

19. The Tabernacle-a portrait of Jesus

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Last week we studied about the Ark of the Covenant and other furniture located in inside of the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place. The everything inside of the Tabernacle pointed us to Jesus Christ. Now we are going to study the decorations of the Tabernacle as well as the outside of the courtyard furnishings. They also describe the person of Jesus and His work on the earth. In short, the Tabernacle is a portrait of Jesus Christ.

The plans for the Tabernacle were revealed to Moses from the inside out, starting with the interior furniture and then working out. Our typical approach to the sanctuary would have been from outside to inside, but God builds the sanctuary from the inside out. He works in His people's hearts from inside to outside while we tend to look and judge people with outward appearance.

Due to the difference in measurement units and eastern style description for some of the areas in chapter 26 and 27 are rather difficult understand. So I will give you a digest version of description in those areas.

A. THE CURTAINS AND COVERINGS

Chapter 26:1-14 describes the curtains and coverings that were used to cover over the Tabernacle itself.

1) The Cherubim embroidered covering – Ex 26:1-6

The covering embroidered with Cherubim was the innermost covering over the Tabernacle. It was about 42 feet by 60 feet, 10 pieces of curtains joined together. So if you are standing inside of the Holy Place, the first covering you would see is this one. The first covering was fine-twined, Egyptian linen with cherubim embroidery in the material.

It did not touch the ground, and its beauty could only be seen on the inside of the Tabernacle. Just like that, the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot be seen by the carnal world. It is important for believers to worship Him because we not only receive blessings from Him, but we need to adore Him in His beauty.

The Cherubim are there to remind us that there angels are around the Throne of Grace in heaven who bow their knees to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ.

The curtains covering the Tabernacle each bore a different color and each had its own meaning. The blue means 'heaven'. The scarlet speaks of 'the blood of Christ' on the cross. The purple speaks of 'royalty' as Jesus the King. The white linen around the outer court speaks of 'the Holiness of God'.

2) The Goats' hair covering – Ex 26:7-13

The second curtain was made of goats' hair and it touched the ground. It was about 45 feet by 60 feet, 10 pieces of curtains joined together. This curtain speaks of Christ's worth for sinners. It is symbolic of the death of Christ.

As a one of the process of a sacrifice, two goats were selected by lot, one for sacrifice, and the other to be sent out into the wilderness. The blood of the sacrificed goat would be taken into the Holy of Holies by the High Priest, as required by God to

forgive the sins of the children of Israel, because without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness according to Hebrews 9:22. Then the High Priest would lay his hands on the head of the other goat and confess all the sins of the children of Israel before it was sent out into the wilderness, signifying that God would forget all the sins thus confessed. Here is the origin of the 'scapegoat'.

3) The ram skins dyed red covering – Ex 26:14

A ram's skin is not red naturally, but had to be dyed to become red. This reminds us of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins on the cross. Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah some 750 years before His crucifixion:

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

Speaking of a ram, do you remember it was a ram caught in the thicket that God provided to be sacrificed in place of Isaac in Genesis 22:8-13? Abraham prophetically declared, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." Jesus just did that. The ram speaks of consecration and obedience to God.

4) The outer covering with badger skin – Ex 26:14

This is the outermost covering of the Tabernacle. The covering was made from either badger or sea cow skin. This covering formed a thick, protective and weatherproof layer over the Tabernacle.

From the outside this covering made the Tabernacle look ordinary and unattractive just like Jesus' appearance. It represents the human side of Jesus.

Isaiah 53:2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

Today there is much temptation to be fashionable and image conscious. Not so with Jesus. What He possesses is real and eternal. He looked like an ordinary person from the outside. But when we get to know Him through His Word, He is full of glory, grace and truth. It is no wonder why the Word said that He dwelt among us and yet the world didn't know Him in John 1.

But there are people who sincerely seek the truth of God. They will ignore other people's scoff and jeers to know Christ. Such truth seekers would be rewarded to see and know the beauty of Jesus our Lord and Savior.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

B. THE FRAMING SYSTEMS FOR THE TABERNACLE

We find the framing systems for the Tabernacle in 26:15-37.

1) Boards for the sides of the tent – Exodus 26:15-25

Each board was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. Each board was 15 feet high and 2 feet 3 inches wide.

The north and south sides of the Tabernacle had 20 boards each. The back – west side was six boards wide with two corner boards, for a total of eight boards across

the back. Each board was joined together by a system of tabs with rings, through which ran bars.

Each board rested on two sockets of silver which keeps the board off the earth, each socket made with one talent of silver. Silver is the metal associated with redemption and payment for sin. Jesus was betrayed for silver in Matthew 26:15. The Tabernacle's foundation was silver – pointing to the redemption work of Jesus Christ which separates us from the world.

2) Bars to join together the boards – Exodus 26:26-30

Each bar was made of acacia wood and overlaid in gold. The bars ran the entire length of each side, linking together each board into one system.

The boards, bars and rings were overlaid with gold which speaks of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3) The Veils – Exodus 26:31-37

The first veil was hung upon pillars outside of the Tabernacle and speaks of the humanity of Jesus Christ. The pillars were made of acacia wood covered with gold, with silver sockets attached. These speak of deity taking hold of earth through redemption. There was no cap on top of these pillars, which made them different from the other pillars in the Tabernacle. These were just cut off.

Isaiah 53:8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

Jesus Christ was cut off at the age of thirty-three years.

The second veil was made of fine-twined linen and was the only entrance to the Holy of Holies. This veil also speaks of the humanity of Christ. When Christ died on the cross, the veil was torn in two. The torn veil in the temple signifies that the way into God's presence is open to every believer of Jesus Christ. In other words, the only way to get to God today is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Some people believe that you can come to God if you are sincere or belong to some church or religious in any faith. Do not believe it. There is no other way, no Plan B.

C. THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE

When a worshiper came to the Tabernacle to offer a sacrifice, the first thing he met was a white linen fence, 150 feet long and 75 feet wide, that surrounded the Tabernacle and created a courtyard area where the priests ministered. The Tabernacle was located at the west end of this courtyard, and at the east end was a 30 foot entrance to the enclosure.

Here the priests met the people who came to offer sacrifices and examined each animal carefully to make sure it was acceptable. The worshiper would put his hand on the animal's head to transfer his sins symbolically to the animals, and then the priest would slay the animal and offer it on the bronze altar according to the regulations given in Leviticus 1-7.

1) The Bronze Altar - Exodus 27:1-8

The altar was a box-like structure and because of its overlay of bronze it could survive high temperatures. The altar was 7 feet 6 inches square, and 4 feet 6 inches high.

The furniture in the outer court is made of bronze which represents judgment of sin. The sin must be settled in the court before it goes. Someone or something have to die on that bronze altar for him. Jesus was our burnt offering. It speaks of the cross of Christ, and of the fact that He is actually the One who died in man's place.

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

2) The Court of the Tabernacle - Exodus 27:9-19

If we could be in the wilderness where these two million Israelites camped around, these Israelites' tents were probably grayish black and brown, set in contrast with the sandy and rocky colors of the desert.

In the center of their camp, you would see the white linen curtains of the Tabernacle's Outer Court, approximately 150 feet long, 75 feet wide and 7.5 feet tall. It was so noticeable against the surrounding rather drab colors of the camp and wilderness. The tall, white, fine twined linen curtains made a separation between the outside world and the beauty that was contained in the Tabernacle. Unless we are on an elevated position, it was impossible to see inside the Tabernacle from the camp outside.

Actually, the entire Tabernacle was a tent – a moveable structure. God wanted Israel to know He was with them wherever they went. It wasn't a case of "You come to Me," but the idea was "I have come to You".

In the Bible, white linen signifies righteousness and holiness according to Revelation 19:8. Therefore, the white linen curtains of the Outer Court remind us that we are separated from God due to our sins.

The fine white linen curtains of the Outer Court were supported by pillars, at least 56 of them. The pillars were set in base sockets of bronze and capped with silver tops.

The bronze base sockets symbolize God's judgement on those who sin against Him. The caps on top of the pillars, the hooks and bands around the linens were made from silver which symbolize the redemption of God for the children of Israel.

From what we've learned, we couldn't help but to come to a conclusion that Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection were planned long before the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

3) Oil for the Lampstand

Exodus 27:20-21 "And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually. 21 In the Tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which is before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening until morning before the Lord. It shall be a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the children of Israel.

Of course, oil speaks of the Holy Spirit and the burning light speaks of Christ. Now all that has changed. The Lord Jesus Christ has gone back to heaven. The Bible tells

us that we are the light of the world. You and I do not make any light without the Spirit of God.

God never wanted the lamps to lose their fire. Only by a continual supply of oil and trimming of the wicks could keep them burning. We can only continue to be on fire for God if we are continually supplied with the oil of the Holy Spirit, and are "trimmed" by God to bear more light.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Truth seekers would be rewarded to see and know the beauty of Jesus our Lord and Savior.

2) We can only continue to be on fire for God if we are continually supplied with the oil of the Holy Spirit, and are "trimmed" by God to bear more light.