

God's Instructions for the Furnishings of the Tabernacle

Exodus 25

Exodus 25 – *“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ²“Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. ³ And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; ⁴ blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats’ hair; ⁵ ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; ⁶ oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; ⁷ onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate. ⁸ And let them make Me a sanctuary,[Ⓞ]that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.*

¹⁰“And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits shall be its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. ¹¹ And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around. ¹² You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four corners; two rings shall be on one side, and two rings on the other side. ¹³ And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. ¹⁴ You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them. ¹⁵ The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. ¹⁶ And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.

¹⁷“You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. ¹⁸ And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. ²⁰ And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. ²¹ You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. ²² And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

²³“You shall also make a table of acacia wood; two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. ²⁴ And you shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a molding of gold all around. ²⁵ You shall make for it a frame of a handbreadth all around, and you shall make a gold molding for the frame all around. ²⁶ And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four corners that are at its four legs. ²⁷ The rings shall be close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table. ²⁸ And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be carried with them. ²⁹ You shall make its dishes, its pans, its pitchers, and its bowls for pouring. You shall make them of pure gold. ³⁰ And you shall set the showbread on the table before Me always.

³¹“You shall also make a lampstand of pure gold; the lampstand shall be of hammered work. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and flowers shall be of one piece. ³² And six branches shall come out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side. ³³ Three bowls shall

be made like almond blossoms on one branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower, and three bowls made like almond blossoms on the other branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower—and so for the six branches that come out of the lampstand. ³⁴ On the lampstand itself four bowls shall be made like almond blossoms, each with its ornamental knob and flower. ³⁵ And there shall be a knob under the first two branches of the same, a knob under the second two branches of the same, and a knob under the third two branches of the same, according to the six branches that extend from the lampstand. ³⁶ Their knobs and their branches shall be of one piece; all of it shall be one hammered piece of pure gold. ³⁷ You shall make seven lamps for it, and they shall arrange its lamps so that they give light in front of it. ³⁸ And its wick-trimmers and their trays shall be of pure gold. ³⁹ It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils. ⁴⁰ And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.”

Background Notes

At the end of Exodus 24, Moses entered God's glory cloud that covered Mt. Sinai, and he was there for forty days and forty nights. During this time on the mountain, the Lord communicated to Moses the details of the design, the construction, and the furnishings of the Tabernacle. Thus, a new section of Exodus, containing these details about the Tabernacle, begins here.

The Tabernacle was to be the central sanctuary for Israel's worship of God throughout their wilderness travels. All the sacrifices were to take place at the Tabernacle, and the Lord's presence in the midst of His people was focused in the Tabernacle.

In the first few verses of this chapter, a collection of materials was taken from the people for the construction of the Tabernacle. (This was the first church Building Fund, wasn't it? So, you see, church Building Funds are biblical!) Seriously speaking, the people were told to give materials for the Tabernacle. But notice – the collection was to be totally voluntary, with no “arm twisting” or manipulation (v2)! And that's the way giving to the Lord's work should be today as well. It's certainly OK to tell the Lord's people about certain needs of the church or needy people, and it's proper to encourage the Lord's people to give based on biblical principles of giving. However, no one should ever be forced to give, or manipulated to sign a pledge, or sent a bill for how much they still owe the church, (etc., etc.). Notice also that the collection was only taken from the Lord's people. Not taking collections from unbelievers is a biblical principle for supporting the work of the Lord.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Ark of the Covenant portrays Christ as the only Mediator.

The Ark of the Covenant was essentially a wooden chest, about 4 feet long, 2 ½ feet wide, and 2 ½ feet high, that was covered over with gold on the outside and on the inside (v11). When Israel traveled in the wilderness, the priests inserted poles into rings on the sides of the Ark, and carried the Ark on their shoulders (v14). The two stone tablets containing the

Ten Commandments were placed in the Ark. In Hebrews 9:4 we learn that two other items were later added to the contents of the Ark — a golden jar of manna and Aaron's rod that budded. (Read about Aaron's rod in Numbers 17). The lid of the Ark was called the Mercy Seat, and it was made of pure gold. At each end of the Mercy Seat was a golden angel, or cherub, with outstretched wings over the Mercy Seat. The term "Mercy Seat" and the word "atonement" derive from the same Hebrew word, meaning, "to cover." Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the atoning sacrifice on the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle to *cover* the sins of the nation before God. It was on the basis of that blood on the Mercy Seat that the people of Israel were able to relate to God, and a holy God was able to dwell in the midst of His people.

What does all this mean to us? In what way are they spiritual pictures or types, according to 1 Corinthians 10:11? In the Ark of the Covenant we have a picture of Jesus Christ as the true Mediator. The natural wood of the Ark represents His humanity. The glory of the overlaid gold represents His divinity. The Mercy Seat with the blood represents His perfect atoning sacrifice, which is the only basis for a Holy God to relate with mercy to an unholy people (and that's us!). The Ark of the Covenant portrays Christ as the true Mediator.

2. The Table of Bread portrays Christ as the Bread of Life.

Twelve loaves of bread baked from fine flour, one for each tribe of the twelve tribes of Israel, were placed on the Golden Table of Showbread before God in the Tabernacle (Leviticus 24). This bread was food for the priests. So in the twelve loaves of bread we have both the idea of representation before God, and nourishment or sustenance from God. In the same way, the Lord Jesus as the true Bread from Heaven represents us before God and sustains us as priests of God. In John 6:35 the Lord said that He is the Bread of life, and 1 Peter 2:5 says that we as believers are holy priests. We come to Christ for salvation, and we come to Him for spiritual sustenance and nourishment as well. The Table of Bread portrays Christ as the Bread of Life.

3. The Golden Lampstand portrays Christ as the Light of the World.

There were no windows in the Tabernacle -- all light in the Tabernacle came from the lamps in the Golden Lampstand (or menorah, or candelabrum). The Golden Lampstand was a beautifully sculptured menorah with seven oil lamps on it. Verse 39 says that the Golden Lampstand was made from one talent of pure gold, which was as much as 75-80 pounds of gold. That's a lot of gold!

It's easy to see how the Golden Lampstand typifies or portrays Christ as the Light of the World. Jesus said in John 8:12: *"I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* Jesus is the Light of the World. Just as the Golden Menorah was only source of light for the priests as they served before the Lord in the Tabernacle, so Jesus is the Light for our salvation, and He is the Light for our service to God. The Golden Lampstand portrays Christ as the Light of the World.

Practical Application

Let's follow the divine pattern.

Moses and the Israelites were to follow the pattern that God gave them for the Tabernacle and its furnishings. Look back at verse 8-9: *"Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them, and you shall make it according to all that I show you, the pattern of the Tabernacle and its furnishing."* And verse 40: *"Make them according to the pattern that was shown to you on the mount."* Moses was to follow the divine pattern. He was not to decide to add extra furniture, such as adding a few chairs in the Tabernacle. No chairs -- chairs were not in the divine pattern! The priests' work was never done, so they were not to sit down in the Tabernacle. Only Jesus Christ, the true High Priest, sat down after His sacrificial work was over. *"And every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices that can never take away sins, But this Man [Jesus Christ], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God."* (Hebrews 10:11-12).

As Christians, we are expected to follow the divine pattern for worship that we see in the New Testament. The divine pattern for the worship of God for believers today is the Church -- not a business organization, and not a social club, but the Church. The Church is the body of Christ, composed of all believers, and all believers are holy priests who are to serve before the Lord. 1 Peter 2: 5 says, *"you are... a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."* All believers have spiritual gifts and should be encouraged to use them in the local church. *"As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"* (1Peter 4:10). Local churches should reflect this divine pattern. Let's follow the divine pattern.