



Study Guide: Exodus – Chapter 38

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This study guide provides an educational overview of Exodus Chapter 38 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

Exodus Chapter 38 completes the detailed account of the construction of the Tabernacle by focusing on the making of the altar of burnt offering and the surrounding courtyard. This chapter contributes to the book's flow by emphasizing the faithful obedience of the Israelites in following God's precise instructions for worship. Readers should watch for the meticulous attention to materials and measurements, which reflect the holiness and order God requires in approaching Him. The chapter also highlights the communal effort and the transparency of contributions, underscoring the unity and dedication of the people in fulfilling God's covenantal commands.

Context

Exodus 38 is situated immediately after the detailed construction of the Tabernacle's inner sanctuary and priestly garments. It continues the narrative of Israel's preparation to meet God in the wilderness after their deliverance from Egypt. The chapter falls within the larger covenantal framework established at Mount Sinai, where God gave Moses the law and instructions for worship. The key speaker is Moses, who oversees the work and reports the completion to God. The setting is the Israelite camp in the wilderness, where the Tabernacle will serve as the tangible presence of God among His people. This chapter reflects the fulfillment of God's covenant promises through obedient craftsmanship and communal participation.

Outline

The chapter begins with the construction of the bronze altar, detailing its dimensions, materials, and accessories. This altar is central for the sacrificial system and worship. Following this, the chapter describes the bronze basin for the priests' ceremonial washing, emphasizing purity and preparation for service. The narrative then shifts to the courtyard's construction, including its curtains and supporting posts, which enclose the sacred space.



Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the contributions made by the Israelites, highlighting the transparency and completeness of the offerings. Each section builds on the previous one, reinforcing the theme of holiness and obedience in worship.

Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1–3: These verses describe the altar of burnt offering made of acacia wood overlaid with bronze. The altar’s size and horns are specified, symbolizing strength and a place of refuge. The bronze overlay signifies judgment and purification, appropriate for the altar where sacrifices are made.

Verses 4–7: The chapter details the construction of the altar’s utensils, including pots, shovels, basins, forks, and firepans, all made of bronze. These tools are essential for the proper handling of sacrifices, underscoring the importance of order and reverence in worship practices.

Verses 8–10: The bronze grating or network beneath the altar is described, including its supports and rings. This feature allowed ashes to fall through and facilitated the altar’s cleanliness, symbolizing the need for purity in approaching God.

Verses 11–16: The chapter moves to the construction of the basin for washing, made of bronze and placed between the Tabernacle and the altar. This basin was used by the priests for ceremonial cleansing before ministering, highlighting the theme of sanctification.

Verses 17–20: The description shifts to the courtyard’s curtains, made of fine linen with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, supported by bronze pillars and bases. This enclosure delineates the sacred space, separating it from the common area and protecting the holiness within.

Verses 21–23: The chapter details the entrance to the courtyard, with a curtain made of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen, supported by pillars and bases of bronze. This entrance signifies the threshold between the holy and the profane, inviting worshippers to approach God in reverence.

Verses 24–31: The final section records the total amount of materials used and the contributions brought by the Israelites. The transparency and completeness of the offerings demonstrate the community’s wholehearted participation and obedience to God’s commands.



Key Themes

One key theme is the holiness of worship, expressed through precise construction and use of materials that symbolize purity, judgment, and sanctification. Another theme is communal obedience, as the people collectively contribute to the Tabernacle's construction, reflecting their covenant relationship with God. The chapter also highlights the importance of order and structure in approaching God, with every element serving a specific purpose in the sacrificial system. Lastly, transparency and accountability emerge as vital, seen in the detailed record of contributions, underscoring integrity in communal worship.

Cross-References

Exodus 27:1-8 provides earlier instructions for the altar of burnt offering, clarifying the significance of its dimensions and materials. Leviticus 1 expands on the sacrificial system, helping to understand the altar's role in worship. Numbers 8:6-7 discusses the ceremonial washing of priests, connecting to the basin described here. Hebrews 9:1-10 reflects on the Tabernacle's symbolism and the importance of purification, offering New Testament insight into the Old Testament rituals. These cross-references deepen understanding of the altar's function and the spiritual principles behind the Tabernacle's design.

Application

Modern disciples can apply Exodus 38 by recognizing the importance of approaching God with reverence and purity. Just as the altar and basin required careful preparation, believers today are called to spiritual cleansing and holiness in their worship and daily lives. The chapter also encourages communal participation in God's work, reminding the church that every member's contribution matters. Transparency and accountability in stewardship and service reflect biblical principles seen here. Finally, the detailed obedience of the Israelites challenges believers to honor God's instructions with faithfulness and care, trusting that God values order and devotion in our worship.

Summary

Exodus 38 completes the Tabernacle's construction narrative by detailing the altar of burnt offering, the basin for priestly washing, and the courtyard's enclosure. The chapter emphasizes holiness, order, and communal obedience as the Israelites faithfully follow God's instructions. Through precise measurements, materials, and transparent



contributions, the text highlights the sacredness of worship and the covenant relationship between God and His people. This chapter serves as a vital link in understanding how God's presence is mediated through worship and how His people are called to approach Him with reverence and unity.