

Message #53**Exodus 26:15-30**

If you are going to build something, such as a frame or a building, you need boards. The general contractor who is in charge of building our new sanctuary is Larry Lewkes of Deloof Construction. I have come to appreciate him. He is a leader who has a good systematic mind when it comes to overseeing construction projects. I walked out back one morning and asked, “Larry—how many boards did it take to build this new sanctuary?”

He said, well it might take me a while to figure that out, but I can get you an answer. I said I would like you to do that because we are going through Exodus and we are looking at boards and I am curious about this fact.

Before the day was over, Larry got back to me and said to build this new sanctuary took a total of 6803 boards. That is a lot of boards. Each board had to meet a certain spec and it was designed for a certain purpose. Some boards were used as trusses. Some boards were used for framing. Some boards were used for office purposes and sanctuary purposes.

That same point was true when God decided it was time to build Him a new sanctuary/tabernacle/tent.

Now obviously if you are building a mobile tent sanctuary you are not going to need as many boards as if you were building an immobile church like TCBC. However, the framing of the tabernacle needed boards to give stability to all the material that formed the tent. You have to drape the material over something. There needed to be a frame and that frame was built with boards. It is clear from this text that each board was very important to completion of the project.

God wanted His people to build Him a new sanctuary and in order for that to happen, they would need boards, lots of boards that were cut to His specific specs.

GOD’S SANCTUARY WAS TO BE BUILT BY USING A SPECIFIC TYPE OF BOARD THAT MET SPECIFIC MEASUREMENTS.

Now the truth is when you look at a structure, typically the boards used are not things you visually see. You actually don’t think much about the boards involved. But they are there holding up the structure and without them you would not have a stable structure.

I think about that when it comes to the people of God. Many people of God are not up front or out in the limelight types of people, but they are solid behind scenes boards that really hold up the church. Without these people you do not have a stable church.

Now the first thing we will observe in **verse 15** is that God chooses to use the noun “tabernacle” rather than “sanctuary.” He began by calling it a “sanctuary” (25:8) and then He changed the noun in the very next verse and called it a “tabernacle” (25:9).

The noun “sanctuary” (miqdash) comes from a Hebrew root word that refers to a sacred, holy place of worship (*Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*, p. 611). The noun “tabernacle” (mishkan) is a word that refers to a place where God dwells (*Ibid.*, p. 702).

So when we combine these two words “tabernacle” and “sanctuary,” we come to the conclusion that this place is a sacred place that features the presence of God, where people may gather for corporate worship.

Now to have a place where God’s people may gather together for worship, they will need to build a place and if you are going to build a place, you will need boards.

BOARD SPEC #1 – The boards for the tabernacle are to be made of acacia wood. **26:15a**

We have already brought out data about this wood but one fact we want to stress here about this wood is that it is found in areas that have parched ground. This wood is a very heavy type of wood. In fact, Bob De Does gave me a piece of a similar type of wood that comes from Australia called “Jar Wood.” This is a very little piece but you will notice how heavy it is.

This is no coincidence that God is choosing this kind of wood, because it was specifically predicted by the prophet Isaiah that Jesus Christ would grow up like a “root out of parched ground” (Is. 53:2). There was nothing in the humanity of Jesus Christ that made Him stand out as spectacular. He did not come from a flourishing Davidic background. He did not stand out like a massive cedar or oak tree; He was like an acacia tree/bush that came from parched ground. He did not come from any place you would expect the King of Kings to come. But Jesus Christ was the Son of God, with all of the heavy weight of the glory of God.

BOARD SPEC #2 – The boards for the tabernacle were to stand upright. **26:15b**

I understand this to mean that these were not to be crooked boards. These boards would be the frame for the tabernacle/tent. They were not to be bent boards or in the building trades they would say these are not to be cattywampus boards. The term cattywampus, spelled various ways –cattiewampus, caddywampus, catawampus–refers to a bent board or a board that is askew, a board that is off-center.

Ever since I heard that term in the building world it has intrigued me. Duane Corstange and Jon Carr used the term and we got to laughing about it. I tried to look up the origin of that term because it always made me laugh and when I looked up the origin it said that cattywampus was closely connected to the term “whopperjawed.” This term refers to something that is crooked. Those builders have their own language code. They speak in tongues, in mysterious building languages and terms the rest of us know nothing about.

Well, the boards for this sanctuary were to be perfectly straight. Again this would depict the fact that Jesus Christ never missed the mark of straight perfection. He always grew in favor with God because His life was totally straight with the Word of God.

BOARD SPEC #3 – Each board is to be ten cubits or 15 feet long. **26:16a**

Now we know the outside curtains were to be 30 cubits in length which is 45 feet (Ex. 26:8). So the curtain would go straight up a 15-foot side wall, go loop over a 15-foot top and come back down another 15-foot side wall. Most tents today that outfitters use have five-foot sidewalls. This place had 15-foot sidewalls.

BOARD SPEC #4 – Each board is to be 1 ½ cubits or 2.25 feet wide. **26:16b**

What we are not told is how thick each board is. It has been assumed, based on a statement of Josephus that it was a board of about a hand width or four inches thick. Josephus writes that “the thickness was four fingers” (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, Kregel Publications, p. 72). So what we have for each board is a board that is 15 feet long, 2 ¼ feet wide and four inches thick.

BOARD SPEC #5 – Each board is to have two tenons that fit all of the boards together.
26:17

Now a tenon is an end piece of wood that is formed in such a way that it will fit snugly into a second piece of wood. The boards were not going to be nailed together, but pegged together.

It would be like forming some type of peg that would be connected to another board of the tabernacle. Each board was to have these two tenons or pegs for joining to the other boards.

BOARD SPEC #6 – Each board was to be made. **26:18a**

So what this would mean is that each board had to be specifically cut and formed for this tabernacle project. This would require a lot of time and a lot of work. Since the text says the board must be made for the “tabernacle,” God apparently wanted the people to think about the fact that as they are making these boards they are doing this for a place where God’s presence would dwell.

We use boards for various projects. Apparently God wanted people to realize this project is about making a tabernacle for God.

BOARD SPEC #7 – There were to be 20 of these boards for the south side of the tabernacle.
26:18b

So the total of boards at this point is 20. So if we stand 20 boards that are each 2.25 feet wide side by side, the length of the tent is exactly 45 feet.

BOARD SPEC #8 – There were to be 40 sockets of silver under each of the 20 boards with each board having two sockets. **26:19**

Now these sockets were bases into which the board fit so that it would stand upright.

BOARD SPEC #9 – There were to be 20 of these boards for the north side of the tabernacle. **26:20**

So the total number of boards after this instruction is now 40. We have 20 boards on the south side and 20 boards on the north side.

BOARD SPEC #10 – There were to be 40 sockets of silver under each of the 20 boards with each board having two sockets. **26:21**

Again each of the boards was to fit into these sockets.

BOARD SPEC #11 – There were to be six boards for the rear frame of the tabernacle/tent on the west side. **26:22**

So the total number of boards after this instruction is 46. Now six boards times 2.25 feet is 13 ½ feet.

BOARD SPEC #12 – There were to be two boards for reinforcements on the corners at the rear of the tabernacle/tent. **26:23-24**

So the total number of boards after this instruction is now 48. So there were to be 48 total framing boards that became the base for this tabernacle/tent.

According to **verse 14**, the two reinforcement boards were to be doubled up at the corners and apparently tapered together to fit into one ring at the top. Now we must assume that these boards overlap in such a way that they form a perfect 15-foot square Holy of Holy place.

BOARD SPEC #14 – There were to be a total of eight boards for the rear frame that sat into 16 sockets of silver. **26:25**

So even though the two reinforcement boards were to be joined at the corner posts, they were to have their own silver sockets.

BOARD SPEC #15 – There were to be 15 cross bars made from acacia wood. **26:26-27**

There were to be five crossbars on each of the two sides of the tabernacle—north and south, and five crossbars at the back of the tabernacle on the west side.

BOARD SPEC #16 – There was to be one middle bar at the center of the tent that passed through from end to end. **26:28**

There is a debated point on whether or not the roof was completely flat or somewhat peaked. Usually with a tent there needs to be some rise in the pitch or in the peak to shed water. But the text does not specifically say that.

BOARD SPEC #17 – The boards are to be overlaid with gold. **26:29a**

Again, we do believe this illustrates the humanity and deity of Christ.

BOARD SPEC #18 – The rings into which the bars fit are to be made of gold. **26:29b**

BOARD SPEC #19 – The bars are to be overlaid with gold. **26:29c**

Now the reason for this is because this represents the humanity of Christ joined to the deity of Christ.

Now carefully notice **verse 30** because this reveals something important—all of these boards and bars were to be put together in the way God showed Moses up there on that mountain. So we can take an educated guess as to how this tent went together; but in all reality, Moses had to tell the builders what God revealed to him and how it was to go together.

Moses did not just hear words on that mountain, he apparently saw pictures. In other words, Moses actually saw the blueprints for this tabernacle. This is important because this sanctuary was not merely some personal opinion or interpretation of how we put these boards together; this was a precise revealed, carefully designed structure.

You did not just start slapping up boards. This sanctuary was to be very carefully constructed in a very specifically designed way.

Now when we turn over to Hebrews 8:5 we see that this very verse from Exodus 26:30 is quoted in reference to this being a copy and shadow of heavenly worship that zeroes in on Jesus Christ. So this carefully constructed sanctuary was a shadow sanctuary.

Now the writer of Hebrews makes it clear that our relationship with God is superior to that of this O.T. worship because of Jesus Christ. We are now in a far better covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ than one could ever have under O.T. Law (Heb. 8:6).

By the way, if someone wants to put themselves back under the O.T. Law, then they better get to building the tabernacle because that is and was a key part of worship.