

Hebrews 8:1-5

Examples, Shadows, Patterns

See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount – v. 5

For 40 days and 40 nights Moses spent time in the presence of God atop Mt. Sinai. The sight of God upon that mountain had been a fearful thing to behold. So we read in Exod. 24:17 *And the sight of the glory of the LORD [was] like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.* Moses was called into this cloud and devouring fire. So we read in the next verse Exod. 24:18 *And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.*

During that 40 day period God would give to Moses very specific and detailed information pertaining to the way that God would be worshipped. This information is so detailed and so extensive that it very often proves to be the case for young Christians who are trying to master the discipline of reading their Bibles that they get bogged down when they get to Exodus 25.

Everything before Exodus 25 is fairly easy to read. The historical narratives of Genesis are captivating when you read of creation and the flood and the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And the end of the book of Genesis contains one of the most dramatic and suspenseful stories in all the Bible when you get to the story of Joseph. And as the reader makes his way through Exodus he discovers that the first half of the book of Exodus is easy to read also because of its captivating drama. We read the story of Moses as a baby being rescued from a basket floating in the water by Pharaoh's daughter. And we read of the rise of Moses and the contest that ensues between Moses and Pharaoh culminating in the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

It seems that right up until the giving of the 10 commandments from Mt. Sinai the Bible makes for captivating reading. But then all of a sudden when you come to Exodus 25 the content of the narrative changes drastically. Now instead of captivating historical narrative you find yourself reading page after page and chapter after chapter of very detailed instructions. It's a bit like going from an action packed story and adventure to a Chilton car manual. And if you've ever seen a Chilton car manual then you know that it's the kind of a book that only an auto mechanic can appreciate.

But the young Christian plows through and when at last he makes it through the meticulous section of detailed instructions he discovers that the difficulty of his reading hasn't ended yet. For after the instructions on how the tabernacle was to be built you discover an equally detailed account of those instructions being carried out precisely as they were given.

The question that naturally arises from that section is Exodus is *why?* – why all this detailed instruction followed by a detailed narrative of those instructions being followed? And let me just say here that whether or not we understand or appreciate the nature of the Bible in such places as Exodus 25 and following, our text in Hebrews makes it very plain

to us that those meticulous instructions and the precise execution of those instructions was very important to God. Note again the words of v. 5 *See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.* God was allowing no room for cutting corners nor was he allowing any room for human ingenuity or innovation. This pattern had to be followed exactly.

Now in our text we are given a reason as to why this pattern had to be followed precisely. The tabernacle and the worship of God associated with the tabernacle were to function as examples and shadows of heavenly things. This is not a case of God being very exact and demanding just for the sake of being exact and demanding – not at all – there were very important spiritual truths being conveyed by the tabernacle and the worship associated with the tabernacle.

Part of the problem that would arise with the Jews throughout Old Testament history was their failure to understand those spiritual truths. They would come to view animal sacrifices as simply a part of the ritual that God demanded of them without realizing or appreciating what those animal sacrifices were designed to teach. And they would heap their own traditions on top of their worship practices in such a way that they would, in effect, nullify the laws of God.

Now Paul's point here in Heb. 8 is that a new economy had come and the old way of doing things was now ready to vanish away. From verse 6 to the end of chp. 8 Paul will be making the point that Christ has obtained a more excellent ministry and is the mediator of a better covenant based on better promises. It seems appropriate, however, that before we begin to examine this new age that Paul will expound we should first take a look back at that which was being rendered obsolete. We'll see in the course of our studies that there are unifying truths that apply to both the Old Testament era and the New Testament era.

And so what I'd like you to consider this morning are examples, shadows, and patterns. That's the title I've given to the message – Examples, Shadows and Patterns. Or if I could put it to you more directly:

We Must Learn the Lessons that Moses Gained in the Mount

See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. What lessons can we learn from that pattern shown to Moses in the mount? Consider with me first of all that there's a theology lesson learned by the pattern shown to Moses in the mount.

I. The Lesson of God's Prerogative in Worship

Recall if you will the setting I brought to your attention a moment ago – the setting of Moses entering the mount. Ex 24:17 *And the sight of the glory of the LORD [was] like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.* When the Lord descended upon Mt. Sinai the revelation of his glory was terrifying to the children of Israel. So much so that they begged Moses to be their mediator. They were keenly aware

of their need for someone to stand between them and God. Listen to the words of Deut. 5:25-27 This passage contains a reflection by Moses. So he is recalling how the children of Israel said: *Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it.*

This revelation of God's glory shows us something that sadly has been lost in our day to a great extent. It shows us that God is unapproachable. God is too holy for men to draw near to him. He is too holy and men are too sinful. The children of Israel perceived this first hand. They could not endure the sight of God and they could not endure the sound of God. They spoke correctly when they said *this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die.* If we were to continue to read in Deut. 5 we would discover that God commended them for their words. They were absolutely correct and they stood in great need of someone to come between them and God.

And what this means to us today even in this New Testament time period is that if God is to be approached at all even to be worshipped by sinners then it must be upon the terms that God himself sets down and never upon terms that men dictate to God.

That sounds simple enough, doesn't it? – and yet the notion of God possessing the prerogative and the freedom to set down the terms upon which he'll be worshipped is given little if any consideration in much of Christendom today. Today the notion is prevalent that we actually do God a favor by worshipping him. And God ought to be happy with us because of our willingness to worship him. And because God ought to be happy with us for our willingness to worship him, he should not become unhappy with us if we choose to worship him however we please. Isn't the important thing the fact of our worship rather than the manner of our worship? – many professing Christians ask.

In the wake of this kind of rationale we find much that passes for worship that at the end of the day is nothing but the entertaining and pleasing of ourselves. If we make any reference to God in our pleasing of ourselves then we're willing to call our entertainment worship. I can remember thumbing through music CDs in a bookstore and coming across a Christian music CD entitled something like this: *Here I am to worship.* Anything wrong with the picture that title presents? I find it very telling – *Here I am!* Look at me God! Listen to me God! Aren't you lucky to have me, God? Wouldn't you be poorer without me God?

Then on the other hand but based on the same kind of thinking we find men and women excusing themselves from church or from the corporate worship of God because they

prefer a worship method of their own – a walk in the woods where they can, in solitude, think upon God in the setting of his creation. I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with a walk in the woods accompanied with meditation upon God. But what I am saying is that God must be approached in the way that he directs.

Would you notice from our text that the pattern for the tabernacle was something that was shown to Moses. He was to make the tabernacle according to the pattern that was shown him in the mount. This means that worship is a subject, then, of special revelation. The heavens do declare the glory of God and we can detect God in his creation but we deceive ourselves if we think that natural revelation can direct us how to worship God acceptably. Natural revelation can reveal God's glory as our creator but it says little about our fallen condition and our need to be reconciled to God. I say it says little because natural revelation can and does say something. When you look at the earthquakes and the tsunamis and the natural tragedies that are found in the earth they all bear testimony to the curse of God upon the world. You wouldn't have found such things in paradise before the fall of man. You only find them after sin entered the world.

This is why I say you can look at such things as the earthquake in Haiti or the hurricane damage in New Orleans or most recently the volcano eruption in Iceland – you can look at them all and say that they bear testimony to the truth that we live in a sin-cursed world. The message such tragedies should convey to sinners is that they need to repent of their sins. But they say nothing to us about being reconciled to God and they say nothing to us about acceptable worship to God.

Can man worship, God, then, as he sees fit? Our text in Hebrews says to us – no way! *See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.* Moses was not to invent the pattern himself or edit the pattern or add to or delete from the pattern. If God was to be worshipped then it must be as God Himself directed that worship. God owes us nothing and God certainly does not become indebted to us because we may, in our pride, decide to worship him according to our own will and way.

The theology of Moses in the mount teaches us that God is altogether glorious and we are altogether sinful. We could have no approach to God at all unless God in his grace devised such a way by which he could be approached. The good news of the gospel, is, of course, that God has devised such a way. The tabernacle provides a shadow or a picture of that way. And this leads to our next lesson. The first lesson was a lesson in theology, the next lesson is a lesson in typology. Would you consider with me next:

II. The Lesson of God's Picture of Christ

I indicated in my introduction that God doesn't do anything arbitrarily. He doesn't, in other words, invent rules for the sake of rules. There are some, unfortunately that view God's laws that way and in so viewing God's laws that way that show a very low level of understanding in the knowledge of God.

Everything God does he does with purpose and it's for that reason that the Lord stressed to Moses that he must make all things according to the pattern that was shown to him in the mount. There were spiritual truths that needed to be conveyed in the tabernacle itself and in the furniture of the tabernacle and in the order of worship that went with the tabernacle. For Moses to fail in any part of the pattern would have marred the picture or obscured the truths that the tabernacle and tabernacle worship were designed to convey.

And the pattern was all the more important because the pattern was designed to convey the truth of Christ. This is a study of its own that we could devote much time to if we were studying the tabernacle rather than this epistle to the Hebrews. I'll only take the time today to highlight a few of the things connected with the tabernacle that portray Christ.

The most important piece of furniture in the tabernacle would have been the ark of the covenant. This was that wooden box that was covered with gold within and without that was the sole piece of furniture in the inner most chamber of the tabernacle. On top of this box was a gold lid which was called the mercy seat where you would find two engraven angels facing each other and looking down at the mercy seat. Inside the ark of the covenant were placed the two tables of the law, Aaron's rod that budded, as well as a sample of the manna that had been provided for the Israelites in their wilderness journeys.

The ark itself portrays a vivid picture of Christ. It is a shadow of his deity and humanity. The wood of the ark would have represented his humanity while the gold that covered the ark would portray his deity. It thus was a shadow of the very thing that is being emphasized in this epistle to the Hebrews. Christ was and is the Son of God and the Son of man. He must be both. He must be a man if he would represent men before God and it took a person no less than God in the flesh to make the kind of sacrifice that could prevail to atone for our sins.

The two tables of the law within the ark portray for us the truth that the law was in the heart of Christ. He rendered that obedience to God from the heart that is required of those that would abide in the presence of God. And he did this as our covenant head and substitute.

There's an interesting narrative that occurs in 2Sam. 6 that vividly illustrates all that we've been considering up to this point. You remember that time in Israel's history when the ark was captured by the Philistines? Sometime later through the providence of God and his judgment upon the Philistines that ark was returned to Israel. The time came when David wanted to bring the ark to Jerusalem and so the ark was placed on a new cart and as it was being transported to the city of David there was great joy and rejoicing and very fervent worship taking place.

And then something very tragic happened. The oxen that were pulling the cart on which the ark was mounted either stumbled or the cart hit a bump in the road – something happened, we're not told exactly what, but something happened that made the ark tip. A man by the name of Uzzah was on hand and evidently thought that the ark was about to fall off the cart and so he reached out his hand to prevent this from happening and he

steadied the ark on the cart. This act which by human standards would have seemed like an act of decency and respect was deemed by God to be an act of indiscretion and as a result Uzzah was struck down instantly by God and he died. The celebration of moving the ark was instantly postponed and David himself was for a time upset with God and was rightfully afraid of God.

What had happened? What had happened was that the pattern had been violated. There was a right way and a wrong way to transport the ark and David and the Israelites had been governed by pragmatism rather than by the pattern that had been shown to Moses in the mount.

Now it would be easy for us to read that narrative and come to the conclusion that God was just too much of a stickler for the rules. That may have been the initial impression that was left on David's mind. The thing that must be kept in mind, however, is that the ark of the covenant was a picture of Christ and God would be and continues to be jealous for the honor of his Son – to the point where he would strike down a sinner, however well intentioned that sinner was – for reaching out his hand to touch that which only pictured God's Son.

I never will forget a sermon I heard on this subject that was preached by Dr. Cairns some years ago in which he brought out a very sober truth pertaining to the sufferings of Christ that I had found easy to pass over because it seemed so insignificant. In Mt. 26:50 we have the account of Judas entering the garden where he knew he would find Christ and his disciples. Listen to what it says in Mt 26:50 *And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.*

That doesn't seem like all that much on the surface of it does it? – especially when compared to the intense sufferings of Christ that would follow. But when you read the account in 2Sam. 6 of God smiting down a man for reaching out his hand to touch that which only typified God's Son and then you read in Matthew's gospel of filthy, defiled and rebellious sinners actually laying their hands on Christ and God allowing them to lay their hands on his beloved Son then you can begin to appreciate the heart of God behind your salvation and you can come to realize the deeper and solemn significance of God giving his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

I hope you're beginning to see, then, the importance of this word given to Moses – *See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.* The pattern of the ark of the covenant served the purpose of pointing the Israelites to Christ. Much more could be said about the ark of covenant that we will perhaps have occasion to say in a future study.

Let me now, however, direct your attention before we close to another piece of tabernacle furniture – that piece which we know as the candlestick or the lampstand. You have, perhaps, seen pictures of this article of furniture in some Jewish pictures. It was made of pure gold and contained 7 lamps. It was to be lighted by the priests every evening

and then extinguished in the morning so the wicks could be trimmed and fresh oil could be provided. It may very well be this piece of furniture that Christ had in mind when he said in Jn. 8:12 *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

One of the things that comes to light when the light of Christ shines in a man's heart is the knowledge of sin. It is for this reason that Christ rejecters are repulsed by the light. *This is the condemnation* Christ says in Jn. 3:19 *that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* But then Christ goes on to say in the next 2 verses: *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God* (Jn. 3:20,21).

The difference between a man in darkness and a man in the light, then, is that the man in the light will acknowledge his sin, he'll be repulsed by his sin, and he'll come to Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. He will also follow after Christ and utilize the word of Christ as a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path.

And then if I could mention but one more piece of tabernacle furniture that points us to Christ. Across from the candlestick could be found the table of showbread. This was a wooden table covered with gold upon which the priests would place 12 loaves of bread on each Sabbath.

It may very well be that Christ had this bread in view as well as the manna in the wilderness when he said in Jn. 6:35 *I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*

And those that have closed in with Christ to the saving of their souls can and do testify that the deep needs of their hearts have been satisfied by Christ. Our need was for forgiveness and Christ has met that need. Our need was for acceptance with God and Christ has met that need. Our need was for a sense of meaning and purpose in our lives and Christ has satisfied that need. Thus Christ satisfied the hungry and thirsty soul the way bread satisfies hunger.

I hope you begin to see and appreciate, then, that there was good reason for Moses to carefully follow the pattern that was given to him in the mount. The tabernacle and the worship associated with the tabernacle served to point the Israelites to the more excellent ministry of Christ.

And so we find theological lessons as well as typological lessons in that pattern shown to Moses. It is my hope and prayer for each one here today, however, that these lessons will prove to more to you than just academic lessons. I hope that you either do know or will know these lessons in your experience of Christ. They can only be learned that way by making it your life practice of coming to Christ and abiding in Christ. May the Lord then draw each one here today into intimate and satisfying fellowship with Christ who is our Light, and our Bread – who is indeed our all in all.