

Message #50

Exodus 25:23-30

Recently I was doing some research on the theme of worship. One of the first places we have to begin is by defining worship. What is worship? It is interesting to me that many believe it is a feeling. Now I will admit when you worship God, your feelings are certainly involved. I am certain our emotions do play a part in true worship.

However, **when you analyze a book like Exodus, it is clear that to worship God means you clearly and carefully use your mind**. If ever we can build a case for that, it is in this construction process of the sanctuary and what goes in it. **To actually build a place that was acceptable to God required a focused mind, not mindless emotion.**

We are in the section of Exodus in which Moses and Israel are getting instructions from God on what they need to build and how they need to build it in order to worship God at a place that He would deem acceptable.

Now when all is said and done, the fact is God's presence will actually be found in the "back room" of the tabernacle. But it is clear that in God's house before you got to the "back room," there were certain pieces of furniture that God wanted in the "front room."

Last time we saw that God wanted an "ark/chest" built that would house the written Scriptures and would be built in such a way that it truly reflected the grace and mercy of God. This was to be the main focus of true worship—the written Scriptures. Those Scriptures were to be revered and protected at the place of worship. People were to realize that God's grace had given His Word to His people and the cherubim on the ark/box displayed the fact that they are monitoring the mercy of God as it relates to the written Word of God.

Now to this point, God has not given the design of the sanctuary; He has started with the furniture. In this text, we come to another piece of furniture that God wanted built for His sanctuary so that people could enter into true worship of Him:

GOD GAVE SPECIFIC BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION SPECS FOR THE DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND USE OF A TABERNACLE TABLE.

We must assume that this piece of furniture was extremely important because, as Victor Hamilton observed, it is "always the first item mentioned after the ark" (*Exodus*, p. 462). Also this is the only item that had three coverings on it when it was moved—blue cloth, scarlet cloth and porpoise skins (Num. 4:7-8). All other items of furniture had only two coverings (Num. 4:9-14).

There are five similarities between the table and the ark.

- 1) Both items were rectangular.
- 2) Both items were overlaid with gold.
- 3) Both items had decorative molding around the top.

- 4) Both items were identical in height—both were 27 inches high.
- 5) Both items had rings attached to the legs so they could be moved.

But there are also three differences between these two items.

- 1) The dimensions of the ark are larger than the dimensions of the table.
- 2) The ark was a chest that had greater depth and shorter legs, whereas the table had no body depth and longer legs.
- 3) Things were to be put in the ark but things were to be put on top of the table.

There are twelve facts we learn about this table:

FACT #1 – The table was to be made of acacia wood. **25:23a**

As we mentioned last time, acacia wood is a tough wood. It lasts. It is not edible to insects like termites and it is naturally waterproof. It is a tough wood that grows in hot desert regions, like the Sinai Peninsula. It would be a relatively small table as opposed to a large dining room table. There will be no chairs made for this table.

FACT #2 – The table was to be 36 inches long (2 cubits) or three feet long. **25:23b**

We may recall that the ark box is 45 inches long, so this table is nine inches shorter than the box. Now one of the purposes of this table, as we will see, is that this table will feature bread on its top (**25:30**). In fact, this table was to contain 12 loaves of bread each loaf representing one of the twelve tribes of Israel (Lev. 24:5-6). Now in New Testament times, the table of the Lord came to represent God's people fellowshiping at church in the presence of the Lord.

So we would suggest that this table not only speaks of God fellowshiping with His people, but also His people fellowshiping with each other.

Now if we just look at the specs of the table versus the ark/box—the table is smaller than the ark. What does this tell us? What this tells us is the Word of God is the thing that is to be magnified above all other things and it is the Word of God that will ultimately lead to fellowship with God and each other.

Churches make a fatal mistake when they stress fellowship over the Word of God. Just the size of these two items disproves that philosophy. Nothing is more important over the Word of God.

FACT #3 – The table was to be 18 inches wide (1 cubit) or 1 ½ feet wide. **25:23c**

Again we may recall that the ark box was 27 inches wide so the table width was shorter than the ark/box width.

FACT #4 – The table was to be 27 inches high (1 ½ cubits). **25:23d**

This is exactly the same height as the ark/box. Both were to be 27 inches high which is 2.25 feet.

FACT #5 – The table was to be overlaid with pure gold. **25:24a**

The acacia wood was to be overlaid with pure gold. This is very important and very symbolic because it represents the two natures of Jesus Christ—human and Divine. The key to any relationship with God is Jesus Christ.

FACT #6 – The table was to have a gold border around it. **25:24b**

FACT #7 – The table was to have a rim and gold border. **25:25**

Now the rim was to be “a handbreadth” high, which means it was to be a four inch trim rim.

Now we aren't exactly sure just how this rim actually was to be attached to the table.

- 1) It could be a decorative rim, which top sat flush even with the top of the table. This would give the appearance that the top was wider.
- 2) It could be a rim that extended 2 inches below the top of the table and 2 inches above the top of the table—this would keep things from slipping off the top of the table.
- 3) It could be a rim that extended 4 inches above the top of the table—forming a 4 inch box top to the table.
- 4) It could be a rim that extended 4 inches down on the legs in the middle giving stability to the table.

Truth is we don't know. What we again must assume is that the construction manager, whose name was Bezalel, was given special revelatory skills to put this rim just exactly where God wanted it to go (Exodus 31:1-11).

A good illustration of this kind of thing may be seen in the New Testament. Paul charged Timothy to preach the Word. He charged him to give attention to reading and rightly dividing Scripture. But he does not tell him how to do that.

He does not tell him whether or not he should study Greek and Hebrew (we may assume he knew both). He does not tell him whether or not he should take a course on Hermeneutics or Homiletics. He does not tell him about ex-egetical versus eis-egetical approach to the Bible. So we may assume that in order to do what God wants a person to do, God needs to give special guidance and skills that enable someone to do that job. We all may see the general data, but we cannot all see the specific detail.

Now this is not only true for handling the Word, but this is true for building things or any occupation. Some people are very skilled at building and constructing things. Some people are very skilled at driving trucks or operating machinery or factory equipment.

Some people are very skilled with numbers or with special abilities to understand things on computers. God has given them their skills. The problem is, in most cases, God does not get the credit for it.

Clearly God wants us using our abilities and skills for Him. One way we do that in this N.T. day is that we are able to earn money with abilities He gives us and we are able to give back to Him a portion to do His work.

FACT #8 – The table was to have four gold rings on the four leg’s corners. **25:26**

Again we are not certain just where on the four leg corners these went, if facing lengthwise or width wise but obviously God gave the builders the wisdom and skill to know exactly where it went.

FACT #9 – The rings were to be attached close to the rim as holders for the poles. **25:27**

Now when it came to the ark, the poles were not to be removed (25:15). There is no such stated point for the table.

Now by placing the rings close to the rim on the legs, then most of the weight of the table would be below the poles. So gravity would stabilize the table in transporting it to various locations.

FACT #10 – The table was to have carrying poles made of acacia wood and overlaid with **gold**. **25:28**

Obviously the purpose of these poles is for carrying the table.

FACT #11 – The table was to have various utensils made of pure gold on it. **25:29**

There are four specific sacred utensils mentioned. We may observe that every one of these utensils were to be made of pure gold. Why? Because these things were going to be used for sacred worship.

Utensil #1 - The table was to have gold dishes.

Utensil #2 - The table was to have pure gold pans.

Utensil #3 - The table was to have pure gold jars.

Utensil #4 - The table was to have pure gold bowls.

Now part of the reason for having these utensils is so that they could be used in pouring drink offerings. In fact, God emphasizes the drink offering aspect right here. God wanted His people to offer Him drink offerings.

There were various drink offerings that were to be poured out to the Lord at worship services and much to the chagrin of a prohibitionist-type, **those drink offerings or libation offerings featured real wine (Num. 6:17-20; 28:14).**

Now I know that this is a hot topic among many people who are believers who go to church, but the fact is if you want to be honest with the Bible, God designed these gold bowls so that real wine could be poured out to Him as an acceptable offering. This is not Welch's grape juice, this is real wine.

Real wine was used and real wine was regularly drunk. This is also true for the communion service. This is why Paul warned that at a communion service at church all should make certain they do not ever get drunk on the wine (I Cor. 11:20-22)

Now I have been studying the Word of God systematically and very seriously ever since 1979, which is over 35 years. If I am going to be honest with what God's Word actually says—it forbids drunkenness; it does not forbid drinking an alcoholic beverage.

The problem some people have is that of control and some people cannot drink a glass or two of wine and quit. So God warns that each person must follow his own conscience in this matter. Each person has his or her own liberty to determine what he or she drinks and we must be careful in the use of that liberty to not offend a brother or sister (Rom. 14:21-22).

But I have believed for years the church is wrong in not using real wine at a communion service. God designed bowls in His sanctuary for real wine to be poured out and Jesus drank real wine and Paul instructed the Corinthians on the subject of real wine use at communion.

Now each person has a right to his own convictions and each person needs to follow his own conscience in his convictions (Rom. 14:2). But **what we do not have the right to do is interpret the Bible by our convictions.** The Bible says what it says and these pure gold jars and bowls were designed for drink offerings of real wine.

Now I want to make a specific point about the pure gold utensils. I doubt that there was anyone else in Israel, including Moses, that had pure gold dishes, pans, jars and bowls. But this was going to be a place to worship God and even though the people did not have this in their own homes, God deserved it in His home.

There is a principle to see here. When we build something for God, we need to construct it at the best possible level we can. We need to have it be the highest quality possible, even if we don't have it in our own homes.

Some churches are sloppy, run-down places that in no way reflect any glory of God. Years ago I spoke in a place like that. On the pulpit was a light that apparently did not work, so they duct-taped a bulb on the side of the light so there would be some light there. Now who would do that even in their own home?

I am not saying we have to build a crystal cathedral or have things made of gold, but it ought to be high quality and thank God the new sanctuary that we are building is just that.

FACT #12 – The table was to have unleavened bread on it at all times. **25:30**

It is interesting that this is the only food that was to ever be placed on this elaborate table. The utensils were used for other things but this was the only food item ever to be put on this table. We may assume that the bread would only be unleavened bread, although that is not specifically stated here. The point of this is to build the table to Divine specs.

The bread was actually called “the bread of the Presence.” What this means is that this bread was set in the presence of God and God would fellowship with His people.

Now most of the food that was offered to God was given outside the tent in the tabernacle courtyard. It was sacrificed and burned on the altar. But this bread was inside and close to the ark.

That bread was to be on that table “before Me at all times.” So when the table was being moved from one place to another, the bread was to go along with it. This bread on the table at all times depicted the presence of God with His people at all times (Ex. 33:14-15).

We know that one key reason why this bread is so important at all times is that this bread is a type of Christ. Jesus Christ is the bread of life (John 6:35). In fact, he took bread and said this is My body which is broken for you.

Jesus Christ is the very key to us have a continual relationship with God and without Christ we do not have a relationship with God.