

Message #56

Exodus 27:9-21

Building anything for God is a process. This is true for a building and this is true for a spiritual life. It is a process. It doesn't happen all at once, it takes time. In order to arrive at the complete level God wants, it is a process and it does take time. That point is clear from this part of the book of Exodus, which has to do with building a tabernacle. It did not get built overnight. It was a process of time in which people carefully followed the Word of God.

Now we may see this in our own lives and in our own church. The construction of our new sanctuary has taken several months. God didn't just say "presto" there you are. There was a very tedious construction process that was carefully followed. There are blueprints that needed to be carefully followed in order to build this. The same is true for our lives. If we want a life that truly honors God and makes a statement for His glory, we need to follow the blueprints of the Scriptures. The more we do, the more we develop. The structure becomes more of what God wants it to be.

Now one thing is clear from these chapters in Exodus is that when it came to worshipping God, you did not just pop up a tent any way you wanted and call it a place of worship. It needed to be a tent that met certain requirements and it needed to be put in a place that God would actually sanction. In other words, no one said let's go out in the backyard and build a sanctuary. It had to be in conformity to the Word of God and it had to meet His specifications.

Now this tabernacle sanctuary is very different from a church in many ways. One of the most significant ways is that if we are discussing the physical place of worship, **in this O.T. sanctuary you worshipped God at the sanctuary but not in the sanctuary.** In our services, we open the door and turn on the lights for everyone to enter into the sanctuary, this was not so in the Old Testament.

Only the O.T. priests were permitted inside the sanctuary; but the rest of the people came to this sanctuary for worship and their worship was conducted outside the tent in a courtyard. So to have a place where the rest of the people could worship God, there needed to be a special sacred courtyard where people could gather and in this text, we learn a great deal about it.

GOD DEMANDED THAT HIS SANCTUARY SIT ON A SACRED PIECE OF GROUND KNOWN AS THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE.

As with the structure of the other things, God is very precise in the structure of this as well. This courtyard will need to be big enough to accommodate hundreds of worshippers at one time. Since worshippers are required to come to this place and actually eat a portion of their sacrificial meals in the presence of God (Deut. 12:18), it needed to be large enough for that to happen. But it also had to be small enough to be able to transport it to various places.

God had that all figured out when He designed it. Now this courtyard would actually form a rectangular perimeter around the tabernacle. In this text there are eighteen facts brought out:

FACT #1 – The south side length of the courtyard is to feature hangings of fine twisted linen.
27:9a

Now as we will see this is a lot of finely twisted linen that needed to cover a large area. So this is a lot of linen. Putting up a structure for God is not cheap. God is the Divine architect and any thing He designs has artistic beauty to it—whether it be birds, flowers, trees, mountains or a Tabernacle. It has often been observed by those of sober minds that clean art and God-honoring thinking go hand in hand. God certainly has an artistic side to Him which is seen in anything He designs.

James Strong suggests that if you track the theme of fine linen through Scripture, it is a “symbol of cleanness” (*The Tabernacle of Israel*, p. 149). Whether it was worn by a priest or used for the Tabernacle structure, this fine twisted linen said this is a clean place. There is nothing filthy beyond these walls.

This is the same mindset we need in the church. Nothing filthy should ever exist within this place. It needs to be a clean place that offers pure worship to the people of God.

FACT #2 – The south side length of fine twisted linen is to be 100 cubits or 150 feet long.
27:9b

There is nothing specifically known about the sacredness of the dimensions other than this is what God demanded. Noah’s ark was 300 feet long, 50 feet wide and 30 feet high.

One common denominator that is observable from Noah’s ark; the ark/box which contained the covenant and the basket in which Moses was placed and this tabernacle is that **all of them are rectangular**.

FACT #3 – The south side length is to contain 20 pillars or posts. **27:10**

To have 20 pillars on one side would mean they would be spaced out with a pillar every 7 ½ feet. 20 times 7.5 feet is 150 feet. It is interesting that when putting up fencing it is still a good idea to use 7 ½ feet centers in building a fence.

The pillars were to have twenty sockets of bronze and twenty hooks and bands were to be made of silver.

It is unclear as to how and where the curtains were actually fastened to the frame. It is possible that the rings were attached to the curtains or hanging loops could be attached to the curtains or some type of button hole was sown.

FACT #4 – The north side length of the courtyard is to be identical to the south side of the courtyard. **27:11**

So there was to be this fine twisted linen that would be exactly 150 feet long with 20 pillar posts which go into 20 sockets of silver with hooks of silver for hanging the curtain.

FACT #5 – The west side width of the courtyard is to be 50 cubits or 75 feet wide. **27:12a**

So the width of the west side is exactly one half of the length.

FACT #6 – The west side width is to contain 10 pillars and 10 sockets. **27:12b**

There are exactly one half the number of pillars and sockets as for the length. Again the spacing is the same because 10 pillars spread out over 75 feet means that there is a pillar/post every 7.5 feet.

FACT #7 – The east side width of the courtyard shall also be 50 cubits or 75 feet wide. **27:13**

The east side is identical to the west side. So what we end up with is a rectangular courtyard—150 feet long and 75 feet wide.

FACT #8 – The east side hangings for one side of the gate were to be 15 cubits or 22.5 feet wide. **27:14a**

Because the east side was the gate side, it needed to be constructed a little differently.

FACT #9 – The east side gate was to have three pillars and three sockets. **27:14b**

The supporting pillars are spaced out identical to the lengthways pillars. God designed this so that there was a pillar post every 7.5 feet.

FACT #10 – The other side of the east gate was to be identical in measurement. **27:15**

What we have here are two curtains that come from each corner toward the center and they stretch 22 ½ feet each (22.5 times 2 = 45 feet) leaving a gap of about 30 feet.

FACT #11 – The gate is to have a screen of 20 cubits or 30 feet. **27:16**

Now this screen was the entrance curtain. It was to be made of blue, purple and scarlet material and it was to contain four pillars with their four sockets. This was the special entrance screen. So this special entrance curtain/screen was 30 feet wide and it was made like the inner curtains except for the cherubim.

Notice carefully this was to be made by “the work of a weaver.” Those who do things for corporate worship are to be skilled at what they do.

Dr. C. I. Scofield said that these hangings on the screen represent the righteousness of God, which His law demands, which excludes all men (Rom. 3:19-20; 10:3-5). The blue represents Jesus Christ is from heaven; the purple represents He is Divine Royalty and the Scarlet represents the fact that He would shed His blood to wash away sin. In order to get into the presence of God, you had to go through this doorway that clearly represented this. So it is when it comes to a relationship with God—there is one door in. One must go through the door to have a relationship with God and that door is Jesus Christ (John 10:9).

FACT #12 – All of the pillars around the court are to be banded together with silver bands with silver hooks and bronze sockets. **27:17**

The rods and hooks would hold up the linen hangings

FACT #13 – The length of the courtyard is 100 cubits or 150 feet. **27:18a**

Again the specific dimensions of what God demands are given.

FACT #14 – The width of the courtyard is 50 cubits or 75 feet. **27:18b**

God is very clear on this point—this is His special and sacred place of worship.

FACT #15 – The height of the courtyard curtain is 5 cubits or 7.5 feet. **27:18c**

This would make it impossible for a person to look in on the things of God without going through the door entrance.

FACT #16 – All the utensils and pegs are to be made of bronze. **27:19**

Obviously ropes and tent pegs were needed to form guy lines to hold up this courtyard tent frame and all of these things were to be made of bronze.

This is interesting to think about because this was the Bronze Age, when many things were made with bronze. Things would not be made with iron until about 1200 B.C. and this is taking place approximately 200 years before that time.

FACT #17 – Oil is to be brought for the lamp so it can burn continually. **27:20**

The oil is to be clear olive oil and it is to be contributed by the sons of Israel. It is to be brought so the lamp may burn continually.

One commentator said since the people of Israel all had lamps that burned at night, it would not have been right to have denied almighty God the “same courtesy” (Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*, p. 600).

God wanted His place of worship to have light burning all the time for the simple reason that as God He never goes to sleep.

Now what is interesting about this is the chronology. We do not specifically know why the instructions concerning the oil for the lamp are not given until now. Logically speaking, one would think you would give the instructions about the oil after you gave the instruction to build the lampstand (Ex. 25:31-40). But no such instructions are given there. We do not get oil instructions until here. If we simply observe the chronology, we see that the oil instructions are given after the entrance gate instructions. Why would that be?

The simplest answer would be because you do not get any light from God until you have gone through the gate of entrance into a relationship with God. In other words, you do not get to see anything until you go through the gate of entrance. But the moment you walk through that gate of entrance, a whole new world of the light of God opens up for you.

FACT #18 – Aaron and his sons are responsible to keep the light burning. **27:21**

These priests had a very sacred responsibility. Part of their responsibility was to make certain that there was enough oil in the lamp at all time to keep it burning. This was to be a perpetual responsibility. They needed to make sure there was enough oil and wick for continually lighting.

Now there is no question that oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit (Zech. 4:2-6). In this N.T. age, when a person believes on Jesus Christ, he/she receives the Spirit of God and that Spirit has the job of burning day and night. We are to be people who shine forth the light of God to this very dark and sinful world.

Since we are now all priests unto God, we need to realize that in order to shine forth God’s light we need to make certain we are continually yielding to the Spirit of God. We need to continually study God’s Word and pray to make certain that we are a continual light that shines forth the glory of God.

We may observe from **verse 21** that the sanctuary is called the “tent of meeting.” This term meant that this was a place where the people could meet with God.

So what was being built here was a place where people could go to meet with God.

This is what we want for our church and this is what we want for our life. We want to be a place and a person that reflects God’s light so that we may point people to the one place where they may meet God.

That place is the cross. Any person, who is willing to go through that door of entrance, enters into a new relationship with God and a whole new world opens.