacle of the testimony as they were recorded at the commandment of Moses.

[6 : 49] The responsibility of the Levites under the direction of Ethamar, the son of Aaron the priest, Bezalel, the son of Uri, son of Hur of the tribe of Judah, made all that the Lord commanded Moses.

And with him was Oholiab, the son of Ahisamak of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and designer and embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twisted linen.

All the gold that was used for the work in all the construction of the sanctuary, the gold from the offering was 29 talents and 730 shekels by the shekel of the sanctuary.

The silver from those of the congregation who were recorded was 100 talents and 1,775 shekels by the shekel of the sanctuary. A becca, a head, that is half a shekel by the shekel of the sanctuary for everyone who was listed in the records from 20 years old and upward for 603,550 men.

The 100 talents of silver were forecasting the basis of the sanctuary and the basis of the veil. A hundred basis for the 100 talents, a talent, a base. And of the 1,775 shekels, he made hooks for the pillars and overlaid their capitals and made fillets for them.

[8 : 03] The bronze that was offered was 70 talents and 2,400 shekels. With it, he made the basis for the entrance of the tent of meeting, the bronze altar and the bronze grating for it and all the utensils of the altar, the bases around the court and the basis of the gate of the court, all the pegs of the tabernacle and all the pegs around the court.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. You guys were very patient through a longer reading. We've been in our sermon series in the book of Exodus for exactly a year as of last week.

And of course, we took some breaks here and there for a sermon series through Advent and Christmas and with guest preachers and whatnot. And when we first began the series, I'd mentioned to you that chapters 1 to 18 tell us about the salvation of the Lord, the deliverance of the Israelites, the Exodus.

And then chapters 19 to 24 tell us about the law of the Lord, the 10 commandments and the book of the covenant that we've been going through over the last two months or so, a few months or so.

And then finally, chapters 25 to 40, which is where we're at, tell us about the presence of the Lord, where Israel follows God's detailed instructions for the construction of the tabernacle so that God may dwell in their midst.

[9 : 22] This last section of Exodus is the part that preachers are often tempted to skip for, I think, reasons that are probably apparent to you.

They worry that the repetitive section with its seemingly tedious details about the tabernacle would bore their listeners. But the final section of Exodus is actually an indispensable and fitting conclusion to the book as a whole.

Throughout the narratives of the Exodus in chapters 7 to 10, the Lord repeatedly said, let my people go. And there was a purpose for that, that they may serve me.

And that's why the Lord freed the Israelites from slavery so that they might serve him. That's why some theologians prefer to call this not emancipation, but repatriation.

They're taking one master, a cruel, harsh master in Egypt, to a gracious and benevolent master in Yahweh, the Lord. And so God, the serving God and worshiping God is the direction in which the all of Exodus has been pointing.

[10 : 32] And now that's where we are. Finally, the people are now getting to serve the Lord, to worship the Lord. This is really not an afterthought or an appendix. It's the climax of the book of Exodus.

And the theological significance of the tabernacle is highlighted by just how many chapters in the book are dedicated to this subject. By comparison, it took only one chapter to tell us about 80 years of Moses' life.

It took only one chapter to give us the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. Even when you count the subsequent book of the covenant, that's still only five chapters. The entire Exodus narrative from the time Moses and Aaron first confront Pharaoh to the crossing of the Red Sea took nine chapters.

That climactic event of divine deliverance in the Old Testament is told in nine chapters. But this book devotes 13 chapters for the construction of the tabernacle.

Chapters 25 to 31 is the blueprint, seven chapters. And then there's a break in chapters 32 to 34 due to Israel's idolatry and the worship of the golden calf. And then in the chapters 35 to 40 is the actual building of the tabernacle over six more chapters.

[11 : 51] So 13 chapters in total. And that makes us ask, why so much emphasis on all these hooks and frames and bars and poles and pegs and cords and linens and curtains?

Well, because it's not just a tent. The word tabernacle comes from the Latin word that means tent.

So it is a tent. But when the word in the Hebrew Bible is translated as tabernacle, it actually means the dwelling place.

That's what the word is translating. Every time it says tabernacle, it's not just saying tent. It's saying the dwelling. The dwelling place of God. And so it's called sometimes the tent of meeting because it's where the Israelites would convene with God, meet with Him.

And so this is a significant development in the biblical narrative because we know from Genesis that Adam and Eve had enjoyed communion with God in the garden.

[13 : 02] And it says in Genesis chapter 3 that God sometimes even walked in the garden. They enjoyed fellowship with Him. But because they sinned against God and ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil that they were forbidden to eat from, they were cut off from the tree of life in the midst of the garden and then expelled from the garden.

Ever since then, humanity has been living in exile from the presence of God. And this question has hung over all of Scripture up to this point. Can God's people ever be reconciled to God?

Can we ever be restored to His presence again? Will God ever dwell with us again? And the tabernacle is God's temporary but gracious yes to that question.

And it points to God's ultimate answer to that question in Jesus Christ. That God does intend to dwell with His people again. And remarkably, we learn from this passage that not only does He intend to do that, the Lord invites us to give to and work for the construction of His very dwelling place among us.

And we're going to explore that in three phases. First, we're going to look at the loftiness of God's dwelling. Secondly, the lowliness of God's dwelling. And third, the costliness of the people's offering.

[14 : 28] So let's first look at the loftiness of God's dwelling. Exodus 25, verses 8 to 9 clearly tell us what the tabernacle is meant to be.

The Lord says, And let them make me a sanctuary that I might dwell in their midst, exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

This tent that they are to build for the Lord is a sanctuary, which is derived from the Latin word that means holy. It's a consecrated place. That's why the inner tent of the tabernacle is called the holy place.

It's divided into two rooms, the holy place and the most holy place. In the Old Testament, sometimes a guilty fugitive ran to the sanctuary or the temple in order to kind of plead guilty and seek clemency.

It was their way of seeking asylum. And it's because of that association with the sanctuary that the word sanctuary is nowadays often used to mean a refuge or a shelter. But its original meaning is simply a holy place, a place that is set apart.

[15 : 38] It's not an ordinary place, a place that is uncommon, a special place that's unlike any other. And the tabernacle is one such place. It's set apart by its design and by its building material.

So before starting the construction, of course, you need to gather all the required materials. And that's what God instructs Moses to do. So in chapter 25, verses 3 to 7, we see this list.

It says, this is the contribution that you shall receive from them, gold, silver, and bronze. So again, those are precious metals that have been prized through centuries, through millennia, because of their luster and because of their rarity.

And even now, even nowadays, during financial downturns, investors often put their money in gold because gold is more likely to retain its value than dollar.

And so the gold will be used for the furnishings within the tabernacle proper, the holy place and the most holy place. The ark, the mercy seat, the cover for the ark, the cherubim attached to that, as well as the altar of incense and the pillars inside the tabernacle will be all overlaid with gold.

[16 : 49] And then, according to Exodus 38 to 27, 31, which we read earlier, silver will be used for the bases of the pillars in the tabernacle and for the capitals and the fillets and hooks of the pillars in the courtyard.

And then bronze will be used for the bases and for the bronze altar and the bronze basin in the courtyard of the tabernacle. Why is this relevant? There are levels, there's a gradation within the tabernacle structure which sets God apart as holy.

It's almost like the tabernacle has three stories. The land outside the courtyard is just dirt, but the courtyard is made up of bronze materials.

And the top tip of the courtyard is made of silver. The rest of it underneath is made of bronze. So if you go further in, then the bottom of the pillars surrounding the actual tabernacle of the tent is made of silver.

And then the rest of it above it is gold. And then once you step into the tabernacle, everything you see is gold. So there's a gradation. You should get closer to the most holy place, to the holy place, the more royal and exquisite and beautiful it gets.

[18 : 05] And the further away you get from that place, the more common and ordinary it gets. the idea is reinforcing the important fact that God is holy, set apart.

He is the sovereign ruler of the universe before whom we should stand in awe and pay homage. Let's return to 2537 and look at the rest of the building materials.

In addition to gold, silver, and bronze, which was given in order of descending significance or value, we also get blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twine linen, which is again listed in descending order of value.

The colored yarns were very expensive and rare in those days because this is before the invention of synthetic dyes. So dyes had to be extracted from natural sources and in this region of the world they would have to rely on sea mollusks like clams and they would have to get plant barks and leaves and berries or precious minerals to get the color that they want.

So think about the long and painstaking labor that would be required to extract even modest amounts of dye, let alone enough to dye, enough to color an entire skin of yarn.

[19 : 26] Skin of yarn. So the next items listed are goat's hair, tanned ram skins and goat skins, which I'll talk more about when we get to them. And these are the next three layers of coverings for the tabernacle.

So first the colored yarns and the fine twine linen and then goat's hair, tanned ram skin and then what this translation says goat skins. I won't go into these details for now but it's sufficient to note that this tabernacle doesn't have a single flimsy rain fly like my tent.

It has three hefty, durable covers over the blue and purple and scarlet yarn. So four total layers of covering. The next few items are acacia wood which is known for its hardness and durability.

It's even stronger than oak. And then the oil for the lamp, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense. The spices are specifically described in Exodus 30 as the finest spices including myrrh, sweet smelling cinnamon, aromatic cane, acacia and olive oil.

These are ingredients that are still used nowadays in perfumes and so it would fill the tabernacle with sweet aromas that are perhaps even therapeutic as you would smell it that would set the tabernacle apart from the common orders of life that you're used to smelling with your animals and with your sweaty self.

[20 : 49] So it's being set apart not only visually but also in your olfactory sense it's being set apart as a holy place like no other. And finally verse 7 adds onyx stones and stones for setting for the ephod and for the breast piece.

I won't get into this now but these are precious stones of great value that will be used as attached to the garb of the priests and of the high priest.

And so all that to say the rare and costly materials used for the construction of the tabernacle show that it was designed to be beautiful, designed to be glorious, so that it might be a sanctuary, a holy place for Yahweh so that the Lord is not cheapened before the eyes of his people.

Everything about this place screams royalty, it screams sovereignty, majesty, and according to Numbers 2 the entire Israelite camp was arranged around the tabernacle, the tabernacle at the center, three tribes to the north, three to the south, three to the east, three to the west.

The king residing at the center of his people, of his loyal subjects, reigning over them. And this is a lesson for the Israelites. God is not to be regarded lightly.

[22 : 09] He is among you, but he is not like you. He is holy. He is set apart. Listen to him.

Obey him. The specific instructions for the tabernacle also tell us the importance of strict adherence to God's commands. Notice what God says to Moses in chapter 25, verse 9.

Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. The tabernacle is supposed to be built exactly the way the instruction says.

The same thing is repeated in Exodus 25, 40, and quoting that verse, Hebrews 8, 5 says this, the priests serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.

For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God saying, see that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.

[23 : 11] The tabernacle, God's earthly dwelling place, is a copy. It's a shadow of the reality, which is God's heavenly dwelling. For example, Psalm 11, 4 speaks of how the Lord is in his holy temple and the Lord's throne is in heaven.

And in John's vision of God's throne in Revelation 11, 19, it says, then God's temple in heaven was opened and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple.

There is in heaven itself a temple for the Lord and it's complete with its own ark of the covenant of which the earthly temple and its ark is merely a copy, a shadow.

So Moses on the top of Mount Sinai got to see this, glimpse this temple of God, this heavenly temple. He saw the archetype of God's dwelling place and now he's commissioned to build an earthly copy according to that pattern.

So you can think of the tabernacle in a way like almost like a miniature, a scale model, representative replica of the heavenly reality. The temple that Solomon built for God in Jerusalem is no longer standing, it's been destroyed but in Jerusalem they do have a scale model of the temple which is helpful for letting people see what it would have looked like.

[24 : 37] I mean, it's a lot smaller but what would it have looked like in this day and time and also to show them that this is a real thing, it really used to exist, this is a copy of the original and that's the purpose of the tabernacle.

It tells us that there's a real thing out there. This is just a copy. It's a shadow of reality and this is why it's so important for that the Israelites follow the blueprint to a T.

That's why there are seven chapters of painstaking instructions and then another six chapters to tell us that they did exactly according to the pattern shown to Moses on the mountain. There is no room for creative license here because God's people must know that God's dwelling place is real and that it is not a figment of Moses' imagination.

The tabernacle is a replication not an innovation and that's why it is beautiful and glorious. It resembles God's heavenly temple, dwelling place.

So in this way the loftiness of God's dwelling place communicates His glory but the relative lowliness of God's dwelling communicates His grace. The tabernacle was a splendid tent but it was still a tent.

[25 : 57] It was merely a copy of the heavenly reality. How can the Lord God Yahweh stoop to such a level to inhabit that?

the Lord commissioned the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 25 8 saying that I may dwell in their midst.

That's an amazing statement. God is not merely visiting or stopping by the Israelites. He is moving into the neighborhood. As I mentioned earlier the word tabernacle is a translation of the word that literally means the dwelling.

It's where God will take residence. But think about that for a moment. Last time I went camping my tent collapsed twice before I was able to actually put it up properly.

It was pretty flimsy. When we think of the most royal and glamorous accommodations we do not think of tents. No matter how glorious it is the tabernacle is still a portable shelter used for camping in the wilderness.

[27 : 10] That's why later in 2 Samuel 7 2 David laments to Nathan the prophet see now I dwell in a house of cedar but the ark of God dwells in a tent.

So he realized that there is a gross incongruity there and he sets out right away to make preparations for the building of God's temple and it's his son Solomon that completes that task and even Solomon after finishing building the temple which is grander than the tabernacle and twice as big in all its proportions 1 Kings 8 27 he says this but will God indeed dwell on the earth behold heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you how much less this house that I have built if even the temple is inadequate accommodation for the Lord God then how can this tent possibly be a fitting dwelling place for almighty God remember the last time we heard of God dwelling somewhere it was in the previous chapter when it said that the cloud covered a mountain the glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it six days and on the seventh day he called to

Moses out of the cloud now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the side of the people of Israel use your imagination for a bit eruption I'm not saying that it was a volcanic eruption I think it would look similar there's a devouring fire atop Mount Sinai consuming everything that dares to cross its paths and the clouds with billowing crowds with the massive cauliflower like shape just ballooning everywhere and covering so you can't see anything around you how does God whose glory is like a devouring fire dwell inside a tent it's an absolutely mind boggling proposition can you catch a lightning bolt in a bottle can you pour a tsunami into a mug how can the glorious creator of the universe dwell inside a man made tent the level of condescension required even the level of humiliation required for this is staggering

God our heavenly father comes down to our level condescends to dwell in our midst the king of kings the lord of lords the one god overall takes residence among a group of stateless refugees nomads wandering through the wilderness he's not offering emotional support from a long distance phone call he is coming into their midst to live among them to let his people know once and for all I am with you and I am for you and I am going to lead you personally into the promised land that's what's happening with the building of the tabernacle and this gracious condescension of God's dwelling in the tabernacle points to God's ultimate condescension to his people in Jesus Christ the tabernacle is a symbol of

Jesus in the Old Testament in John 2 19 to 21 Jesus says that his body is the new temple of God and that's because Colossians 2 9 tells us that of deity dwells bodily the word we use for that to describe it is the incarnation the divine son of God taking on human flesh and dwelling among us John 1 14 says of Jesus the eternal word of God and the word became flesh and dwelt among us the word translated dwelt there literally means he pitched a tent among us there is an intentional allusion to the tabernacle in the gospel of John Jesus tabernacled among us to show us that God is with us that God is for us Jesus it tells us in Philippians 2 6 to 8 that though he was in the form of

[31 : 53] God he did not consider equality with God a thing to grasp but instead he humbled himself and took on the form of a servant by taking on human flesh and Adam and Eve though they were not in the form of God they were only in the form of man sought to become like God and to grasp for equality with God by taking from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but Jesus who was in the form of God did not seek equality with God but instead he humbled himself by becoming a man and dying on the tree of God summarizes this way in this book the cross of Christ man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be man claims prerogatives that belong to God alone

God accepts penalties that belong to man alone Adam's sin brought humanity's exile and it's Jesus' sacrifice that brings humanity's homecoming bring his people's homecoming more specifically the priests in the old testament went into the tabernacle or to the temple to offer atoning sacrifices for the sins of God's people but their sacrifices along with the tabernacle and the temple were mere copies shadows that pointed to a greater reality but Jesus our great high priest he says in Hebrews 9 he did not make a shadow sacrifice he made the actual sacrifice by going into the tabernacle the tent in the heavenly places and offering a one central sacrifice at his own blood his own life so that we might live so that we might be reconciled to God so that now it is true that it is on earth it is so on earth as it is in heaven what

Jesus has accomplished in that heavenly temple and heavenly tabernacle is the reality that we get to live in as God's people and we are now indwelt by the spirit of God and that's why we ourselves are called by God's word in 1 Corinthians 3 16 as God's temple God's dwelling place this is the ultimate condescension of God how can the son of God become a son of man how can the one by whom all things were created become a creature how can the consuming fire dwell among us how can the holy one ever dwell within you and within me because of God's mercy because Jesus tabernacled among us and sanctified us by his blood some of you here still do not know Jesus you have not yet entrusted your life to him you have not believed in his death and resurrection and

God is still foreign to you he's alien to you he does not dwell with you but here is Jesus invitation in Revelation 3 20 behold I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me Jesus this is his invitation he wants to dwell with you he wants to dwell within you will you renounce your idols and pledge allegiance to Jesus will you surrender your life to him consecrate yourself to him say take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee he wants to tabernacle within you and make you his dwelling place God's grace here is so amazing but that's not the end of it let's return to the tabernacle in Exodus 25 just once more here

God's gracious condescension continues in that he invites us to give to and work for the construction of his dwelling place among us he says in Exodus 25 verse 2 speak to the people of Israel that they take for me a contribution from every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me that means the contribution the people are to make is voluntary chapter 35 is even more emphatic about this it says in verse 5 take from among you a contribution to the Lord whoever is of a generous heart let him bring the Lord's contribution this voluntary aspect of the contribution frames the entire section of verses 21 to 29 it begins by saying this and they came everyone whose heart stirred 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 garments then that same section ends by saying this all the men and women the people of

[37 : 05] Israel whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a free will offering to the Lord this is not a mandatory tithe the 10% that God's people were required to give commanded to give this is a free will offering that goes above and beyond the requirements this is a voluntary gift and this voluntary aspect of the collection is intentionally contrasted with the narrative of the golden calf that we'll get to later when the Israelites rebel against the Lord during Moses absence and demand that Aaron produce for them gods who shall go before them idols Aaron says this in chapter 32 verse 2 take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives your sons and your daughters and bring them to me it's not voluntary it's forced when it comes to building an idol

Aaron demands the gold but when it comes to building the tabernacle God commands Moses to ask for it why because as it says in 2nd Corinthians 9 7 each one must give as he has decided in his heart not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver God has every authority every right to demand everything we have of us but instead he asks of it he wants us willingly to give to him and serve him this is amazing think about it God God you want me to give something to you you the king would ask something of me a pauper do you really mean that there's something

I can actually do for you that there's something I can actually give to you what greater honor can a human being have than this to bring willingly a contribution to the Lord to be able to give to him from what he has given to us to be able to serve him with what he has enabled us to do so the men and women of Israel donated valuables precious commodities and they volunteered their time and skill for the construction of the tabernacle not because they had to but because they wanted to because their hearts stirred them to and their spirit moved them to my gold earring can become a part of the ark of the covenant the linens that I weave with my hands and the leather that I tan with my hands can become the covering for God's holy dwelling place by all means take it what else can I do what else can I give to my

Lord my king in Exodus 38 21 to 31 which we read earlier there's a careful accounting of the contribution that the people brought recorded by Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest every time people give money they want to know how their money is being used that it's being stewarded wisely that's why we as a church also take particular care to make sure every offering and every expense is noted and cataloged and maybe and maybe one day we too will get a chance to use some of the money for a sanctuary to worship God in because it's hard-earned money that God's people have generously given and if you look at Ithamar's bookkeeping in chapter 38 it says that the people's offerings amounted to 29 talents and 730 shekels of gold that's a total of 2,210.65 pounds of gold the current gold price per pound is said to be 22,103 dollars so that's nearly 50 million dollars worth of gold that God's people willingly brought as an offering to him

I did the math for the silver and the bronze too but I won't get into that it's just total it's 52 million or so dollars not counting the value of all the precious stones the jewels the dyed yarn this is a massive financial undertaking but where in the world did the Israelites get all these after all they're but former Egyptian slaves fleeing captivity and wandering in the wilderness where in the world did they get these precious commodities we see a clue in Exodus 35 22-23 it says men and women brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets and all sorts of gold objects and everyone who possessed blue or purple or scarlet yarns or fine linen or goat's hair or tanned rammed skin or goat skins brought them in other words they're not going mining somewhere for gold they're bringing the gold gold and silver and bronze and precious stones that they already have they're not engaging in any kind of maritime trade for these expensive dyed yarn they're bringing what they already had or what they could make with what they already have and if you look back at Exodus 12-35-36 when the Israelites were leaving Egypt it says that they asked the

[43 : 12] Egyptians for what? silver and gold jewelry and clothing and the Lord had given the people favor in the side of the Egyptians so that they let them have what they asked thus they plunder the Egyptians they are building the tabernacle with materials from their plunder their peaceful plunder of the Egyptians which by the way they had only because the Lord had already disposed the Egyptians to be favorable and generous toward them so in essence the Israelites are giving back to God a portion of what he has given to them in fact that's the case with everything we bring to God David captures this sentiment in 1 Chronicles 29-14 he gathers all the supplies for the construction of the temple and then he thanks God and then he says this but who am I and what is my people that we should be able thus to offer willingly for all things come from you and of your own have we given you how can we be credited with bringing contribution for the Lord's temple when all that we have is actually from him in the first place but that's the privilege that God gives us he counts that the same truth applies to us in our new covenant context

I mentioned earlier of how God's people we the church are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in us God is still in the business of building a dwelling place for himself 1 Peter 2 5 says that we ourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house as the house of the spirit of God we ourselves are the tabernacle that God is building as a dwelling place for himself and the Lord invites us to contribute to it to give to it to work for it Ephesians 4 12 uses that same metaphor of construction again to say that we are building up the body of Christ when we use our gifts when each part is working properly we make the body grow and it builds itself up in love we are being joined together as God's dwelling place brick by brick and each time we bear with one another each time we forgive one another each time we serve one another each time we speak the truth in love to one another each time we encourage one another exhort one another from the scriptures each time we sing to one another the truths of the gospel we are contributing to the building up of God's very dwelling place that's the privilege we have in serving one another we even though we are so weak and so deficient and so frail we get to contribute to the building up of God's dwelling place

I've noticed recently that some of the children in our church have been putting in their own offerings into our offering box during worship Jen counts and records and deposits the offerings as our church administrator and she's been telling me that she's been finding offering envelopes with a dollar in it and one of the children's names on it and she's also been finding loose change in the offering boxes without any name and of course our children don't work jobs so they're giving their parents money money that they got from her or maybe from an uncle or something like that and yet when I see them doing it when I catch them doing it sometimes they do it with such joy and eagerness that they get to be part of this that they get to give something of their own and that's what we get to do what God's graciously provided to us we can use that to give to him what God has graciously gifted us with we get to serve him render service to him the health that God has given us the energy that God has given us the resources

God has given us the money that God has given us the experience that God has given us the skills that God has given us the gifts that God has given us let us all eagerly and cheerfully give back to God for the building up of his dwelling place among us and that building will one day be completed and when it's completed this is what's going to happen in Revelation 21 verses 2 to 4 and I saw the holy city new Jerusalem this is the dwelling place of God coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband that's us we are that dwelling place and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God so let's look forward to that day and keep building let's pray together

Father we love you you are so glorious so grand majestic beyond our comprehension and yet you sent your only son Jesus so that in his condescension in his humiliation we might get to know you that we might be saved that we might be consecrated as your dwelling place Father thank you for this grace Lord let this truth transform the way we live as we remember that we are the temple of the

[49 : 59] Holy Spirit and that in every interaction with one another we are building up your home and as we do that Lord fill us more and more with your Spirit give us a greater foretaste of that eternal dwelling in the new heavens and the new earth when you will be with us forever we look forward to that come Lord soon Lord in Jesus name we pray amen