

### Construction of the Ark of the Covenant and Tabernacle Furnishings

#### Exodus 37-38

**Exodus 37** – *“Then Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits was its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. <sup>2</sup> He overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a molding of gold all around it. <sup>3</sup> And he cast for it four rings of gold to be set in its four corners: two rings on one side, and two rings on the other side of it. <sup>4</sup> He made poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold. <sup>5</sup> And he put the poles into the rings at the sides of the ark, to bear the ark. <sup>6</sup> He also made the mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits was its length and a cubit and a half its width. <sup>7</sup> He made two cherubim of beaten gold; he made them of one piece at the two ends of the mercy seat: <sup>8</sup> one cherub at one end on this side, and the other cherub at the other end on that side. He made the cherubim at the two ends of one piece with the mercy seat. <sup>9</sup> The cherubim spread out their wings above, and covered the mercy seat with their wings. They faced one another; the faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat.*

*<sup>10</sup> He made the table of acacia wood; two cubits was its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. <sup>11</sup> And he overlaid it with pure gold, and made a molding of gold all around it. <sup>12</sup> Also he made a frame of a handbreadth all around it, and made a molding of gold for the frame all around it. <sup>13</sup> And he cast for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four corners that were at its four legs. <sup>14</sup> The rings were close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table. <sup>15</sup> And he made the poles of acacia wood to bear the table, and overlaid them with gold. <sup>16</sup> He made of pure gold the utensils which were on the table: its dishes, its cups, its bowls, and its pitchers for pouring.*

*<sup>17</sup> He also made the lampstand of pure gold; of hammered work he made the lampstand. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and its flowers were of the same piece. <sup>18</sup> And six branches came out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side. <sup>19</sup> There were three bowls 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 coming out of the lampstand. <sup>20</sup> And on the lampstand itself were four bowls made like almond blossoms, each with its ornamental knob and flower. <sup>21</sup> There was 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 extending from it. <sup>22</sup> Their knobs and their branches were of one piece; all of it was one hammered piece of pure gold. <sup>23</sup> And he made its seven lamps, its wick-trimmers, and its trays of pure gold. <sup>24</sup> Of a talent of pure gold he made it, with all its utensils.*

*<sup>25</sup> He made the incense altar of acacia wood. Its length was a cubit and its width a cubit—it was square—and two cubits was its height. Its horns were of one piece with it. <sup>26</sup> And he overlaid it with pure gold: its top, its sides all around, and its horns. He also made for it a molding of gold all around it. <sup>27</sup> He made two rings of gold for it under its molding, by its two corners on both sides, as holders for the poles with which to bear it. <sup>28</sup> And he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold. <sup>29</sup> He also made the holy anointing oil and the pure incense of sweet spices, according to the work of the perfumer.”*

**Exodus 38** – “He made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood; five cubits was its length and five cubits its width—it was square—and its height was three cubits. <sup>2</sup> He made its horns on its four corners; the horns were of one piece with it. And he overlaid it with bronze. <sup>3</sup> He made all the utensils for the altar: the pans, the shovels, the basins, the forks, and the firepans; all its utensils he made of bronze. <sup>4</sup> And he made a grate of bronze network for the altar, under its rim, midway from the bottom. <sup>5</sup> He cast four rings for the four corners of the bronze grating, as holders for the poles. <sup>6</sup> And he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with bronze. <sup>7</sup> Then he put the poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, with which to bear it. He made the altar hollow with boards.

<sup>8</sup> He made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the bronze mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. <sup>9</sup> Then he made the court on the south side; the hangings of the court were of fine woven linen, one hundred cubits long. <sup>10</sup> There were twenty pillars for them, with twenty bronze sockets. The hooks of the pillars and their bands were silver. <sup>11</sup> On the north side the hangings were one hundred cubits long, with twenty pillars and their twenty bronze sockets. The hooks of the pillars and their bands were silver. <sup>12</sup> And on the west side there were hangings of fifty cubits, with ten pillars and their ten sockets. The hooks of the pillars and their bands were silver. <sup>13</sup> For the east side the hangings were fifty cubits. <sup>14</sup> The hangings of one side of the gate were fifteen cubits long, with their three pillars and their three sockets, <sup>15</sup> and the same for the other side of the court gate; on this side and that were hangings of fifteen cubits, with their three pillars and their three sockets. <sup>16</sup> All the hangings of the court all around were of fine woven linen. <sup>17</sup> The sockets for the pillars were bronze, the hooks of the pillars and their bands were silver, and the overlay of their capitals was silver; and all the pillars of the court had bands of silver. <sup>18</sup> The screen for the gate of the court was woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and of fine woven linen. The length was twenty cubits, and the height along its width was five cubits, corresponding to the hangings of the court. <sup>19</sup> And there were four pillars with their four sockets of bronze; their hooks were silver, and the overlay of their capitals and their bands was silver. <sup>20</sup> All the pegs of the tabernacle, and of the court all around, were bronze. <sup>21</sup> This is the inventory of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the Testimony, which was counted according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest. <sup>22</sup> Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the Lord had commanded Moses. <sup>23</sup> And with him was Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and designer, a weaver of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and of fine linen. <sup>24</sup> All the gold that was used in all the work of the holy place, that is, the gold of the offering, was twenty-nine talents and seven hundred and thirty shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. <sup>25</sup> And the silver from those who were numbered of the congregation was one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary: <sup>26</sup> a bekah for each man (that is, half a shekel, according to the shekel of the sanctuary), for everyone included in the numbering from twenty years old and above, for six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty men. <sup>27</sup> And from the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary and the bases of the veil: one hundred sockets from the hundred talents, one talent for each socket. <sup>28</sup> Then from the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels he made hooks for the pillars, overlaid their capitals, and made bands for them. <sup>29</sup> The offering of bronze was seventy talents and two thousand four hundred shekels. <sup>30</sup> And with it he made the sockets for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, the bronze altar, the bronze grating for it, and all the utensils for the altar, <sup>31</sup> the sockets for the court all around, the bases for the court gate, all the pegs for the tabernacle, and all the pegs for the court all around.”

## Background Notes

As you read through these verses, the best way to appreciate this descriptive passage is to have a set of diagrams or a model of the Tabernacle before you. Better yet, draw your own diagram of the Tabernacle and its furnishings as you're reading through all of these details! Remember - a "cubit" is about 18 inches.

Guess what detail of construction I'd like to know more about? I'd like to know more about how they fastened the rings for carrying the items onto the furnishings! Did they have some kind of special screws in that day? Did they have some kind of super-glue or epoxy? Duct tape? We don't know. We've all had knobs and rings that break and fall off of our furniture or camping gear (or whatever) because they weren't fastened well enough -- right? Well, these rings would have taken some rough treatment over the forty years of traveling in the rugged Sinai wilderness, so Bezalel and the other skilled craftsmen must have come up with a great way to fasten these rings. And remember we've seen that Bezalel was filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom and understanding and knowledge, and all kinds of craftsmanship -- including the best way to fasten the rings for carrying the Tabernacle furnishings!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Records should be kept of ministry accomplished.

The first nine verses of Exodus 37 give us the record of the construction of the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat. The blood of the atoning sacrifice was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat to cover the sins of the nation before God. This ritual took place once a year on the Day of Atonement in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle. Remember, "to cover" is the basic meaning of the word "atonement." This ritual is a wonderful spiritual picture of the means by which our sins are covered before God—with the blood of Christ who gave His life for us.

In Exodus 37:10-16 we have the record of the construction of the Table of Bread. Remember, this bread was food for the priests. This bread typifies or pictures Christ as the Bread of Life.

In verses 17-24 we have the record of the construction of the Lampstand. In Exodus 25 we mentioned that the Lampstand is a spiritual picture of Christ as the Light of the World. The light came from oil that was supplied to the seven individual lamps of the Lampstand. This portrays the fact that Christ, as the Light of the World, is seen through believers, who are indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit, who is pictured by the oil. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the Light of the World" (John 8:12), and He also said "**You** are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).

In Exodus 37:25-29 we have the record of the construction of the Altar of Incense, or the Golden Altar. Remember from Exodus 30 that the Altar of Incense portrays Christ as the basis for our acceptable worship of God, and the incense offered represents our Christ-centered prayers and praises.

In verses 1-7 of chapter 38, we have the record of the construction of the Bronze Altar of sacrifice. Remember from our studies in Exodus 27, the Bronze Altar is a spiritual picture of the Cross of Christ, and all the sacrifices offered here were blood sacrifices. All of these sacrifices typify in some way the various aspects of the personal work of Christ.

In Exodus 38:8 we have the record of the construction of the Bronze Laver. The continual priestly washings at the laver portray the continual washing of the Word that we need daily, because of the defiling effects of sin in our lives.

In Exodus 38:9-20 we have the record of the construction of the Court of the Tabernacle. Remember also from our studies in Exodus 27, the Tabernacle Courtyard portrays the way of worship. The progression of worship begins at the one gate (which portrays Christ as the only way to God), to the Bronze Altar of Sacrifice (in which we see the Cross of Christ), to the washings of the laver (daily cleansing), into the Holy Place and finally into the Holy of Holies, and the very presence of God Himself.

It is significant that detailed records were kept of all the construction work that was accomplished. We too should keep records of work that is accomplished for the Lord—as individuals, as ministries, and as churches. For example, recently I went over the record of what books of the Bible we've studied in our Tuesday morning Men's Bible Study. Keeping records like this helps to guide us as to balance us in our study of God's truth. Keeping records of ministry accomplished helps churches see what programs work and what programs don't work, and even why they worked or why they didn't work. Records should be kept of ministry accomplished.

## **2. Records should be kept of money spent.**

As many of you can see from your noted Bibles, a lot of gold and silver and bronze was used in the construction of the Tabernacle—as much as 2,800 pounds of gold, as much as 9,600 pounds of silver, and as much as 6,700 pounds of bronze! According to Exodus 12, the Israeli people brought all this material with them when they left Egypt.

When Moses wrote the book of Exodus, how did he know exactly the amount of these valuable metals that were used for the Tabernacle? Answer: They kept records! And so should we! We should keep accurate and detailed records of money that is spent in the work of the Lord.

In Matthew 6:3, when the Lord said, "When you give alms, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing," He did not mean that we shouldn't keep records -- He meant that we should be generous in meeting needs and in supporting the work of the Lord, and that we should do our giving quietly and privately. It is biblical to keep records of money spent for the work of the Lord.

When Ezra and the former captives returned to Jerusalem from Babylon, one of the first things they did was to record the weights of the money that they brought with them to be used for the rebuilding of the Temple of the Lord. They kept a

careful record to ensure that nothing had been lost or stolen, and so that they would know the amount of money spent on the House of the Lord.

When the apostle Paul brought alms from various churches in Greece to help meet the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem who were experiencing a famine, faithful Christians were put in charge of these funds -- for accountability and record keeping.

Growing Christian Ministries keeps a record of every dime that comes in and every dime that is spent. Records should be kept of money spent in the work of the Lord!

## **Practical Application**

### **Use your “mirrors” for the Lord!**

Exodus 38:8 – “And he made the laver of brass from the mirrors of the women who assembled at the door of the Tabernacle.”

In those days, mirrors were made from polished bronze, not from glass. The women who helped around the Tabernacle gave their bronze mirrors to be melted down and turned into the Bronze Laver. Do you see the obvious spiritual lesson and practical application here? We can take what enhances our personal “glory” — and give it to the Lord to be used for HIS glory!

Recently I heard about a very talented and creative Christian who was a highly paid designer of Disney projects and theme parks. This man offered his services, at a considerable financial and career sacrifice, to the *Answers in Genesis* ministry, in order to head up and coordinate all the design work and projects for their Creation Museum. He gave up his personal “bronze mirror” -- the job that brought him recognition and career satisfaction -- and gave his talents to the Lord. His service for the Lord will now bring glory and honor to God! Praise the Lord!

What are you doing with your “mirrors”? Are you using them to serve your own vanity and enhance your own personal glory? Use your “mirrors” for the Lord!