

# OpenTheo

## April 2nd: Exodus 40 & Mark 2:1-22

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### Alastair Roberts

The completion of the tabernacle and God's Glory entering it. Conflict with religious leaders.

Some passages referenced:

Genesis 8:13 (first day of the first month in the Flood narrative); Genesis 6:5, 8:21 / Exodus 32:9, 33:3, 34:9 (reason initially given for judgment used as reason for mercy at the end); Exodus 39:43, 40:9-10, 33-34, Genesis 1:31-2:3 (similarities between God's completion of his creation and the Sabbath and the completion and consecration of the tabernacle); Exodus 15:17 (placing the people on the mountain of God).

Matthew 9, Luke 5 (parallel passages); Daniel 7:13-14 (Son of Man in Daniel).

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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## Transcript

Exodus 40 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 Testament, 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, and you shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the Testament, and set up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. You shall set up the Altar a 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 priest.

And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations. 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 bases 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.

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.

Exodus chapter 40 begins with God instructing Moses to construct the tabernacle on the first day of the first month, after a full year has passed. There are continued reminders here of Noah and the flood. In Genesis chapter 8 verse 13, it's on the first day of the first month, after the year on the ark, that the waters are finally dried from the earth.

This isn't the only connection between the story of Noah and the story of Moses and the Israelites and the building of the tabernacle. In both cases, exact conformity to God's commands concerning the instruction is emphasised. There are two periods of seven days, followed by a period of 40 days and 40 nights in chapter 24, and there is the elevation on the top of the mountain.

There is the creation of a wooden box of specified dimensions, overlaid inside and out. There is the threat of all people being cut off and only one spared. There is someone who finds favour in the sight of the Lord.

There is the establishment of a new covenant. As in the story of the flood, there is the passage of the full year and the turning of a new page. In both stories, there are statements at the end of a great judgement that reference the reason earlier given for the judgement as a basis for mercy at the end.

Genesis 6 verse 5 reads, The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. But then in chapter 8 verse 21, And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. We see a similar thing in Exodus.

In Exodus chapter 32 verse 9, And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. And in verse 33 verse 3, Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey, but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people. But then in chapter 34 verse 9, We read, And he said, If now I

have found favour in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.

So we can see noticeable similarities with the story of Noah at this point. But there are also contrasts. While the first day of the first month was the removal of the covering of Noah's ark, the first day of the first month of the story of the Exodus is the establishment of the covering of the tabernacle.

While Noah's ark was a temporary safe place for man in a world returned to its original chaos, the tabernacle is a place for the dwelling of the Holy God in a sinful world. The tabernacle, like Noah's ark, is the establishment of a divine order within a chaotic, fallen and sinful world, and it enables a holy God and sinful man to coexist. The tabernacle should also remind us of the sanctuary of Eden in various ways.

It's an ordered realm where God and man can enjoy fellowship. And the connections with the flood highlight, among other things, the urgency of such coexistence, where such coexistence does not exist, you'll have the situation of Egypt, with creation itself rising up against humankind. The tabernacle, then, is a cosmic symbol.

It's a symbol of a rightly ordered society in creation. If the beginning of Exodus was about the breakdown of creation in plagues and judgment upon sin and the final wiping away of enemies in the rush of water as the dawn came, the book of Exodus moves us to a point where there is a renewal of the creation, the cosmic and the social order. This is why the Sabbath is such an important symbol for the Mosaic covenant.

It's why the seven-day pattern appears on a number of occasions in these chapters. It's why, despite all of the great and exciting events recorded within it, the construction of a tent in the wilderness occupies about a third of the book of Exodus. The establishment of the tabernacle is the seed of a new cosmic order, is a sort of Eden, suited for a fallen and a sinful world.

The tabernacle is also a sort of Sabbath tent, a sanctification of space, as the Sabbath was a sanctification of time. If the Ark was how Noah escaped the sinful world destroyed in the flood, the tabernacle is how human beings will be able to escape the fate of places like Egypt and enjoy communion with their creator, acting as creators under him, as we see in these final chapters. It's the political constitution also of the delivered Israelites as a nation in fellowship with the Lord.

All of the different parts of the tabernacle were created, but now Moses assembles all of these pieces together in a single structure. It's important to notice that while the people made the elements of the tabernacle and brought them to Moses in Exodus 39, 32-43, the entire work of setting up the tabernacle is described as if it were personally performed by Moses himself in verses 16-32. Now it's highly unlikely that Moses did this

himself, but he is seen as the one who's responsible for it.

So the people do the tent and then he is the one that puts everything together. Moses and the people are united in the task, but they are placed over against each other in the narration of the construction, performing different parts. Moses' part is one in which he largely plays the role that God did in Genesis 2 verses 1-3.

God finished his work and blessed and consecrated the Sabbath day, and Moses finished the work of the tabernacle and blessed the people and consecrated the tent. You should be able to hear some of the parallels if you listen carefully. And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it, as the Lord had commanded.

So they had done it, and Moses blessed them. Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all 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.

So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And then back in Genesis 1 verse 31 to 2 verse 3, And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

And there was evening, and there was morning the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done.

And he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. We might see in this another suggestion that the tabernacle itself is comparable to the Sabbath day in some respects.

If the Sabbath is the day where God rests from his labours, the tabernacle is the place where God will rest among his people. And the story ends with the theophanic cloud of God's presence coming upon the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord filling the tent. The story ends then with God taking up residence in the tent, in the midst of his people, even after all of the crisis of chapters 32 to 34.

The descent of the cloud is similar to the coming of God's glory upon Mount Sinai in Exodus chapter 19. Now the tabernacle is a movable Mount Sinai for them to travel with in their journeys. That meeting with God at that mountain is something that will now travel with them, will now be the terms in which they relate to God.

The tabernacle is the place of God's special dwelling. God is present in all places, but he is present in a particular, intentional and manifested way in the tabernacle. He is present to be near to and commune with his people.

He is present to forgive and to be addressed in prayer. He is present to lead and to provide. He is present to judge and to bless.

The tabernacle symbolises the higher heavens of God's particular dwelling and orders men according to the pattern of those higher heavens. In such a way then, Israel is formed in the image of God as his firstborn son. The tabernacle, like the ark, is not a static construction, but something designed to be moved from place to place and the story of the Exodus ends not with Israel settling in a particular location, but with God's presence in their midst in their continued journeying.

The Lord is travelling with his bride, gently leading her through the wilderness to the land that he has promised to her. The ark is still moving and has yet to come to rest on God's own mountain that he spoke of in Exodus chapter 15 verse 17. The story of Exodus then begins with life in bondage within an unjust and oppressive society under Pharaoh.

It moves to God's liberation of his people through plaguing the Egyptians with the powers of his creation and delivering them through the Passover and the Red Sea. In the wilderness we see a reversal of the themes of the plagues, as creation is wielded by its creator to give life and provision to his people in need. Where it had once caused destruction and death in the plagues, it now gives life and sustenance.

In the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant we see a reversal of Egypt in another way. God establishes a just society founded upon and perpetuating liberation from slavery. And the second phase of the book involves the instructions for the tabernacle, followed by the law of the Sabbath, followed by the incident with the golden calf, Moses' intercession for Israel and God's gracious response, followed by a return to the law of the Sabbath and then the building of the tabernacle.

It's a there and back again pattern again. So the book is a highly structured one with a theological and literary unity and purpose. It's all giving us a deeper understanding of what it means for God to be near his people, what it means to relate to the Holy God, how we relate to creation, who God is.

All of these questions are being addressed within the book of Exodus. What does it mean to live in a just society? What does it mean to be free? All of these questions are within the book of Exodus. However, its concluding note is not with some theme of political theory, what it means to be free in an abstract way, but it's about God dwelling with his people, God coming near to his people, the God who created all things, travelling with his people through the wilderness.

As the ark was a movable vessel, so the tabernacle is a movable vessel, travelling through the wilderness to the promised land. It will one day land on that particular mountain and God will establish his people there and bless them in that land. But to this point, they are travelling as it were upon the sea and they're moving towards that point

where God will ultimately give them a rootedness in the land and complete their liberation and that seed of a new creation will take root and germinate into a new nation settled in a new land.

A question to consider. Reading through the book of Exodus, it's very clear that the purpose of the events of the Exodus is in large measure, perhaps primarily, a theological one. God is revealing who he is and God is coming near to his people.

Exodus is a revelation of God's relationship to Israel and to the nations. It's a revelation of God's name. It's a revelation of God's presence.

It's a revelation of God's glory, of his forgiveness, of his character. What are some of the ways in which you see the theme of God's self-revelation serving to hold the book of Exodus together? Mark chapter 2 verses 1 to 22. And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home, and many were gathered together so that there was no more room, not even at the door.

And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him.

And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven. Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming.

Who can forgive sins but God alone? And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, Rise, take up your bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He said to the paralytic, I say to you, Rise, pick up your bed and go home. And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this.

He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alpheus, sitting at the tax booth, and said to him, Follow me. And he rose and followed him.

And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners? And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came to him and said, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast? And Jesus said to them, Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins.

If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins. In Mark chapter 2, Jesus performs a healing, followed by a series of confrontations with, and questions from, the religious authorities.

The same sequence of events is also found in Matthew chapter 9 and Luke 5. While the previous chapter was mostly about Jesus' rising fame and the Messianic secret, here we start to see conflict with the religious authorities coming into the foreground. Jesus is challenged with a series of why questions. In verse 7, Why does this man speak like that? In verse 16, Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners? In verse 18, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast? And then in verse 24, Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? And then Jesus responds to each of these challenges in turn, in a way that drives forward his teaching.

In verse 10, But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. In verse 17, And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

In verse 19 and 20, Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. And then in verses 27 to 28, And he said to them, The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. The section that we are looking at is part of a sequence beginning in verse 1 of this chapter and then ending in chapter 3 verse 6. Jesus returns to his own city of Capernaum. The last time he was there, he had to leave secretly because of the size and the demands of the crowds.

And as soon as people discover that Jesus is there again, once again the place is crowded. Presumably Jesus is in the house of Simon. This is the place where he seems to have his base.

And as noted in the previous chapter, the mother-in-law of Simon is probably acting as



his hostess there. While Jesus is teaching, four men bring a paralytic to him on a bed. However, since the crowd is so great and they cannot approach him, they remove the roof above him and lower the man down to him.

They overcome both the obstacles of the crowd and the roof to reach Jesus. And their faith is expressed in their persistence born of confidence in Christ's power and willingness to save and to heal. Jesus responds to their faith by declaring the sins of the paralytic forgiven.

Now we should note the interesting detail that it is in seeing the faith of the men who are bringing the paralytic to Jesus that Jesus is led to declare the sins of the paralytic forgiven. This isn't just a physical deliverance or even an exorcism. As we've already seen, this is a far more powerful act of salvation.

It's also seemingly exercised in response to the faith of people other than the man who's being brought to him. It's in these verses that we can get confidence, I believe, to continually pray for Christ to save people. Perhaps our persistent faith will be blessed with the fruit of another person's salvation.

The scribes think he's blaspheming, claiming a prerogative that is God's alone. Only God can forgive sins. Who can forgive sins but one, that is God.

And that seems to be a reference to the Shema. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one. Jesus recognises what is in their hearts and he challenges them.

He heals the man as a demonstration of his authority to forgive sins. Very easy to say you have the authority to forgive sins but in the actual healing of the man, he's giving a proof of the fact that he has that authority. So there's a two-stage healing here.

There's an inward healing as he's forgiven his sins and an outward healing as his body is restored to him. Once again, Jesus speaks of himself as the Son of Man. He's acting in a particular office.

The Son of Man is a figure of eschatological significance, a sort of great prophet perhaps. The Son of Man isn't just a judge though but one who brings forgiveness. In Daniel chapter 7, the figure of the Son of Man is a judge and one having great authority over the nations but Jesus presents the establishment of the kingdom and the authority of the Son of Man as being exercised through forgiveness on earth.

Which is a surprising note for this eschatological figure. The response of the crowd is amazement and to glorify God. When going out beside the sea and teaching the crowd after this, Jesus saw Levi the son of Alpheus standing at the tax booth as a tax collector.

Now in Matthew's gospel, we're told that the tax collector was Matthew. Presumably Levi was another name by which he went. There's another son, however, of Alpheus among

the disciples called James which raises the possibility, as a number of people have held, that Levi or Matthew was his brother.

Now among the disciples there are a number of brothers, James and John, Simon and Andrew, and in this is the case, James and Matthew too. Half of the disciples at least would be brothers of each other as some early Christian writers claimed that Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, was the same as Mary the wife of Clopas and that the James in question was James the son of Alpheus which is the Latin that corresponds to Clopas for the Greek and that Clopas was the brother of Joseph, Jesus' father. This would make Levi Jesus' cousin.

Now at this point we're venturing far beyond the realm of certainty but it's an interesting possibility, one that is based upon claims made very early on in the church's history. If it is indeed the case, then Jesus probably had four of his first cousins among his disciples, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and James the son of Alpheus, and Levi or Matthew the son of Alpheus. This should perhaps unsettle some of the preconceptions people have about Jesus' opposition to the family structure.

Jesus is teaching about leaving father and mother and the importance of his disciples being his true family but not in a way that simply abandons the natural family structure, rather it tries to take that structure into the life and the reality of the kingdom and for that reason we see many of Jesus' brothers involved later on in the history of the church. The tax collectors were despised for collaborating with the Romans and also for their injustice. They dealt with Gentiles and the Gentiles were an imperial oppressive power of the Romans but what Jesus does in eating with the tax collectors is he's redefining the nation and the nation is redefined around the meal table.

It's a place where people are fellowshiping together, something that foreshadows the meal of the kingdom as people are brought in and eat with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There are recliners at table in his house and from Luke the house in question seems to be Levi's. Jesus comes as a guest just as he goes to the house of Peter after his call and is a guest within the house of Peter while he's in Capernaum.

The story begins with one tax collector sitting down and being called to rise up and it ends with a larger number of tax collectors sitting and eating with Christ and the Pharisees come into the picture here. They challenge Jesus for his fraternising with tax collectors and sinners but Jesus highlights the fact that his concern is for those who are sick, those who need forgiveness, those who are sinners. His concern is for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, those who need to be restored.

Of course as we go through the gospel we'll see that the Pharisees are sick but they do not realise it. They're in need of forgiveness and they don't recognise it. They're sinners and yet they see themselves to be the righteous and so Jesus' statement here should not be taken to suggest that the Pharisees are okay.

No, it's to express his concern for the tax collectors and the sinners and as we see as we go through the book, to be a challenge to the Pharisees who fail to recognise their status. The disciples of John question him after this and this connects to the preceding story with the shared theme of eating. So the story that begins the chapter is concerned with the theme, among other things, of sin and forgiveness and then the eating with the tax collectors and sinners is connected with sin and forgiveness too and then that's connected with eating which is connected with this next story and so there's a daisy chain pattern through the chapter where each story connects with the one after it with some particular key theme.

When Jesus is questioned concerning the fact that his disciples do not fast unlike the Pharisees and the disciples of John, he answers with an illustration about the bridegroom. Christ is the bridegroom. This is an anticipation also of the future departure of Christ, one of the earliest that we have in the Gospels.

Jesus is going to depart from them and when he departs they will fast but until then he will be with them and they will celebrate as they have the bridegroom with them. This is a window into Christ's self-understanding. Christ is the bridegroom, come for the bride.

It also helps us to understand the previous story with the tax collectors and sinners. Jesus is the one who's come feasting for the bride. As the bridegroom he's celebrating the marriage, the wedding and the people that are coming in and eating with him are having some experience of that eschatological wedding feast, the wedding feast that's awaited at the very end of history.

New wine has to go in new wineskins and if it's put into old wineskins it will destroy them and both will be lost. This is an illustration to help to explain Jesus' teaching about fasting. There are the old practices of the law and the pharisaical traditions but there's the way that the fulfilment of the law that Christ brings in goes beyond the containing and constraining structures that they are working within in their tradition and in their legal structure.

John and his disciples and Jesus and his disciples are operating in some ways in different ages. Jesus and his disciples are anticipating what's to come. They're experiencing it, they're having a foretaste of that wedding feast here and now.

John and his disciples were awaiting the action that Christ would bring. The language of the wineskins, tearing, is a very strong language. It suggests something about the way that Christ relates to the old order.

The tearing of the temple curtain for instance or the tearing open of heaven at his baptism. Christ is bringing about a tearing apart of the old order and an eruptive new order arriving within the midst of that. Central to this chapter is the theme that Jesus is bringing something new then.

Something that cannot be bound by the existing categories and structures. As he answers controversy after controversy we see that Christ does not fit expectations. He does not fit the limits and the categories that people are working within.

He's presenting something new, something that's radical, that gets back down to the root. To be a follower of Jesus then is to be a participant in this new age that is dawning in history. A question to consider.

We should not miss that at the heart of these controversies with the religious leaders is the question of who Jesus is. What are some of the ways in which light is shed upon the answer to this question within this passage?