

# EXODUS 26: MEETING JESUS

## SERMON-ALIGNMENT CURRICULUM

by Kevin McGill

### God of the Spiritually Homeless

The tabernacle was meant to communicate something. If you were standing in the desert with the Israelites, you would have seen a big tent—the dwelling place of God. Among all their tents, God said, “I want to live with you. You’ll have your tents, and I’ll have mine. Through your priests, we will meet and connect” (Exodus 25:8–9).

The word I want you to hold onto is pilgrimage. Normally, pilgrimage means traveling to a holy site. But Israel’s pilgrimage was different. They had no home. They wandered for forty years with no fixed place. We like to think we’ve found our place—our address, apartment, or house. But in reality, our hearts are always wandering. We make commitments, but our hearts stray. We are spiritual nomads (Isaiah 53:6).

Think about homelessness in Los Angeles County. While it has leveled out overall, in the Antelope Valley it has spiked 42% since 2018, driven by rising rents and displacement. People live in tents and RVs in the Mojave Desert. That is what Israel looked like—a homeless encampment of ex-slaves. Not something to brag about. Yet here is the beauty: God said, “I will tent with you.” He turned a homeless encampment into the nation of Israel by His presence. This foreshadows Christ. The God who dwelt in a tent with Israel would one day dwell in flesh among His people. John 1:14 — “The Word became flesh and dwelt [ἐσκήνωσεν, literally ‘tabernacled’] among us.” Jesus is the true tabernacle. So as we look at the tabernacle in Exodus, we see a picture of Jesus—God’s presence with His wandering people, transforming them into His people.

### Group Discussion Questions:

1. Think about how much energy we spend trying to feel “settled”—whether through a home, career, or routines. Yet Israel lived as wanderers, and God chose to set up His tent right in the middle of their camp. What does this say about God’s willingness to meet us even in seasons when life feels unsettled or uncertain (Exodus 25:8–9; John 1:14)?
2. Homelessness in our cities can feel distant or uncomfortable to think about, but God identified Himself with a homeless encampment of ex-slaves in the desert. How might remembering that shape the way we see people who are overlooked in our communities—and also how we see ourselves when we feel spiritually restless or lost (Isaiah 53:6)?

### **I. Jesus: Glory Covered in Humility (Exodus 26:1-14)**

Today we focus on the tabernacle coverings (Exodus 26:1–14). These coverings point us to the incarnation of Jesus, who came clothed in humility. From the outside, the tabernacle looked ordinary, even unimpressive. Peter Enns notes that it appeared common, yet within was gold and cherubim—the place of God’s presence. Philip Ryken adds that the drab exterior hid beauty and glory, a sign of the incarnation: outwardly unattractive, inwardly filled with God’s glory (Isaiah 53:2).

The first covering was goat skins—or in some translations, badger skins or sea cow—used for protection from rain. This represented Jesus’ humility. He came not displaying power, but to protect and care for the broken. The second covering was ram skins dyed red, symbolizing blood. Blood-sealed covenants, binding God and His people. Jesus’ blood is the perfect covenant, reconciling us to God (Hebrews 9:11–15). The goat hair covering represented atonement. Jesus is our true atonement, the payment for sin (Leviticus 16, John 1:29). Finally, inside the tabernacle were finely woven, glorious curtains. But this beauty was hidden. Only by entering could one see it. Likewise, Christ’s divine glory is revealed to those who draw near in intimacy (John 1:14).

Why humility? Because glory impresses but distance remains. We approach the powerful for what they can do for us. But humility makes one accessible. Jesus came humbly so that people would seek Him for who He is, not for what they could gain. Elijah learned this at Mount Horeb. God was not in the earthquake or storm, but in the still small voice (1 Kings 19:11–12). God relates to us through humility and intimacy. The coverings remind us: approach Jesus not for His power alone, but to know Him. And in the center—there you see His glory.

#### **Group Discussion Questions:**

- 1. The outside of the tabernacle looked plain and ordinary, but inside it was filled with beauty and glory (Exodus 26:1–14). How does this picture help you think differently about Jesus, who came in humility but carried the fullness of God’s glory (Isaiah 53:2; John 1:14)? How might this change the way you view people or situations in your life that look unimpressive on the surface but may hold hidden value?**
- 2. The ram skins dyed red symbolized blood, reminding Israel of covenant and sacrifice. How does remembering the blood of Christ as the true covenant (Hebrews 9:11–15) shape the way you approach your relationship with God today? In what areas of your life do you need to rest in Jesus’ finished work rather than striving to prove yourself to God?**
- 3. God revealed Himself not in the earthquake or storm, but in a still small voice (1 Kings 19:11–12). What helps you recognize God’s presence in quiet, humble ways rather than only looking for dramatic displays of power? Where in your daily routines—commute, meals, chores, work—might you pay closer attention to God’s quiet presence?**

## **II. Jesus: Transforms us from Ordinary to Extraordinary (Exodus 26:26-30)**

We move from the coverings to the acacia wood (Exodus 26:15–30). God commanded Israel to build boards of acacia wood, plain and ordinary, overlaid with gold, joined with silver sockets, raised according to the pattern shown on the mountain.

Scholars note that the tabernacle was not made of marble or cedar but of skins and acacia poles—ordinary wilderness material sanctified by God’s glory. His dwelling was formed from the life of Israel’s journey. Acacia wood is common, even unimpressive. Yet God covered it with gold. He instructed Israel to take what was basic, what others might pass over, and make it holy. This reflects the work of Christ. Jesus takes what is overlooked and transforms it for His purposes (1 Corinthians 1:27–29).

Unlike Solomon’s temple of cedar and fine stone, the original tabernacle declared: God chooses the ordinary to display His glory. This has deep implications for us. We often think we must make ourselves ready before being useful—high value, polished, impressive. But Jesus meets us before we are ready. He meets us before we are redeemed or transformed. He meets us in the messy places: early mornings before we’ve cleaned up, late nights weighed down by guilt, moments when work pulls us from family.

Jesus takes what is passed over and of little value and transforms it. Our mistake is trying to impress Him—writing flowery prayers, dressing up our spirituality—when He simply wants us. If we keep pretending, He cannot transform us. But when we come as we are, empty-handed, He takes us in and remakes us. We are like old furniture left by the curb—discarded, forgotten. But in Christ, the plain acacia wood is overlaid with gold. He makes holy what the world would throw away (2 Corinthians 5:17).

### **Group Discussion Questions:**

- 1. The tabernacle was built from plain acacia wood, then overlaid with gold (Exodus 26:15–30). What does this teach us about the way God values what the world often overlooks (1 Corinthians 1:27–29)? Where in your life do you feel “ordinary” or unimportant, and how might God be preparing to cover that area with His glory?**
- 2. We often feel like we must be polished, valuable, or impressive before God will use us. Yet Jesus meets us before we are ready—right in the middle of our mess. How does that challenge the way you approach your relationship with Him? Can you think of a time when God met you unexpectedly in weakness, failure, or imperfection?**
- 3. Paul says in Christ we become “a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The plain acacia wood became holy once it was overlaid with gold. How might this image reshape the way you see your identity in Christ? What “old furniture” in your life—things you might hide or discard—do you need to hand over to Jesus so He can remake it?**

## **III. The Disatisfaction of Jesus (Exodus 26:31-37)**

The final element of the tabernacle is the veil (Exodus 26:31–37). The veil, woven of blue, purple, and scarlet, separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, where the ark of the covenant and mercy seat were kept. Its purpose was clear: the blood of animal sacrifice was not enough to fully cover

sin, so the veil stood as a barrier between a holy God and sinful people. Only the high priest could enter, and only after careful consecration (Leviticus 16).

The veil represented both God's presence and our separation from Him. But it also foreshadowed Christ's mission. Matthew 27:51 records that at the moment of Jesus' death, "the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom." His blood, poured out on the cross, became the once-for-all sacrifice that satisfied God's holiness (Hebrews 10:19–20). The veil was no longer needed. For priests in that moment, the torn veil would have been terrifying. Without it, God's holiness was exposed. Yet instead of death, what came was life. Jesus' sacrifice made it possible for us to draw near without fear. No more barriers. No more separation. God's Spirit now dwells not in an ark, but in His people—we are His temple (1 Corinthians 3:16).

This is God's dissatisfaction with the veil. He never desired distance from His people. From Genesis 3 onward, it is God who seeks, while humanity hides. The tabernacle pointed forward, but Jesus fulfills it, removing the barrier completely. The question is: are we satisfied with a God behind the veil? Many prefer Him at a distance—safe, unintrusive. But the invitation of Christ is to stay, to let Him dwell in us, veil removed. This is what we long for: a God who is present, accessible, and transforming.

#### **Group Discussion Questions:**

- 1. The torn veil meant no more barriers between God and His people (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:19–20). How does it change the way you think about God's presence to know that you can draw near without fear? In what area of your life do you still act as if there is a "veil" keeping you from God?**
- 2. From Genesis 3 onward, humanity hides, but God seeks (Genesis 3:8–9). Why do you think people—including us today—sometimes prefer God at a distance rather than up close? Where do you find yourself tempted to keep God "safe" and unintrusive, instead of letting Him dwell fully in your life?**
- 3. Paul writes that we are now God's temple, filled with His Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). What does it mean to you personally that God chooses to dwell not in a building, but within His people? How could seeing yourself as God's dwelling place reshape the way you approach your daily routines, relationships, or struggles?**