

God's Directions for the Construction of the Tabernacle

Exodus 26

Exodus 26 - *"Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine woven linen and blue, purple, and scarlet thread; with artistic designs of cherubim you shall weave them. ² The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits. And every one of the curtains shall have the same measurements. ³ Five curtains shall be coupled to one another, and the other five curtains shall be coupled to one another. ⁴ And you shall make loops of blue yarn on the edge of the curtain on the selvedge of one set, and likewise you shall do on the outer edge of the other curtain of the second set. ⁵ Fifty loops you shall make in the one curtain, and fifty loops you shall make on the edge of the curtain that is on the end of the second set, that the loops may be clasped to one another. ⁶ And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains together with the clasps, so that it may be one tabernacle. ⁷ "You shall also make curtains of goats' hair, to be a tent over the tabernacle. You shall make eleven curtains. ⁸ The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; and the eleven curtains shall all have the same measurements. ⁹ And you shall couple five curtains by themselves and six curtains by themselves, and you shall double over the sixth curtain at the forefront of the tent. ¹⁰ You shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in one set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain of the second set. ¹¹ And you shall make fifty bronze clasps, put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one. ¹² The remnant that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. ¹³ And a cubit on one side and a cubit on the other side, of what remains of the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on this side and on that side, to cover it. ¹⁴ "You shall also make a covering of ram skins dyed red for the tent, and a covering of badger skins above that. ¹⁵ "And for the tabernacle you shall make the boards of acacia wood, standing upright. ¹⁶ Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the width of each board. ¹⁷ Two tenons shall be in each board for binding one to another. Thus you shall make for all the boards of the tabernacle. ¹⁸ And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side. ¹⁹ You shall make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards: two sockets under each of the boards for its two tenons. ²⁰ And for the second side of the tabernacle, the north side, there shall be twenty boards ²¹ and their forty sockets of silver: two sockets under each of the boards. ²² For the far side of the tabernacle, westward, you shall make six boards. ²³ And you shall also make two boards for the two back corners of the tabernacle. ²⁴ They shall be coupled together at the bottom and they shall be coupled together at the top by one ring. Thus it shall be for both of them. They shall be for the two corners. ²⁵ So there shall be eight boards with their sockets of silver—sixteen sockets—two sockets under each of the boards. ²⁶ "And you shall make bars of acacia wood: five for the boards on one side of the tabernacle, ²⁷ five bars for the boards on the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the far side westward. ²⁸ The middle bar shall pass through the midst of the boards from end to end. ²⁹ You shall overlay the boards with gold, make their rings of gold as holders for the bars, and overlay the bars with gold. ³⁰ And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain. ³¹ "You shall make a veil woven of blue,*

purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim. ³² You shall hang it upon the four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Their hooks shall be gold, upon four sockets of silver. ³³ And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy. ³⁴ You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy. ³⁵ You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand across from the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side.

³⁶ “You shall make a screen for the door of the tabernacle, woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver. ³⁷ And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be gold, and you shall cast five sockets of bronze for them.”

Background Notes

Have you ever seen a full-size model of the Tabernacle? The “Holy Land Experience,” a theme park in Orlando, Florida, has a full-size model of the Tabernacle. My first impression was how small it was, especially when compared with the size of the Temple. But remember, the Tabernacle was a portable sanctuary, designed primarily for the wilderness travels of the people of Israel.

The Tabernacle was a rectangular structure about 45 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 15 feet high. It was divided into two sections: the outer sanctuary, or the “Holy Place,” which took up two thirds of the Tabernacle’s space, and the other third was the inner sanctuary, the “Holy of Holies.” Thus, the Holy of Holies was a perfect cube—15 feet x 15 feet x 15 feet. The Holy Place contained the golden Lamp stand, or *menorah*, the Table of Bread, and the Altar of Incense. The Holy of Holies contained only the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat. A linen veil divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

There is some question as to the structure of the Tabernacle. We don’t know whether the gold-covered boards went together to form a solid box, or if they formed more of a trellis-like structure so that the full beauty of the first (inner) linen covering with the designs of the cherubim could be seen from inside the Tabernacle. The entrance to the Tabernacle was an opening in an outer linen veil or screen, hung on five pillars that were overlaid with gold.

A courtyard surrounded the Tabernacle. In the courtyard were the large Bronze Altar for sacrifice and the “Laver” for the ritual washings of the priests.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Tabernacle is a “type” of the sanctuary of heaven.

By definition, a “type” is an Old Testament person, place, event or item that illustrates New Testament truth. Some Old Testament types are clearly designated as types, or illustrations, in the New Testament. Others are determined from the close parallel between the Old Testament spiritual picture and the New Testament truth it illustrates.

In reference to the Tabernacle, the New Testament clearly says that it is a type. Hebrews 8:1-5 says: *“The point of what we are saying is this: we do have such a High Priest who sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true Tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man. Every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this One also to have something to offer. If He were on earth, He would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer gifts prescribed by the Law. They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. That is why Moses was warned, when he was about to build the Tabernacle: ‘See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’”* And Hebrews 9:22-24 says, *“In fact, the Law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.”*

So the blueprint of the Tabernacle that the Lord showed Moses on Mt. Sinai was really patterned after the heavenly sanctuary and the heavenly Holy of Holies, where Christ as our High Priest has entered with His own blood to atone for our sins. Thus, the Tabernacle is a “type” of the sanctuary of heaven.

2. The Tabernacle is a “type” of the Son of God.

The Tabernacle is not only a type of the sanctuary of heaven, but it is also a type of the Son of God. In Exodus 25 we learned that various details of the Ark of the Covenant and the Table of Bread and the Lamp Stand typify our Lord Jesus Christ. The same is true of the details of the Tabernacle itself. John 1:14 says, *“the Word became flesh and dwelt (or “tabernacled”) among us.”*

From the outside, there was no special beauty to the Tabernacle. It was made of goat hair, and looked like the typical Bedouin tents that can still be seen in the wilderness today. The beauty and difference of the Tabernacle was seen from the inside. In the same way, from the outside our Lord looked like the other men around Him. There was no halo or bright light associated with our Lord as the incarnate Son of God. This is what Isaiah 53:2 meant, in speaking of the Messiah: *“and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.”*

Our Lord's beauty was from within -- His moral glory, and His divine character. As John 1:14 says, He was "...full of grace and truth." The cloud of God's glory filled the Tabernacle (Exodus 40), and was also seen by the people from the outside, as it covered the Tabernacle and perhaps emanated from the Tabernacle. In the same way, those who knew our Lord and walked with Him saw the intrinsic moral glories of our Lord. That cloud of God's glory, which indicated God's presence, was known as the *shekinah*. *Shekinah* means "dwelling," and this name certainly emphasizes the great truth that "*the Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us...*"

The details of the beautiful Tabernacle curtains, and the gold-covered boards that fit together perfectly, certainly emphasize the Tabernacle as a type of the Son of God in His incarnation. He was the perfect God-Man—fully God and fully Man. Even the colors of blue, purple and scarlet are part of the picture. Blue, the heavenly color, emphasized that He was the eternal Son of God come from heaven; purple, the color of royalty, emphasized the fact that He was the true King; and red, the color of blood, emphasized that He was the Redeemer.

The inner veil or curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle is specifically a picture of the human body of our Lord, which was given in sacrifice to open the way for us to enter God's presence. Hebrews 10:19-20 says, "*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body...*" This inner veil in the Temple was torn apart, from top to bottom, at the time of our Lord's death on the cross. The Tabernacle is a type of the Son of God.

Practical Application

Start with the inside, and work outward.

In Exodus 25 and 26, in the structure of the Tabernacle, God started with the inside and worked outward. First came the Ark, which would go into the Holy of Holies. Then came the articles that furnished the Holy Place. Then came the building itself, and in the next chapter we will come the outer courtyard.

Here is a divine principle that we should follow. Start with the inside and work outward. In building your own life, start with your relationship with the Lord and your daily walk with Him. All your decisions about job and career and ministry will then follow and work themselves out in proper order. The same is true with your marriage and family. Start on the inside by dedicating your marriage and your children to the Lord, and making your home a Christ-centered home, right from the start! If you start by putting the Lord "on the inside" -- at the center of your lives -- then the outworking of the other priorities and activities of your marriage, family and home will follow in the right and proper order. Start with the inside, and work outward!