

# Read the Whole Bible with Pastor

## **Monday (February 20) – Exodus 21**

At the end of last week's reading, the Israelites arrive at Mount Sinai, where they are to worship, as the Lord had promised Moses (see Exodus 3:12). What follows for much of the remainder of the books of Moses are laws and instructions about how Israel is to worship the Lord rightly, both in terms of their Divine Service (instructions related to the Tabernacle) and in terms of their daily lives (laws about societal life). As you read these chapters, take note of the ways in which the Lord calls Israel to a high standard of morality even as He teaches them about how to receive the fullness of His blessings through worship in the Tabernacle.

Chapter 21 contains detailed instructions regarding the just treatment of slaves. While we may not appreciate the nuances of these laws, we recognize that the Lord cares for slaves. In fact, it is the Lord's freeing of His people from slavery which informs His will for their lives. Notice how Exodus 20:2 is the rationale for *all* of God's commands to His people. Similarly, we who were once slaves to sin, have been freed by the blood of Christ. We, too, must hold ourselves to a high moral standard of living, lest we return to our slavery (see Romans 6:16-18).

## **Tuesday (February 21) – Exodus 22, 23**

In chapter 22 and the beginning of chapter 23, the laws about societal life continue. In these laws, some of which sound stranger than others to our ears, most of the Second Table of the Law is covered—God's concern for possessions (Seventh Commandment), God's desires for the preservation of life (Fifth Commandment), God's design for marriage (Sixth Commandment), the importance of speaking well of others (Eighth Commandment), and the dangers of scheming (Ninth & Tenth Commandments). While the specific laws given in these chapters do not apply to us directly, the Lord's will at the heart of them is still relevant for us (see the Ten Commandments).

In the second half of chapter 23, the focus shifts to the Third Commandment and the Lord's promise of rest. The laws about the Sabbath and festivals are not given as "one more thing to do." These commands are grounded in a promise: "I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared" (Exodus 23:20). The Israelites are to celebrate the Lord's gift of rest even before they reach the Promised Land. Similarly, we Christians gather every Sunday (or more frequently) to celebrate the Lord's gift of rest to us even before we reach our Promised Land. Eternal life with our Lord Jesus is such a guarantee that even now we celebrate as if it were here. In so doing, we experience the now/not yet presence of our Lord through Word and Sacrament. Our Sunday gatherings are not "one more thing to do." They are celebrations of God's present and future gifts to us!

## **Wednesday (February 22) – Exodus 24**

In chapter 24 God's covenant with Israel is confirmed, as Israel makes a resounding commitment to keep all its laws and decrees. The covenant is sealed as the chiefs of the people of Israel eat and drink in God's presence. Similarly, when our Lord Jesus came to earth, He instituted a new covenant—not one based on adherence to regulations (which no man can

keep). Our Lord instituted a new covenant in His blood as a gift. As confirmation of this covenant, He invites not only the chiefs of the Christian faith, but all Christians to eat and drink in His presence at His Table and to receive His gifts of grace freely.

### **Thursday (February 23) – Exodus 25**

God begins to give detailed instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle and its accoutrements. The Lord takes from the ordinary gifts of the people and creates a place of worship filled with beauty and detail, which testifies to His glorious presence among them. In our churches today, every detail—the pieces of art and stained glass, the ornate robes and paraments, the beauty of the Communion ware, the incense—bears witness to the beauty and glory of the God in whose presence we come to receive grace upon grace from His hand!

### **Friday (February 24) – Exodus 26**

In chapter 26 instructions for the structure of the Tabernacle are given. This tent is the place where God will be present with His people. His presence will dwell above the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle. It is from here that God will forgive and bless His people. However, there is one significant detail hidden in the elaborate instructions which reveals something deeper: The Tabernacle is covered in skin (see verse 14). That is to say, it is covered in flesh. Saint John the Evangelist articulates the significance of this in the first chapter of his Gospel: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt (or tabernacled) among us” (John 1:14). Jesus is the fulfillment of the Tabernacle, because He is God’s eternal fleshly presence with His people on earth.

### **Saturday (February 25) – Exodus 27**

In chapter 27 instructions are given regarding the altar, the court, and the lamps, which will allow the Tabernacle to function as a place of sacrifice where sin is atoned for by the blood of animals. The author of Hebrews tells us that these sacrifices were but a foreshadowing of Jesus’ “once for all” sacrifice on the cross (see Hebrews 10:1-18). We no longer have need to do something or to offer sacrifices in order to receive forgiveness. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is enough to wipe away our sins and to grant us forgiveness.

### **Sunday (February 26) – Exodus 28**

Chapter 28 gives specific details for the elaborate garments for the priests. Pastors today do not serve in the same role of priest as Aaron and his sons. Christ is our High Priest and has taken on the role of mediator between God and man (see Hebrews 7:17). However, pastors are still public servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries (1 Corinthians 4:1). It is fitting, then, that our pastors today wear garments (vestments) fitting of their office—the white robe represents the robe of Christ’s righteousness (Revelation 7:14). The stole represents the yoke of obedience to Christ (Matthew 11:28-20). The chasuble covers the individuality of the pastor and represents the high priestly office of Christ (Hebrews 8:1-6), who through the hands of the pastor, is the true host and food in the Holy Communion.