

## Study 0043

### Scripture Text: Exodus 25:1-9

To begin with, we shall be making some changes to the nomenclature earlier stated regarding the last two stages in the evolution of worship. Thus, “The Law Era”, will now be referred to as, “The Old Covenant Era”, and “The Grace Era” will be referred to as, “The New Covenant Era”.

So far, we have seen that since the beginning of time, man has worshipped God, even though not all men did. We have also seen that the worship of God is acceptable to God in so far as men have a relationship with Him; are in right standing with Him; and bring acceptable sacrifices unto Him. In this study, we shall begin to look at worship in the Old Covenant Era.

### Worship in The Old Covenant Era: Introduction

Worship in the Old Covenant Era was established by God Himself—a departure from the previous eras, in which worship was initiated by devout men who wanted to acknowledge and appreciate God for His doings and dealings in their lives. It should be noted that prior to the time the children of Israel got to the point where God was now instituting worship, they had been slaves in Egypt for about four hundred and thirty years, and had been subjected to hard labour for most of that time. Worship, through the building of altars, which the patriarchs engaged in after the Floods, was for them, a thing of the past in the face of the oppression they faced in Egypt. It is also possible that most of them did not pay attention to the matter of altars, nor was it even discussed from generation to generation. Hence, God had to bring them to a place (the wilderness) where they would have to learn how to worship Him in a manner that he wanted. And this God did through Moses.

From our scripture text, we read the instruction God gave Moses to build unto Him a sanctuary. The people were to bring the materials for the building of the sanctuary, in the form of an offering from a willing heart. This was a sanctuary to be made for God, not for man, because God desired to dwell among them. More importantly, the sanctuary was to be built according to a pattern to be showed to Moses on the mountain; the same applied to the instruments/items of furniture to be placed or used in the sanctuary. God wanted His people to be involved in building Him a sanctuary by using what they had, indeed, what He had given to them (**Exodus 11:1-3; 12:35-36**). In initiating worship, God’s intention in building the sanctuary was so that He “*may dwell among them*”. Thus, we see that God’s desire is to live among His people. He does not want to be a distant God, but a very present God in the midst of His people. The sanctuary was thus the centre of the lives of the children of Israel, and the heart of national worship. The sanctuary also served as recognition of the presence of God in the midst of His people. Without God being present, worship cannot be accomplished! Also, there was a pattern for the building of the sanctuary, and it was of things in heaven being represented by things on earth (**Hebrews 8:5**). The representation of heavenly things in the earthly tabernacle was but a shadow, sketch, or copy, of the reality in heaven. Thus, God wanted Israel to worship Him after the pattern of worship in heaven. Today, we no longer have to build a sanctuary, for we are the sanctuary of God (**1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16**)!

From God's instruction to Moses regarding the building of the sanctuary, we make the following observations:

- (i) The materials for the building of the sanctuary was provided by God but placed in the hands of the people. *All that you are and have is given so that you can become a sanctuary for God.*
- (ii) Although the people were to bring the materials for the building of the sanctuary, the plan of the sanctuary, and the manner in which it was to be built was God's. *As God's sanctuary, it is His plan for your life that counts.*
- (iii) God wanted the people to be involved in the building of the tabernacle by using their substance and skills (**Exodus 31:1-11**). *You are to be actively involved in the building of your life as a sanctuary to God, using all that God has given you.*
- (iv) God's desire is to dwell among His people. *This is God's desire for you—to live with you and in you (2 Corinthians 6:16).*
- (v) There is a pattern for what God wants, and this is what must be followed. *God's pattern for His worship must be followed otherwise, what you call worship cannot be worship.*
- (vi) The pattern God gave Moses was but a copy or shadow or model; not the real thing. *As a part of the sanctuary God is building today; you are not a copy or model, but a lively stone (1 Peter 2:5).*
- (vii) The pattern of things in heaven was shown to Moses on the mountain, not of things on earth in the valley. *You must ascend above worldly patterns so as to receive instruction for true worship (Revelation 4:1-11).*
- (viii) Earthly materials were being used to represent heavenly things. An architect's model is made using materials like paper, cardboard, etc., which cannot be used for the main project. *All the glories of this world cannot compare to that in heaven. Indeed, you cannot begin to imagine how you will be when you get to heaven (2 Corinthians 3:7-18; Romans 8:18; 1 John 3:2-3)!*
- (ix) If God is not present in a place, then worship becomes idolatry or at best, meaningless. *The sanctuary, which you are, if you are God's, is the centre of worship and the dwelling place of God, you must therefore be holy (2 Corinthians 6:16-17; 7:1; 1 Peter 1:15-16).*

In **Exodus 25—31**, we read about the instructions concerning the sanctuary of God which the children of Israel were to build for God; while in **Exodus 35—40**, we read about the implementation of the instruction, which culminated in erecting the sanctuary—tabernacle and all. In describing the pattern for the sanctuary, God begins with the innermost and holiest item of furniture, even before the tabernacle that was to cover the items was mentioned. Indeed, the courtyard which was to enclose the tabernacle came in for mention much later. We observe as follows from this, that:

- (a) Your worship must be from within you, the inner man (the spirit), and not from without, the outward man (the flesh)—trying to urge the inner man to worship God (**John 4:24**).
- (b) Holiness is central to our worship of God.
- (c) The content of your worship is more important than the edifice of worship.
- (d) Church is only church in so far as God is present.

Furthermore, we observe that the instruction to build the sanctuary for God took Moses forty days on the mountain of God to assimilate and document. This shows the attention to details and the extent to which God went in order to ensure that the children of Israel were able to

worship Him acceptably. It is therefore instructive to note that although we may read **Exodus 25—31** in less than two hours, it would take a lifetime trying to assimilate its significance.

In our next study, we shall have an overview of the sanctuary itself and the significance of some of the items therein, but before then, we counsel that we read and re-read **Exodus 25—31** and **35—40**.

### **EXERCISE**

Please state true or false to the statements below:

1. In all the eras studied so far, worship was initiated by devout men, who wanted to acknowledge and appreciate God.
2. God wants to stay far away from people so that He would not easily kill them because of their sinful nature.
3. God's sanctuary can only be built by angels to preserve its sanctity.
4. Today's believers in Christ need a sanctuary like the Old Covenant pattern.
5. Years of idolatry can make us not know how to worship God.
6. Worship is not accomplished if God is not present in a sanctuary.
7. Our motivation for worship must come from our emotions.
8. A good building is very important if we are to worship God acceptably.
9. The building of the believer in Christ as a sanctuary by God requires no input from the believer.
10. The way our fathers worshipped idols can be helpful in our worship of God.
11. A chorister whose voice is first-class is the joy of God in worship.
12. God is so hungry for worship; He does not mind who worships Him.