

Dr. John Oswalt, Exodus, Session 13, Exodus 25-31 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Exodus, Session 13, Exodus 25-31, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a transcript of a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus 25-31. **The lecture focuses on the construction and symbolism of the Tabernacle**, exploring its components (Ark of the Covenant, altar, priestly garments) and their theological significance. **Oswalt emphasizes the Tabernacle as a representation of God's presence among his people**, contrasting it with pagan temples and highlighting the importance of the covenant and mediation between God and humanity. He also discusses the importance of **experiencing God's presence versus merely having a religious experience**. Finally, the lecture connects the Tabernacle's symbolism to Christ's role as the ultimate mediator.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Exodus, Session 13 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Exodus).



Oswalt_Exodus_Session 13.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 13, Exodus 25-31

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on Exodus 25-31:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus 25-31

Overview: This session focuses on Exodus 25-31, which details the instructions for building the Tabernacle, its furnishings, the priestly garments, and consecration, and the importance of the Sabbath. Oswalt frames these chapters as a revelation of God's *person and presence*, contrasting with previous sections on God's power (Ex 1-15), providence (Ex 16-18), and principles (Ex 19-24). He emphasizes that the Tabernacle is the fulfillment of the Exodus story, demonstrating God's desire to dwell among His people, and that these chapters are not an "add-on" but the heart of the narrative. He also stresses the necessity of mediation with God due to human sinfulness and how this all points towards Christ as the ultimate mediator.

Key Themes & Ideas:

1. The Danger of Experiential Religion:

- Oswalt uses the example of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, who "saw God" (Exodus 24:10-11) yet later offered "strange fire" (Leviticus 10:1-2). This is used as an illustration of how powerful experiences can be, but those experiences can also be dangerous if they do not lead to a deep and lasting transformation of the inner person. Oswalt says, "They didn't allow God to permeate their lives enough to keep sin out."
- He notes that focusing on the experience itself can lead to a superficial understanding of God rather than a genuine permeation of His character into one's life. He cites the Welsh revival of 1905 as a historical example of how experience can become a substitute for God. "The experience becomes the revival and not the true permeation of their lives by the character and nature of God."

- He points out that the description of seeing God focuses on the *pavement under his feet*, not on God's face or form. He connects this to Moses' request in Exodus 33 to see God's face which God refuses because "no one can see my face and live," arguing that while humans can experience a *sense* of God's presence, they cannot perceive His true nature, since, "Created eyes cannot look upon the reality of the creator."
- He notes that in Isaiah 6, Isaiah's vision of the Lord is described as "the hem of his garment filled the temple". Oswalt says, "words stop there."
- This highlights that there are levels of intimacy with God, and this is "something that is at God's giving." He contrasts this with a tendency to "take it for granted."

1. **Purpose of the Exodus: God's Presence, Not Just Canaan:**

- Oswalt argues that the ultimate purpose of the Exodus was not simply to reach Canaan, but to establish God's presence among His people. "The purpose of the Exodus is not truly Canaan. The purpose of the Exodus is God's presence revealed in his people's lives."
- He emphasizes that humanity's deepest need is deliverance from alienation from God, which is the purpose for which Christ came. "Ultimately, God is most concerned that we be restored to fellowship with him."
- The Tabernacle is thus a fulfillment of God's promise and desire to dwell among His people and "came down off the mountain into the camp and, of course, ultimately through Christ, into the heart."

1. **Structure and Purpose of Exodus 25-40:**

- The chapters are divided into three parts:
- Exodus 25-31: Instructions for the Tabernacle and priesthood - God's way.
- Exodus 32-34: The Golden Calf incident - Man's way.
- Exodus 35-40: Report of the Tabernacle's construction - obedience to God's way.
- The two detailed accounts of the Tabernacle's construction (instructions in 25-31 and report in 35-40) highlight the importance of the center of worship being defined and built according to God's specifications. "How important is it that the center of worship be defined?"

- The fact that the tabernacle is set up briefly before they move on to Canaan highlights the book's emphasis on closure and the central importance of God's presence. "Moses wants to give you closure."
- The Tabernacle's construction is described as a process of working outwards from the most holy (the Ark) to the least holy (the courtyard). "The movement is from the center outwards." This was to show, "The heart is the most important."

1. **The Tabernacle and its Significance:**

- Oswalt emphasizes that the Tabernacle's construction involved a great variety of materials and colors (gold, silver, blue, purple, scarlet, etc.) demonstrating that, "God is never boring." He notes that this variety is intended to engage all our senses in worship, saying, "God is saying, to worship me, you don't have to cut off your aesthetic sensibilities."
- He uses visualizations from Paul Kina's "The Tabernacle of God in the Wilderness of Sinai" to illustrate the Tabernacle's structure and elements like the outer court, the altar, the laver, the inner veil, the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the Ark of the Covenant.
- He highlights that the Ark of the Covenant is placed where pagan idols would be in pagan temples, but the Ark represents a covenant relationship with God based on His grace. "What does the Ark of the Covenant represent? A covenant, a relationship with God based on His grace and issuing in behavior like His." This contrasts with the manipulation and control inherent in idolatry.

1. **The Priesthood and Mediation:**

- The instructions for the priesthood are linked to the Tabernacle, as they provide the means for God to come home to the hearts of His people.
- Oswalt underscores the necessity of mediation between God and humans because of human sinfulness. "It is not possible for us humans to come into the presence of God without a mediator." He elaborates that, "The unclean cannot exist in the presence of the clean."
- The priests serve as mediators, representing God to the people and the people to God. "Someone who, on the one hand, will reveal God to us, and on the other hand, will represent us to God."

- The priestly garments and activities are a preparation for the ultimate mediator, Jesus Christ. "This is all preparatory to Jesus." He notes that the book of Hebrews argues that the human mediator had to atone for his own sins, but Jesus didn't and could atone for ours.
- He comments on the Catholic church's view of the need for Christian priests, and the Reformation's emphasis on the "priesthood of all believers." He argues that, in fact, we still have a priest, but that mediator is Christ. "We each have our own priest who makes it possible for us to come into the presence of God."
- He explains that praying "in Jesus' name" means approaching the Father "as though I were Christ," rather than using it as a magic formula.

1. **The Sabbath:**

- Oswalt notes the importance of Sabbath in these chapters, which is "not directly related to tabernacle or priesthood." He notes that the instructions end with Sabbath requirements.
- It is connected to the report of the tabernacle's construction in chapter 35.
- It "reaffirms the importance of the Sabbath" which is "one of the Ten Commandments."

Conclusion:

Dr. Oswalt's lecture provides a deep theological understanding of Exodus 25-31. He emphasizes that the construction of the Tabernacle was the culmination of God's intent for the Exodus, and it signifies the restoration of God's presence with his people. He also emphasizes that all of this was pointing towards the ultimate mediator, Jesus Christ, through whom we can all have access to God. This lecture serves to warn against superficiality in faith, stressing the importance of genuine internal transformation and the need for a mediator, in the person of Christ, to approach God.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 13, Exodus 25-31

Exodus 25-31 Study Guide

Short Answer Quiz

1. What was the significance of the covenant meal shared by God and the elders of Israel?
2. How did Nadab and Abihu demonstrate a lack of permeation by God's holiness, despite their experience of seeing God?
3. According to Oswalt, what is the deepest need of humans that God seeks to address?
4. How does Oswalt characterize the difference between chapters 1-15, 16-18, and 19-24 of Exodus?
5. What is significant about the fact that the instructions for the Tabernacle in Exodus 25-31 begin with the Ark and move outward?
6. What are the four main colors emphasized in the materials of the Tabernacle, and what does Oswalt suggest they represent?
7. According to Oswalt, what is the key difference between the Hebrew understanding of the temple and the practices of the Canaanites?
8. What does Oswalt say is the difference between religion and the covenant relationship with God?
9. Why is a mediator necessary to come into the presence of God, and how does the priesthood fit into that need?
10. How does Oswalt interpret the phrase "in Jesus' name" in prayer, and what is it NOT?

Short Answer Quiz Answer Key

1. The covenant meal underlined the significance and mutuality of the covenant, with God as the host inviting honored guests, indicating a close relationship.
2. Despite seeing God, Nadab and Abihu offered "strange fire," demonstrating that their experience did not transform their character or prevent them from sin.
3. Oswalt states that the deepest need of humans is for deliverance from alienation from God, which is caused by sin.

4. Chapters 1-15 are a revelation of God's power to redeem, 16-18 reveal God's providence and care, and 19-24 are a revelation of his principles.
5. Starting with the Ark signifies that the heart of God's presence and covenant is the most important, moving outward to the less essential aspects.
6. The colors are gold (royalty, kingship), white (purity), blue (serenity), and purple (richness). These colors engage our visual senses.
7. The Hebrews are very concerned about getting the details right in terms of the shape of the Tabernacle and the symmetry of it, which was not the case for the Canaanites.
8. Religion, according to Oswalt, is about manipulating the forces of this world to satisfy individual needs, while a covenant with God is a relationship based on grace and leading to behavior like God's.
9. Humans are too fallen and unclean to come into the presence of God directly without being destroyed. Therefore a mediator, like the priest, is necessary to represent people before God and to reveal God to people.
10. "In Jesus' name" is not a magic phrase, but a recognition that we come to the Father as though we were Christ, because of Christ. We come through Christ, using his power of attorney.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the tabernacle's design and materials as outlined in Exodus 25-31, and how they relate to God's desire to dwell among his people.
2. How does Oswalt distinguish between the concept of “experience” and a true permeation of one’s life by the character and nature of God, and how does this relate to the story of Nadab and Abihu?
3. Compare and contrast the Hebrew understanding of worship, as exemplified by the tabernacle, with the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites and other surrounding cultures.
4. Explore the role of the priesthood and the concept of mediation in the Old Testament, focusing on how they foreshadow the ultimate mediation of Jesus Christ.
5. Analyze the key themes in Exodus as presented by Oswalt, focusing on the progression from God’s power, to his provision, and finally to his presence, arguing how this informs the purpose of the Exodus itself.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Covenant Meal:** A shared meal signifying a formal agreement or covenant, often a closing ceremony.
- **Nadab and Abihu:** The two older sons of Aaron, who were consumed by fire for offering "strange fire" in worship.
- **Permeation (by God):** The deep, transformative influence of God's character and nature on an individual's life.
- **Tripartite Temple:** A temple structure with an outer courtyard, an inner room, and an innermost room, a pattern common in ancient Canaan.
- **Ark of the Covenant:** A sacred chest containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments, representing God's presence and covenant.
- **Mercy Seat:** The golden cover of the Ark of the Covenant, where God's presence is said to dwell; it is often linked to ideas of atonement and redemption.
- **Urim and Thummim:** Objects used by the high priest for divination, to discern God's will.
- **Idolatry:** The manipulation of the forces of this world to satisfy one's needs. This includes attempts to control and manipulate deities or any other object of worship.
- **Mediator:** A go-between or intermediary who represents people before God and reveals God to people.
- **Priesthood:** A group of individuals consecrated to perform religious duties, especially mediating between God and the people.
- **Tabernacle:** A portable sanctuary used by the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings, meant to be a dwelling place of God's presence.
- **Consecration:** The act of making something holy or setting it apart for a sacred purpose.
- **Holification:** The process of making holy or becoming holy.
- **Sabbath:** A day of rest and worship, which is important enough to be included alongside tabernacle instructions.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Exodus, Session 13, Exodus 25-31, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about Exodus 25-31

1. **What is the significance of the covenant meal shared by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and others, and what does the subsequent actions of Nadab and Abihu reveal about the nature of religious experience?**
 The covenant meal emphasizes the solemn and mutual nature of the covenant between God and His people. It signifies God as the host, inviting honored guests. Nadab and Abihu's later offering of "strange fire" despite having seen God highlights that powerful experiences do not necessarily translate into lasting spiritual transformation. It underscores the danger of focusing on the experience rather than allowing God's character to permeate one's life, and the possibility that individuals can substitute a superficial experience for genuine relationship with God.
3. **Why does the text describe the pavement under God's feet instead of God's actual form, and how does this connect to Moses' request to see God's face?**
 The description of the pavement under God's feet, rather than a direct visual of God, indicates the limitations of human language and perception when it comes to encountering the divine. It suggests that created eyes cannot fully comprehend the creator's true nature. This connects to God telling Moses that he cannot see God's face and live, highlighting that the full presence of God is too overwhelming for mortal beings, and emphasizing that we experience his presence, but do not see his "real presence" in a visible form. The emphasis on what they saw rather than *who* they saw illustrates the danger of focusing on the experience of God rather than the reality of God.
4. **What is the progression of who ascends the mountain, and what does this reveal about levels of relationship with God?** The progression from the larger group to Moses and Joshua, then Moses alone, signifies that there are varying levels of intimacy with God. Not all are ready for the deepest level of relationship. This highlights that closeness with God is a serious matter, given by God, and not to be taken for granted. God might reveal a greater or lesser degree of himself based on what a person can stand and whether they are receptive.

5. **What are the main themes in the book of Exodus and how do they relate to the tabernacle?** The book of Exodus can be divided into sections, each revealing an attribute of God. Chapters 1-15 show God's *power to redeem*, 16-18 show his *providence* and care, 19-24 display his *principles*, and 25-40 reveal his *person and presence*. The tabernacle is the culmination of this revelation, establishing God's dwelling place in the midst of His people and showing that the ultimate goal of the Exodus is not simply deliverance from Egypt or even the promised land of Canaan, but restoration of fellowship with God, and that the deepest need of humans is to be delivered from alienation caused by sin.
6. **Why are the instructions for the tabernacle and its construction repeated, and what does the episode of the golden calf teach about obedience and worship?** The repetition of instructions (chapters 25-31) and their execution (35-40) emphasizes the importance God places on the precise nature of worship. The interjection of the golden calf episode (32-34) in the middle of these instructions shows how humans tend to do things "their way," in contrast to God's way, highlighting the human tendency to create substitutes for God and the consequences of disobedience.
7. **What are the main topics covered in Exodus 25-31, and what is the significance of the sequence in which they are presented?** The primary topics are the materials for the tabernacle, the detailed construction of the tabernacle itself, instructions for the priestly garments and their consecration, and the importance of the Sabbath. The order of instruction is significant, beginning with the Ark (the innermost and most sacred part) and moving outward to the courtyard, highlighting the central importance of God's presence and covenant.
8. **What is the symbolism behind the colors and materials used in the tabernacle?** The variety of materials (gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple, scarlet) represents the richness of God's nature. Gold and silver symbolize royalty and high worth, while other colors evoke purity, serenity and richness. This suggests that God engages all our senses and does not require us to abandon our aesthetic sensibilities when worshipping him.

9. **What is the role of the priesthood, and how does it relate to the idea of mediation between God and humanity?** The priesthood is essential because humans, in their fallen state, cannot directly approach God. Priests act as mediators, representing the people to God and revealing God to them. The instructions for the priesthood prepare the way for Jesus Christ, the ultimate mediator who can truly atone for human sin and bring humanity into the presence of God, and ultimately tearing the veil that separated humanity from the Holy of Holies.