

Message #52**Exodus 26:1-14**

Many years ago in the south a gathering of “Christian worshippers” took place in what was called a camp meeting or a Tent meeting.

The first old time “tent revival” was held in July 1800 in southwestern Kentucky. Supposedly between 10,000 to 25,000 people from the Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist churches went to those tent meetings. The Pentecostals and the Holiness movement really got behind this type of thing. People would get together under the “big top” to have their healing services and their crusades with the idea that they were accomplishing something big for God.

By the 1920’s tent meetings were being held in many places in the south and they were designed to produce, as one historian said, an almost “circus-like atmosphere.” People went to these tent meetings expecting a lot of emotional things to happen. In fact, back in 1949, Billy Graham became a well-known figure by conducting a series of tent revival style gatherings under a tent in Los Angeles.

One thing that has always troubled me about this is that often, people who have tent meetings will often refer to the tabernacle of Israel. The thing that troubles me is if that is your basis for having tent meetings, then apparently the purpose has been overlooked. The tabernacle was not designed for some emotional experience or some evangelistic experience; it was designed for a real thoughtful, careful worship of God.

The purpose of the tent/sanctuary was not to reach out to lost people so they could have some “big top religious emotional experience”; the purpose of the tent/sanctuary was to build a very sacred place where God would be revered and worshipped.

Now at this point, Israel is basically on a big national camping trip. They are living in tents in the wilderness. So tents were the norm. But this sanctuary tent was not going to be an ordinary tent. This tent would be very different from the average tent Israel was camping in. Now to this point, God had carefully given specs for the furniture and now it was time to build the tent/sanctuary.

Actually when we think through the chronology here—God had carefully designed three pieces of furniture for His sanctuary and now that He had those pieces of furniture designed, He was not about to let them sit outside to gather dust or rust. These items were key items and sacred items and they needed to be housed in a very sacred tent.

If God’s people were to worship God, they needed a very sacred place to corporately worship God.

GOD GAVE INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE TENT CURTAINS TO BE USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF HIS SANCTUARY.

Now the actual sanctuary complex covered an area 150 feet long and 75 feet wide or 11,250 square feet. The sanctuary area was an enclosed courtyard that contained an inside tent. Inside this courtyard area was a tent that was 45 feet long and 15 feet wide. Inside that tent was the lampstand, table of the bread of presence, the altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant.

Since Israel was not yet in her land, she needed a special place of worship that could be moved. So this could not be a structure made of brick or boards; it needed to be made of some form of tent frame and material for mobility purposes. What God decided to do was use a network of curtains to construct this sanctuary.

Now the first thing we may observe from **verse 1** is that God calls this place “the tabernacle” (mishkan). **The particular meaning of this word is that this will be a place of habitation and dwelling presence of God** (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 517). So this tent was going to be a very sacred tent because this would be the actual residence of God. When people would see this tabernacle, they would say God is there. God’s presence is there.

This to me is a humbling point. It is staggering to think that God would actually permit sinful people to build Him something that He would view as so sacred that He would actually choose to allow His special presence to be there. These Israelites had some real spiritual issues and spiritual problems. These were very sinful people. The fact that God would even have anything to do with sinful humanity whatsoever is totally amazing; let alone let that humanity build Him a structure where He would agree to make His presence known in.

I am not too certain people who build structures for God really grasp this point. It is staggering to think that we could construct a place where God’s special presence would exist. But this would be one such place. As we put up a new sanctuary, what a testimony it will be if people say the presence of God is there.

This past Tuesday I received an email from a couple out of state out west who said that they loved the new picture we have of the sunset and steeple. Then they said, “There are no good churches where we live.” There are none who teach the Bible seriously and systematically. Now the thought I had is that when they saw that sunset and steeple at TCBC, their thought was there is a church that has the presence of God and the power of the Word of God.

That is what people would think when they would see the tent.

Now in this section there are three different types of curtains or coverings that were to be made for this tabernacle:

COVERING #1 – The covering of the linen curtains. **26:1-6**

Now God gives His eight specs concerning the linen curtains:

Spec #1 - The tabernacle was to be made with 10 curtains of fine twisted linen. **26:1a**

This is God's tent. This tent was to contain some very exquisite and expensive linen that had been finely twisted by the process of spinning. The linen would have been white and most interpreters believe that this represents the color of the righteousness and holiness of God.

Spec #2 - The fine twisted linen was to be entwined with blue, purple and scarlet material. **26:1b**

Three colors were to be weaved together—blue, purple and scarlet. Dr. C. I. Scofield said the three colors of this fine linen has great meaning pertaining to Jesus Christ: 1) The blue represents Christ's heavenly origin; 2) The purple represents His Davidic royalty; 3) The scarlet represents His sacrificial shed blood.

Spec #3 - The linen was to be embroidered with cherubim. **26:1c**

When Jesus was here, he said that there are "angels in heaven who continually behold the face of My father who is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10). We also learn from Revelation that there are angels around the throne of God (Rev. 7:11). Any place that features the presence of God features angels. When one gets to heaven, there will be a visible angelic presence clearly seen.

Cherubim are the highest ranked angelic beings in the program of God. Wherever God's presence is, they are there. Apparently the cherubim were to be "embroidered into the tapestry of which the linen curtains were composed" (George Bush, *Exodus*, p. 120). We don't know the size of the cherubim, but we must assume Moses knew and they were embroidered or woven into the fabric.

We may recall that when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, cherubim were stationed to see to it that no one could get to the "tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). So originally the cherubim signaled "paradise lost." But now the cherubim would signal that a relationship with God was possible again. Paradise could be regained through this system of worship.

Spec #4 - Each of the ten curtains was to be 42 feet long (28 cubits) and 6 feet wide (4 cubits). **26:2**

So if we dangle a 42 foot long curtain over a 15 foot high and wide structure, it ends up 3 feet short. If we divide the 3 feet in half, it ends up 18 inches short on each side.

Spec #5 - Two sets of five curtains were to be joined together. **26:3**

We may suspect that each of the sets would measure 42 feet long or tall by 60 feet wide. This was to become one continuous awning or pavilion.

Spec #6 - Both sets of joined curtains are to have loops of blue on the edge. **26:4**

The obvious purpose of the loops is to join things together. Since they are blue in color, they are heavenly in origin.

Spec #7 - Each of the 10 sets is to contain 50 loops. **26:5**

50 loops along the 42 foot edge would mean there would be a loop about every 10 inches. These curtains were not to be sown together, but joined together by these loops.

Spec #8 - Each set of curtains is to be joined together by 50 clasps of gold. **26:6**

About every 10 inches there were these special gold joining rings. It must be assumed that these rings had some opening to hook the loops into.

COVERING #2 – The covering of the goat hair curtains. **26:7-13**

A curtain of goat hair was to be made for a tent over the tabernacle. Now the goat hair curtains were black weather-resistant curtains that are still used today by Bedouins. They block out the sun and the heat. These goat hair curtains would hide and protect the brilliant colors of the inner curtains and the costly pieces of furniture in the tabernacle.

Many commentators believe that the “goat skins” are skins of separation. There is a judgment specifically aimed at national Israel in which the goats are separated from the sheep (Matt. 25:32ff). By covering the tent with goat skin, it says there is “no evil within this place.”

Spec #1 - It shall be made of eleven curtains over all. **26:7**

Rather than ten, the number would be eleven curtains. This extra curtain would enable it to drape over the back and the front.

Spec #2 - Each curtain shall be 45 feet (30 cubits) long. **26:8a**

So this outer curtain was three feet longer than the inner curtain (45 feet rather than 42 feet). So as these curtains were draped over the other curtains, they would touch the ground from one side to the other.

Spec #3 - Each curtain shall be 6 feet wide (4 cubits). **26:8b**

Spec #4 - Five curtains are to be joined together. **26:9a**

Five curtains were to be joined together like the inner curtains.

Spec #5 - Six curtains are to be joined together. **26:9b**

Six other curtains were also to be joined together.

Spec #6 - Each set of curtains is to contain 50 loops. **26:10**

Spec #7 - Each set is to contain 50 bronze clasps to join the curtains together. **26:11**

When the two sets of curtains were to be joined together, the length was 66 feet.

Spec #8 - The overlapping part shall lap over the tabernacle back. **26:12-13a**

If the length of the tabernacle is 45 feet and the back is 15 feet high the remaining six feet was to be folded over on the back.

Spec #9 - The overlapping length of 18 inches shall dangle over the sides of the tabernacle.
26:13

COVERING #3 – The covering of the animal skins covering. **26:14**

Over the goat hair curtains was ram skins dyed red and over that were hides of sea cows. The dyed red color would signal shed blood. So everything in a relationship with God was under the dyed red skins of the ram. Why is that? Everything in a relationship with God is due to the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Now the outer sea cow skins were important. So what we have here are a doubled up covering of animal skins. We may assume that the sea cow skins would waterproof everything and keep all rain and moisture out. It would also keep the internal contents from any exposure to any weather element that could destroy it.

So these doubled up animal skins would protect this material for a long, long time.

There are no dimensions given for this, so we must assume that probably this double covering covered the entire sanctuary.

Now if you would look at the outside of this tent/tabernacle, it would look coarse and rough. The beauty was what was inside the tent/tabernacle.

This is how it is with the people of God. If you look at the outside, they look rough. We have a flesh and we are all sinners. But when you look at the inside of the believer, there is where the beauty exists. Inside every believer is the righteousness of God. Inside every believer is the presence of God.