

## Robert Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Lecture 5A

### Golden Calf and Tabernacle

#### Review

1. Israel's Great Apostasy – Golden Calf -- Exodus 32-34
  - b. Moses' First Intercession

We were looking at the Golden Calf incident in Exodus 32, which on your outline is “Israel’s first great apostasy.” We were working down through that chapter, and we got to the point in verses 7 to 14, which is b on the outline, “Moses’ first intercession.” We looked at Moses’ prayer on behalf of Israel requesting that God turn away from the judgment that he had proposed in verse 10, where God says, “Leave me alone, so that my anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them and make you into a great nation.” Then Moses intercedes. We went down through those next verses and the three arguments he makes. In connection with those three arguments he says toward the end of verse 12, “Turn from your fierce anger and relent. Do not bring disaster on your people.” Then we read the conclusion in 14, “Then the Lord relented, and did not bring on his people the disaster that he intended.” That’s where we ended last week.

In talking about how we understand that word “relent,” it’s *naham*, the main verbal form in the Hebrew is often translated “repented.” I do not want to go back to that discussion particularly, but I want to pick up from there. What we can see from this text is that Moses’ prayer urges God to revise what he said he wanted to do. In verse 10, God “relents.” You might say that his mind changed. That is something we see consistently in Scripture in relation to the prayers of God’s people being effective, in response to the repentance of God’s people.

Remember, we looked at Jeremiah 18:7-8. That’s a key text where Lord says, “If I say that I will bring judgment, and the people repent, then I will relent,” and vice versa, “If I pronounce the people blessed, and the people turn away from me, then I will bring

judgment instead of blessing.” Now admittedly we get in the really difficult theological discussion over how to understand all that’s going on there. In this text here the focus is on Moses’ role as an intercessor, not on the theological issues of divine omniscience and sovereignty. So that’s another discussion.

## 2. Joel 2:12 -- Naham

I want, before going on, to point you to another text, Joel 2:12 to 13, there you have a similar text. In Joel 2:12 it says, “‘Even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return unto me with all your heart with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.’” It’s the same word again. “He relents [*naham*] from sending calamity.” So when people turn to the Lord and repent, the relationship between God and his people is one that he is gracious, longsuffering, and will forgive. That is a factor in repentance. It’s also a factor in intercessory prayer.

Look at James 5:16. That’s a passage talking about prayer where James says, “Therefore confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous man is powerful and effective.” In my own words, God has so sovereignly arranged it so that he chooses to use the prayer of people to bring about the results that without those prayers I think you could say would not have happened. Then you read, “Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain.” So I think the emphasis here is that God is not some unmoved mover. Yes, God is immutable in his purposes. But he’s also a person, and he responds to repentance and is gracious to his people and in this instance to Moses’ prayer.

### c. Moses Returns to the Camp – Exodus 32:15-24

#### 1. The Destruction of the Tablets of Stone

Let's move on to c, "Moses returns to the camp – Exodus 32:15-24." There are two sub-heads there, 1) "The destruction of the tables of stone" and 2) "Aaron's lame excuses." It's interesting that on the mountain, Moses is the intercessor. When he comes down from the mountain into the camp, he shows his anger at the people because of their sin. You see, in verse 15, "Moses turned and went down the mountain, with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands. They were inscribed both sides, front and back, tablets were the work of God, the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets," as we noted last week, what was on those tablets was the Ten Commandments. But he comes into the camp, and you read in Exodus 32:19, "When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain." So Moses comes down, he sees what's going on and he breaks the tablets.

If you look in your citations page 34 there is the paragraph there, by Gispen, in the Bible Students' Commentary published by Zondervan.

Gispen says, "Verses 15 and 16 are parenthetical and draw attention to the great value of the two tablets: they were completely covered with writing, inscribed by God Himself.... This parenthetical statement indicates that Moses' subsequent breaking of the tablets was wrong: even he, the interceding mediator, fell into sin. It would have been much more impressive and would have placed the focus much more on God if Moses had presented the two tablets to the people side by side with the golden calf; that would have been a lesson in comparative religion! Moses had violated "the work of God," where he only had a right to destroy the work of sinful people!"

I'm not so sure Gispen is right there. It's an interesting suggestion but the text itself doesn't make any comments on the rightness or wrongness of what Moses did. It seems to me that Moses' action was a symbolic act. Israel had just broken the covenant.

They had violated one of the fundamental obligations, “You shall not make any graven image.” They had done that. It seems like they were moving toward some sort of syncretistic kind of idea of combining the worship of God with the types of worship you had among the heathen people surrounding them. That’s a violation of the covenant. The breaking of the tablets symbolized the breaking of the covenant, at least that’s how I would read it. Moses isn’t rebuked for it. The Lord just tells him, “Bring two more tablets up here” and he does it again.

## 2. Aaron’s Lame Excuse – Exodus 32:21

But in any case, on the mountain Moses is the intercessor; in the camp he shows his anger over what the people had done. Then he addresses Aaron, and notice in chapter 32 verse 21, he says to Aaron, “What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?” Then you get a pretty lame response, where Aaron tries to excuse himself, and he says, “You know how prone these people are to evil. They said to me, ‘Make us a god who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.’ So I told them, ‘Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.’ Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!” You can’t help but smile when you read that, because it’s obvious that he is attempting to avoid the responsibility. It didn’t quite happen that way. If you compare, what Aaron says there. Go back to verse 4, “He took what they had handed him, and made idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool!” So Aaron was much more involved in it than he let Moses know at that point.

If you go to Deuteronomy 9, while Moses reflects back on this later, he speaks of something that’s not mentioned in Exodus 32. In Deuteronomy 9:20, he says, “The Lord was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him. But at that time I prayed for Aaron too. Also I took that sinful thing of yours, the calf that you had made, and burned it in the fire.” So Moses also interceded on behalf of Aaron, and the Lord turned away his anger from Aaron as well.

Moses himself doesn't respond to Aaron's lame excuses, perhaps distracted by what was going on in the camp, because the very next verse, chapter 32 verse 25, Moses was told that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control, so he stood at the entrance of the camp and said, "Whoever is for the Lord come to me," and all the Levites rallied to him."

### 3. Vengeance on the People – Exodus 32:25-29

That brings us to d on your outline, "Vengeance on the people – Exodus 32:25-29." When Moses issues that challenge, "Whoever is for Yahweh," and the Levites respond, he tells them what he wants them to do. He says, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing their friend and neighbor.' The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. Then Moses said, 'You [to the Levites] have been set apart to the Lord today, for you were against your own sons and brothers and he has blessed you this day.'"

So Moses calls for those on the Lord's side to come to him, and the Levites respond. He tells them to go out into the camp and to put to death those who had been participants in this idolatrous worship; regardless of the relationships. If the person was a brother, a father, or some relative, or friend, whatever, it didn't matter. Three thousand people were put to death. Now this sort of violent action is sometimes hard for us to understand and accept. For many people this is an objection against the God of the Old Testament. But it's clear here it is something that is demanded by God. In the context it is the purpose that is emphasized: the seriousness of God's commands to the people, particularly in that foundation rule. That rule was to be obeyed. This is the beginning of Israel's life as God's covenant people. If they begin in a way that exhibits this kind of conduct, it wouldn't be long before they will go right back into hedonism, paganism, like the people among whom they were to settle. So I think you can say this is an issue that is very closely connected with Israel's existence as God's covenant people. They were to be

to him a holy nation – set apart from all the other people; a kingdom of priests –his own treasured people.

#### 4. Levites: Curse (Gen. 49:7) Turned to Blessing

Exactly what the “blessing” is, in verse 29, is not spelled out here. I might say there’s a translation problem in verse 29 as well, but it seems to me that what’s going on here is that the Levites have turned the curse of their father Jacob by responding to this invitation from Moses to come and stand with him and the Lord. They turned that curse into a blessing. If you go back to Genesis 49:7, you have in Genesis 49 the blessings that Jacob gives to each of his sons. And in verse 5, you have the reference to Simeon and Levi. Verse 5 says, “Simeon and Levi are brothers – their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger, and hamstringed oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger; so fierce, their fury so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob, disperse them in Israel.” Well that would be true for both Simeon and Levi. Neither one would have a tribal territory, and neither of them did. Simeon was sort of absorbed into Judah. Levi never got to have any tribal territory allotment; instead they got the Levitical cities. And that was the curse that was placed on the Levites.

If you go to Numbers 3:6-13, there you read, “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Bring the tribe of Levi, and present them to Aaron the priest to assist him. They are to perform duties for him, and for the whole community at the Tent of Meeting by doing the work of the Tabernacle. They are to take care of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, fulfilling the obligations of the Israelites by doing the work of the Tabernacle. Give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to him. Appoint Aaron and his sons to serve as priests, anyone else who approaches the sanctuary must be put to death.’ The Lord also said to Moses, ‘I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites in place of the first male offspring of every Israelite woman. The Levites are mine, for all the firstborn are mine. When I struck down all the firstborn of Egypt, I set apart for myself every the firstborn in Israel, whether man or animal. They are to be

mine.” The Levites were to represent the firstborn and were given the task of performing all the duties associated with work in the Tabernacle, and ultimately in the temple. So the Levites become appointed to the service of the sanctuary in place of the firstborn. It seems to me that it is this incident that provided the basis for the change for Levi from being cursed to being blessed because they stood with Moses during the golden calf incident.

e. Further Intercession – Exodus 32:30-33:23

1. Being Blotted Out

Sub-point e on your outline is, “Further Intercession – Exodus 32:30-33:23.” We read in verse 30, “The next day Moses said to the people, ‘You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the Lord, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.’” The people were probably grieving for those who have been put to death, undoubtedly impressed with the seriousness of their sin. Now Moses says again, he will go to the Lord as their intercessor – their representative. And notice how he puts it, “Perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”

So he goes back and we read in chapter 32 verse 31, “What a great sin these people have committed! They made themselves gods of gold.” But then he makes this remarkable proposal in verse 32, “But now, please, forgive their sin.” I think it may be better translated: “But now, if you will forgive their sin,” and then a blank where you should supply “good.” “But if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.” That statement by Moses is much like that of Paul’s in Romans 9:3. Paul says, “I could wish that I myself were cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my race, the people of Israel.” It’s the same spirit that Moses had here. The question is, what is he proposing? What is this “book you have written”? Opinions are divided on that among commentators. “Please forgive their sin, but if not, block my name out of the book you have written.” Is that book the Book of the Living? In other words, is Moses saying, “Let me die”? I think that’s possible. But the other interpretation that some argue for, is it’s the

book of the Redeemed. I think that's probably more likely. Because then that creates more theological questions: how can you be blotted out of the book of the Redeemed? What about the idea of eternal security? But it seems to me that what Moses is proposing is that he takes the penalty of these people by being blotted out from among those who were Redeemed, so that they could be freed from God's further judgment on them.

If you look at your citations, there are a number of things here, look at the top of page 37. This is from Gispén again. He says, "In verse 33, the Lord says that it was impossible for him to accept the offer Moses made in verse 32." Moses says in verse 32, "But now, if you will forgive their sin, good, but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written. The Lord replied to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. Now go lead the people.'" As Gispén says, "Being blotted out of his book does not depend on anyone's will, but solely on him. And he punishes only those who have sinned against him, without respect of persons. The Lord did not say that he always did this; he merely cut off Moses in his attempt to move the Lord to blot him out of the book. Moses also sinned against the Lord, and the Lord did not destroy him. We must see this verse in the context of the whole Bible, which later reveals more about this book and about the Lord's elective decree. Yet Moses' offer did have an effect, as verse 34 shows. He was told to go and lead the people to Canaan."

If you go to page 36 of your citations, there are several paragraphs by John Calvin. I don't want to take the time to read all of it, but go down to the second paragraph, where he is commenting on verse 33, "Whoever has sinned against me, him I will blot out." Here's Calvin's comment on that, "In these words God adapts himself to the comprehension of the human mind, when he says, 'Him will I blot out;' for hypocrites make such false profession of his name, that they are not accounted aliens, until God openly renounces them: and hence their manifest rejection is called erasure."

Now, if you go back up to the first couple lines of the preceding paragraph, Calvin says, "By 'the book,' in which God says to have written his elect, must be understood, metaphorically, his decree." In other words, he sees it as a metaphor for God's decree. Let me read further, "But the expression which Moses uses, asking to be blotted out of



the number of the pious, is an incorrect one, since it cannot be that one who has been once elected should ever be reprobated; And those lunatics,” – this is the kind of language you often find in Calvin and more so in Luther than Calvin – “who, on this ground, overturn, as far as they can, the prime article of our faith concerning God’s eternal predestination, thereby demonstrate their malice no less than their ignorance. David uses two expressions in the same sense, ‘blotted out,’ and ‘not written.’ ‘Let them be blotted out from the book of the Living and not be written with the righteous,’ Psalm 69:28. We cannot hence infer any change in the counsel of God, but this phrase is merely manifest that the reprobate, who for a season are counted amongst the number of the elect, in no respect belong to the body of the Church. Thus the secret catalog, in which the elect are written, is contrasted by Ezekiel with that external profession, which is often deceitful. Justly, therefore, does Christ bid his disciples rejoice, ‘because their names were written in heaven.’”

In your citation, if you go back to page 34, bottom of the page, you’ll see Berkouwer, *Divine Election*. There are some comments on this Book of Life as it comes to be understood in the New Testament. I’m not going to read all of Berkouwer, but on top of page 36, its last paragraph, where Berkouwer says, “The Book of Life is connected with deep joy (Luke 10:20), with service of the gospel (Philippians 4:3), and with solace amidst great terror. ‘In the New Testament the Book of Life becomes free of fatalism, it becomes the expression of the certainty of salvation for God’s children who know themselves chosen for eternity because they have their eternal foundation in God’s counsel of grace.’” It seems to me, throughout all the passages where we have references to this book what it really comes down to is that this is something that gives joy and certainty and the assurance to the believer.

So when we get back to this text, Moses makes this proposal, the Lord doesn’t really say that this is possible or it isn’t possible; he says, it’s up to me, “I will,” in verse 33, “blot out of my book whoever has sinned against me.” But then he tells Moses, “You go and lead the people to the place I spoke of.” So he gives Moses the task of leading the people; he doesn’t directly answer his proposal, but says blotting out of the book rests

with himself alone.

## 2. Moses Leading and the Driving Out of the Inhabitants of the Land

As soon as he tells Moses in chapter 32 verse 34, to go and lead the people, another idea is introduced here which is enormously significant. He says, “Go lead these people to the places I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sins.” He says, “My angel will go before you,” and when you get into the next chapter, in 33:2, that’s elaborated on. He says, “I will send an angel before you, and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land of milk and honey.” But here is what the significance of that angel is: I’m going to send an angel before you, but I will not go with you! Exodus 33:3, “Because you are stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.” You read in chapter 32 verse 35 that they were struck with a plague, that was their punishment, but he says, “Now go up to the land of Canaan, and I will send my angel, but I myself will not go with you.” That becomes the issue in the rest of chapter 33.

## 3. Exodus 33:7 – God Leads Israel, Not Angel and the Tabernacle and Tent of

### Meeting

There is a parenthetical thing here, I want to make a few comments on, before we trace out the development of the Lord saying, “An angel will go with you, I myself will not;” which causes Moses to intercede further, and again the Lord relents, and says his own presence will be with them. But before getting there, look at Exodus 33:7. It has provoked quite a bit of discussion. We read, “Now Moses used to make a tent, [or used to take the tent], and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the ‘tent of meeting.’ Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the

camp.” I want to make a few comments on that reference to the tent of meeting in Exodus 33:7.

Critical scholars have made a lot of this verse, and they see a discrepancy between what they thought of as a primitive tent of meeting, which is according to them part of the E source and the E source is the tabernacle. According to a pretty standard critical theory, there was no tabernacle in the wilderness period, in the time of Moses. If you draw a timeline, of course, the E source was about 850 or 950 B.C. The P source was right around 450 B.C. Moses is back at 1200 to 1400 B.C. Critics say in the time of Moses there was no tabernacle. All that material that describes in detail how the tabernacle was to be constructed, and how it was actually set up, they say that is all late, post-exilic P document material. It reflects what the priestly writers were doing taking the temple and its structure and the elements of the holy place, the altar, the table of showbread, and all of those things, and projecting that back into the Mosaic time. So the descriptions of the tabernacle are simply a projection into that earlier period from the late period of time from exilic times, but the reality is the tabernacle itself, they would say, never existed. And what you have in this verse 7 of chapter 33 is the E description of the tabernacle and the detailed description is a P document description. So you have these two sources, and hence two different descriptions of the tabernacle. The tabernacle itself was really unhistorical – it never existed.

#### 4. On the Tabernacle

Now, why was the tabernacle constructed? At this point in time, it hadn't been put together yet. It's not until Exodus 35:1 and following, through 35:9, where the tabernacle is actually constructed. There was no tabernacle at the time of the Golden Calf incident. When you look at the language used to designate the tabernacle, you find a variety of terms. One is simply the Hebrew word for tent – *ohel*. The most common is *mishkan*. It comes from the root word *shakan*, “to dwell.” *Mishkan* is a noun from the verbal form *shakan*. It captures the idea that God wants to dwell among his people, Israel; to dwell, in

the tabernacle.

Another designation is the one you have in this Exodus 33:7, *ohel moed* – “tent of meeting.” It’s interesting that in the King James Version, “tent of meeting,” *ohel moed* was translated “tabernacle of congregation.” In other words, *moed* is translated, “congregation.” The word *moed* simply means “meeting.” It’s a tent of meeting between God and Moses. It’s not a tent of meeting of the people together as a corporate body. In other words, “Tabernacle of Congregation” gives a wrong idea on what this label is describing. The other label that is sometimes used is *mishkan haedut* – Tabernacle of Testimony.

However, to get back to this verse 7, where you have that third label, it’s there on slide 30, *ohel moed*; that description does occur in connection with the tabernacle. If you go back to Exodus 27:21, where instructions are given for the building of the tabernacle, you read, “In the tent of meeting, outside the curtain,” that is, in front of the testimony, “Aaron and his sons would keep the lamps burning before the Lord.” Tent of meeting there is *ohel moed*, just as it is in 33:7. So it appears that Moses took the name for the tabernacle, *ohel moed* and applied it to a tent that he set up outside the camp, where he would meet with God. I think that has led some to think, you get this confusion, you have it here in reference to the tabernacle. It is not a reference to “the tabernacle,” as some might say, it is simply a reference to a tent that Moses pitched outside the camp, where he went to intercede for the people and to receive the Lord’s word for them. So you read in Exodus 33:7 and following, “Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp, some distance away, calling it the ‘tent of meeting.’ Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrance to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshipped, each at the entrance at his tent. The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of

Nun did not leave the tent.”

## 5. God's Presence

So there's this reference to this tent where Moses spoke with God outside the camp. It's not the tabernacle, all these elaborate theories of source criticism miss the point of most of what's going on here. So what's Moses doing out there in that tent? Exodus 33:12, Moses said, “You [Lord] have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you had not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name you have found favor with me.’ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways, so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.’ The Lord replied,” and I think there is a translation question here; I think this is an interrogative. The NIV says, “‘My presence will go with you and I will give you rest.’” I think that's an interrogative: “Shall my presence go with you? And Shall I give you rest?” In chapter 33 verse 15 Moses responds to him, “If your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from you.” See, that's that issue. Is the Lord going to go with his people from this point further on their journeys, or is it an angel who's going to accompany them, going back to Exodus 32:34 and 33:2 and following? So in chapter 33 verse 17, the Lord relents again, “The Lord said to Moses, ‘I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.’” So the Lord relents again, and his presence will go with them as they continue on their journey.

### f. The Covenant Renewed – Exodus 34 – Cultic Decalogue (?)

Let's go on to f, “The covenant renewed – Exodus 34.” You get into a question of critical theories again with chapter 34. Chapter 34 is sometimes, what they call the “Cultic Decalogue.” The theory is that in Exodus 20, where you have the Ten Commandments, that's the E source. Exodus 34, where you have this “Cultic Decalogue,” that's the J source according to source critics. So again you have two Decalogues; you have the Exodus 20 Decalogue and you have the Exodus 34 Decalogue. The Exodus 34 Decalogue is said to be J source, and the Exodus 20 Decalogue is said to

be the E source.

If you glance down through Exodus 34, you can pick out some commandments that are in the form of the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20. For example, look at verse 14, “Do not worship any other god. For the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” Verse 17, “Do not make cast idols.” Verse 18, “Celebrate the feast of unleavened bread.” Verse 21, “Six days you shall labor, the seventh day you shall rest.” Verse 22, “Celebrate the feast of weeks.” Verse 25, “Do not offer the blood of the sacrifice.” Verse 26, “Bring the best of the first fruit.” Verse 26b, “Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.”

So you go down through, and you see commands of “do this, don’t do that.” You try to pick out ten of them to get a Decalogue and that gets a little more complicated. So what you see is, the emphasis of this chapter is on ceremonial worship. These are commands that have to do with the way in which Israel is to worship the Lord. The reason why you have that kind of an emphasis here is that Israel has just broken the covenant with the sin in that particular area of their religious observance. They have made this idol. So the Lord gives them these additional regulations about worship in the aftermath of the Golden Calf incident. This in a way changes that fact. This not a new edition of the Ten Commandments. It doesn’t change the fact that when the new tablets are written again by the finger of God it is the same thing that was on the first – the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20. In fact, you see in the first verse of chapter 34, the Lord says, “Chisel out from stone tablets like the first. I will write on them the words that were on the first tablet.” So Moses did that. At the end of this pericope, you read in verse 28, “He,” that is, God, “wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant – the Ten Commandments.”

#### 1. Moses’ Face and Horns – Vulgate

So in Exodus 34 you have the Covenant Renewed with this additional material given to Israel. That focuses on the way in which the Lord desires them to worship himself. You read at the end of the chapter, “When Moses came down from Mount Sinai

with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands,” this is chapter 34 verse 29, the NIV says, “He was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him.” And you read in verse 33, he put a veil over his face. The Latin Vulgate translates Exodus 33:29b, “He was not aware that his face was radiant” as “he knew not his face was horned.” The reason for that is that there’s the verb “*qaran*,” which means “to send out rays.” There’s a noun form *qeren* built off that same root which means “horns.” The original text didn’t have vowels. When Jerome was translating the Hebrew into the Latin, he took this *keren* root which, means “horn” translating it “Moses didn’t know that his face was horned.”

Here’s an interesting fact but not significant; I was never aware of that until in the 1960s, I was in Rome and went into the cathedral that is called “St. Peter’s Chains.” In the cathedral in the altar there is this old box that has some chains in it that were supposed to have chained Peter while he was in the prison. If you’re standing, looking at that altar up to the right side, off to the side of the front of the church, there’s an enormous statue done by Michelangelo: Moses, with the tablets of stone. It’s a tremendous piece of sculpture. It is enormously impressive; much more impressive than the chains of Peter. But the funny thing about it is, Moses has these horns protruding from his forehead. I remember looking at that and I didn’t have any idea why Michelangelo would have sculpted Moses and put horns on him. I mean, usually you’d think of horns on Satan. I looked into that later, and found that it comes from this text. Michelangelo was reading the Latin Vulgate, and text, “He came down the mountain, and didn’t know his face was horned!” So he made the statue of Moses with horns. If you ever have a chance to travel to Rome – it is a remarkable piece of sculpture – then you’ll know why Moses had horns. You may also see it in some paintings; some old paintings picture Moses with horns.

##### 5. The Tabernacle is Built – Exodus 35-39

Let's go on to 5,"The Tabernacle is built." Now that the covenant is reestablished Moses had set out to carry out the instructions that had been given to him in the Exodus 25 to 31. It's interesting when you see the structure of the book. In chapters 25 to 31, Moses was given the instructions about how to build the Tabernacle. In chapters 35 to 39, he actually sets about building the Tabernacle. So you have instructions to build, and you have the account of the actual building. In between, as an interruption of that sequence, you have chapters 32 to 34, which is the Golden Calf incident. The Golden Calf incident was sort of Israel's seemingly contrived human way to secure the presence of the Lord, and that's contrasted with the divinely intended way that God desired his people to provide for his presence.

You remember those instructions about building the Tabernacle, those instructions ended, if you go back there to the end of chapter 31, with a command about Sabbath. In 31:12, I made some comments on that. "Work six days, the seventh is for the Lord, no work is to be done." Then you get that interlude of chapters 32 to 34. When you start chapter 35, what's it start with? Sabbath recognition, he goes back and re-emphasizes the Sabbath. "Moses assembled the whole Israelite community. These are the things the Lord is commanding you to do. For six days work is to be done, the seventh day shall be holy." So he re-emphasizes that. We can look at the construction of the Tabernacle as a provision for the continual presence of the Lord in the midst of his people just as he had been at Sinai. At Sinai, he comes down from the mountain, he gives his word, Moses gives God's word to the people. The tabernacle is really a kind of a movable Sinai, because as the Israelites set out on the journey, after the construction of the tabernacle, the Lord is going to move with them. But his presence will constantly be in their midst. So that work of the construction of the tabernacle is now to begin.

#### a. History of Interpretation of the Tabernacle

Before going further, I'm not going to go through these chapters and comment on them, but I did want to make some general comments on the history of the interpretation of the tabernacle. The tabernacle has been the subject of a great deal of speculative and,



perhaps, irresponsible kind of interpretation. In the history of its interpretation, a very wide variety of symbolic meanings have been suggested for the tabernacle. Go back to even some Jewish interpretations, Philo of Alexandria, who was a Jewish expositor. He was very allegorical in his method of interpretation and said that the tabernacle represented a pattern of the universe. The outer court represents the earth, the Holy Place – heaven, the table with the twelve loaves of shew-bread, represents the year with 12 months, the golden candlestick with seven branches represents the seven planets. I'm not sure what we do now since we have more than seven planets. The linen of purple, blue and scarlet represents the elements, and so on. So that's one example.

Others have seen the tabernacle as depicting man in the image of God. The Holy of Holies is man's spirit – it's the center. The Holy Place is the soul, where there is the candlestick with the seven lights, that is, various types of understanding, discernment, knowledge and conception. The Outer Court is the body, open to everyone, so that everybody can see what it is and how it works.

So these kinds of very speculative interpretations are quite common. When you get beyond the looking at the tabernacle as a whole, symbolic of something of that sort, there have been a lot of other expositors who take all the colors, the materials, the types of metal, and find significance in the colors; find significance in the metals.

#### b. Faibairn's Advice on Interpreting the Symbolism of the Tabernacle

If you look at your citations page 38, and over on 39, I think I'll take the time to read this, because I think it gets at the issue. This is from Patrick Fairbairn's *The Typology of Scripture*, which talks about the various articles that make up the tabernacle and the materials. He says, "In regard to the other articles used, it does not appear that any higher reason can be assigned for their selection, than that they were the best and fittest of their several kinds. They consisted of the most precious metals, of the finest stuffs in linen manufacture, with embroidered workmanship, the richest and most gorgeous colors, and the most beautiful and costly gems. It was absolutely necessary, by means of some external apparatus, to bring out the idea of the surpassing glory and

magnificence of Jehovah as the King of Israel, and of the singular honor which was enjoyed by those who were admitted to minister and serve before Him. But this could only be done by the rich and costly nature of the materials which were employed in the construction of the tabernacle, and of the official garments of those who were appointed to serve in its courts. It is expressly said of the high priest's garments, that they were to be made 'for glory (or ornament) and for beauty'; for which purpose they were to consist of the fine linen cloth of Egypt, embroidered with needle work done in blue, purple, and scarlet, the most brilliant colors. And if means were thus taken for producing effect in respect to the garments of those who ministered in the tabernacle, it is but reasonable to infer that the same would be done in regard to the tabernacle itself. Hence we read of the temple, the more perfect form of the habitation, that it was to be made 'so exceeding magnificent as to be of fame and glory throughout all countries'; and that among other things employed by Solomon for this purpose, 'the house was garnished with precious stones for beauty.' Such materials, therefore, were used in the construction of the tabernacle, as were best fitted for conveying suitable impressions of the greatness and glory of the Being for whose peculiar habitation it was erected. And as in this we are furnished with a sufficient reason for their employment, to search for others we only wander into the regions of uncertainty and conjecture."

In other words, what Fairbairn is suggesting is we shouldn't look for other meaning than the fact that these materials and colors were chosen to emphasize the magnificence and the glory of what this place was made to be. So in his next paragraph, he says, "We therefore discard the meanings derived by Bahr, as well as those of the elder theologians, from the intrinsic qualities of the metals, and the distinctive colors employed in the several fabrics. They are here out of place. The question is not, whether such things might not have been used so as to convey certain ideas of a moral and religious nature, but whether they actually were so employed here; and neither the occasion of their employment, nor the manner in which this was done, in our opinion, gives the least warrant for the supposition.

So far as the metals were concerned, we see no ground in Scripture for any symbolical meaning being attached to them, separate from that suggested by their costliness and ordinary uses. That brass should have been the prevailing metal in the fittings and furniture of the outer court, where the people at large could come with their offerings, and in the sanctuary itself silver and gold, might undoubtedly be regarded as imaging the advance that is made in the discovery of the divine excellence and glory, the more one gets into the secret of his presence and is prepared for beholding his beauty.

A symbolical use of certain colors we undoubtedly find, such as of white, in expressing the idea of purity, or of red, in expressing that of guilt; but when so used, the particular color must be rendered prominent, and connected also with an occasion plainly calling for such a symbol. This was not the case in either respect with the colors in the tabernacle. The colors there, for the most part, appeared in a combined form; and if it had been possible to single them out, and give to each a distinctive value, there was nothing to indicate how the ideas symbolized were to be viewed, whether in reference to God or to his worshippers. Indeed the very search would necessarily have led to endless subtleties, and prevented the mind from receiving the one direct and palpable impression which we have seen was intended to be conveyed.

“As examples of the arbitrariness necessarily connected with such meanings, Bahr makes the red significant, in its purple shade, of the majesty, in its scarlet, of the life-giving property of God; while Neumann, after fresh investigations into the properties of light and color, sees in the red the expression of God’s love, inclining as purple to the mercy of grace, as scarlet to the jealousy of judgment. With Bahr, the blue is the symbol of the sky majesty whence God manifests his glory; with Neumann, it points to the depth of ocean, and is the symbol of God’s substance, which dwells in light inaccessible, and lays in the stability of the Creator the foundation of the covenant. Such diverse and arbitrary meanings, rivaling the caprice of the elder typologists, show the fancifulness of the ground on which they are raised. And interwoven as the colors were in works of embroidery, not standing each apart in some place of its own, we have no reason to

imagine they had any other purpose to serve than similar works of art in the high priest's dress, namely, for ornament and beauty," and leave it at that. In other words, don't go seeking deeper spiritual significance for the colors and materials of the tabernacle."

I think that's probably good advice. There's been an enormous amount of abuse in the area that the interpretation of these things with respect to the tabernacle. However, having said that, I think we can say, and even as the book of Hebrews seems to suggest this, that there is a legitimate sense in which the tabernacle can be given a typological significance. In other words, it's pointing forward to something greater that is to come.

### c. Vannoy and Vos on Typological Significance of the Tabernacle: Symbol and Type

Let me go a bit further. I think once you say that there can be legitimate typological significance attached to the tabernacle, the question quickly becomes, "How do you sort out from what's legitimate from what's illegitimate?" I think Gerhardus Vos has given some good direction with these passages, not just for what an artist's rendering of what the book of the Tabernacle would look like. That's the diagram on slide 31.

Let's get back to this question of meaning and significance as far as typological significance. Look at your citation page 40. In his *Biblical Theology*, Vos discusses typology, and he discusses it in connection with the tabernacle of God and says if you're going to talk about typological significance, in terms of tabernacle or anything else in the Old Testament, you must establish a connection between the symbolism of something and its typological significance.

If you look at page 40, in the definition, what's a symbol? Top of page 40 in your citation, according to Vos, "A symbol is in its religious significance something that profoundly portrays a certain fact or principle or relationship of a spiritual nature in a visible form. The things it pictures are of present existence and present application. They are in force at the time in which the symbol operates." So that's what a symbol is. It is portraying something of a spiritual nature; some fact or truth of a spiritual nature in a physical form. The things that it pictures must be of a present existence and present

application. With a type, he says, in the next quoted line there, “With the same thing, regarded as a type, it is different. A typical thing is prospective; it relates to what will become real or applicable in the future.” So a type is prospective; a symbol is of present existence. Then here’s where he posits a connection, as seen on slide 32; he says, “A type can never be a type independently of its first being a symbol. And only after having discovered what a thing symbolizes can we legitimately proceed to put the question what it typifies for the latter can never be aught else than what it symbolizes lifted to a higher plain.”

Go back to page 40, third paragraph. Vos says, “The main problem to understand is, how the same system of portrayals can have served at one and the same time in a symbolical and a typical capacity. Obviously this would have been impossible if the things portrayed had been in each case different or diverse, unrelated to each other. If something is an accurate picture of a certain reality, then it would seem disqualified by this very fact for pointing to another future reality of a quite different nature. The solution of the problem lies in this, that the things symbolized and the things typified are not different sets of things. They are in reality the same things, only different in this respect that they come first on a lower stage of development in redemption, and then again, in a later period, on a higher stage. Thus what is symbolical with regard to the already-existing edition of the fact or truth becomes typical, prophetic, of the later, final edition of the same fact or truth. From this it will be perceived that a type can never be a type independently of its being first a symbol. The gateway to the house of typology is at the farther end of the house of symbolism.”

So, you have a symbol that portrays some spiritual truth that is of a present reality. That becomes typical of a later edition in a long line of the redemptive history; it is a later edition of the same truth. Not a different truth, but the same truth reappearing at a later, higher stage of redemptive history. “So only after having discovered what a thing symbolizes can we then ask the question what it typifies. The latter can never be anything else but the former. Now take this one step further. The bond that holds types to anti-type together must be a bond of vital continuity in the progress of redemption.”

Notice the next paragraph on page 40, “This is the fundamental rule to be observed in ascertaining what elements in the Old Testament are typical, and wherein the things corresponding to them as antitypes consist. Only after having discovered what a thing symbolizes, can we legitimately proceed to put the question what it typifies, for the latter can never be aught else than the former lifted to a higher plane. The bond that holds type and antitype together must be a bond of vital continuity in the progress of redemption. Where this is ignored, and in the place of this bond are put accidental resemblances, void of inherent spiritual significance, all sorts of absurdities will result, such as must bring the whole subject of typology into disrepute. Examples of this are: the scarlet cord of Rahab prefigures the blood of Christ; the four lepers at Samaria, the four Evangelists.

“The tabernacle affords a clear instance of the coexistence of the symbolical and the typical in one of the principle institutions of the Old Testament religion. It embodies the eminently religious idea of the dwelling of God with His people.”

In other words, the truth here symbolizing the tabernacle is God dwelling in the midst of his people. Where does that truth reappear in the progress of redemption? That is where he develops it. The typical significance of the tabernacle should be sought in the close dependence upon symbolic significance.

#### d. Tabernacle and Christ, the Church, Individual Christian and New Jerusalem

We must ask, where do these religious principles and realities, which the tabernacle served to teach the community, reappear in the subsequent history of redemption, lifted to their consummate stage? First, we discover them in the glorified Christ, the evangelist speaks of this in John 1:14, it is the one in whom God came to tabernacle among men in order to reveal to them his grace and glory. In John 2:19-22, Jesus himself predicts the Old Testament temple which his enemies by their attitude toward him, were bent on destroying. He will build up again in three days through his resurrection. This affirms the continuity between the Old Testament sanctuary restored by

person. So this truth of God dwelling in the midst of his people reappears with Christ. It's the same truth. Christ came to dwell, tabernacling among men.

But it's not only there; see in the next paragraph, "But what is true of Christ is likewise true of the Church. Of that also the tabernacle is a type. This could not be otherwise, because the Church is the body of the risen Christ. For this reason the church is called 'the house of God.'" So it's in Christ and in the Church. Next he sees it in the individual Christian, and then ultimately in the new Jerusalem. So you see the truth of God's dwelling in the midst of his people, symbolizes the tabernacle is pointing forward. So the typological significance where you see that same truth of God dwelling in the midst of his people reappears in the progress of redemptive history, which is that line, the bond, that holds these things together. But it must be the same truth. What is symbolized must be the same truth as what is typified. So you have Christ, the Church, the individual Christian and then new Jerusalem. I think that Vos' connection of looking for the same truth in what is in the symbol reappearing in the type keeps you from falling into irresponsible kinds of typological interpretations. If you lose that same truth, it seems to me, then you're bringing meaning to the text. You're not really following a legitimate method of interpretation. There has been a lot of abuses of interpretation with typological interpretations.

The tabernacle is pointing forward to the temple. The temple is like the tabernacle only on a more permanent and larger scale. Although both the tabernacle and temple are the same truth symbolized both by the tabernacle and symbolized by the temple. So in a sense both the temple and the tabernacle are pointing to different manifestations of that same truth, Immanuel – God with us.

Transcribed by Hyeyon Lim  
Rough edited by Ted Hildebrandt  
Final edit by Katie Ells  
Re-narrated by Ted Hildebrandt

