

Message #49

Exodus 25:10-22

One of the first things God wanted Israel to do was to build Him a new sanctuary through the voluntary contributions of His people. Now we may recall that God told Moses to tell the people that He wanted a tabernacle and new sanctuary built as a place where Israel could meet corporately and a place where God could meet with His people. He specifically said that He wanted this built through voluntary contributions of His people.

We may recall that God gave a list of 13 acceptable gifts that His people could give if their hearts were moved to give.

Now we would naturally and logically think that the first order of business, if you are going to build a new sanctuary, would be the design of the new sanctuary. You would naturally think that if this is to be a tabernacle place to worship God, then we need to get blueprints for the building.

However, that is not what God does. This is not how God begins. God begins by carefully giving direction for the specific furnishings that He wants in the sanctuary.

When we considered building a new sanctuary, the first thing we did was to come up with a design for the sanctuary. We didn't start ordering chairs and other items. We started with a design of the building. This is the way we did it.

However, this is not how God did it. **The first thing God does is He gives direction for the furnishings before He gives the design of the sanctuary and the first thing God wants built is the construction of the ark. This ark would be the place where God's precious Word was contained. So the construction of the sanctuary was to begin with a focus on God's Word.**

Now this ark, which really is a box/chest, would have two special purposes:

Purpose #1 - It would actually house the Testimony, which is the written Word of God.

Purpose #2 - The lid of the ark would serve as the mercy seat, which symbolized a contact point where Holy God would meet sinful man. The ark is referred to over 200 times in the O. T. by different titles: the ark; the ark of Jehovah; the ark of God; the ark of the covenant; and the ark of the testimony.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW SANCTUARY, THE FIRST THING GOD WANTED MADE WAS THE ARK-BOX-CHEST THAT WOULD CAUSE ALL OF HIS PEOPLE TO FOCUS ON HIS WRITTEN WORD AND HIS GREAT MERCY.

No one can look at this text without concluding that a key to worship of God and a key to fellowship with God is to honor the written Word of God in a very reverent way and to come to terms with the grace and mercy of God in a very reverent way.

Just by the design of this there is no doubt that there is to be an intense focus on the written Word if one is to have the true presence of God in the midst.

Now there are four main ark realities that are revealed here:

ARK REALITY #1 – God reveals the design of the ark. **25:10-15**

In these verses it is very clear that God wanted His ark designed in a very special way. He carefully designed this to meet His specs. This ark/box/chest was to be built in a very certain way and it was to meet all of His specific details.

There are seven details it was to meet:

(Detail #1) - The ark box was to be constructed of acacia wood. **25:10a**

Acacia wood is a wood that comes from a shrub/tree that is found in warm, hot regions of the world. It has very deep roots that are capable of drawing moisture and water from deep in the ground, something other plants and trees cannot do. This type of wood came from a shrub/tree that grew plentifully in the desert regions of the Sinai Peninsula and Israel.

Acacia wood is known to be an extremely strong and dense wood. One writer said this is a “great option” of wood for “any type of construction.”

This wood is resistant to decay; it is not a palatable wood to insects and it is so dense that it cannot be penetrated by water. Now some types of woods can splinter and crack, but acacia wood was a type of wood that could be cut and shaped and it would maintain its integrity.

Now to give us an idea of how tough this wood is, we would do well to realize that this tabernacle that was about to be constructed would last for the next 400-500 years until the Temple would be built by Solomon. Frankly, there are not too many types of wood in the world that could hold up for 400-500 years.

Actually today you can purchase high quality furniture made from acacia wood. In fact, you can purchase acacia wood flooring for \$5.85 per square foot. It is a rich looking wood.

Since God made the trees and knew about all types of wood, He is the One who deemed that His ark/chest be made from this wood.

(Detail #2) - The ark box was to be 2 ½ cubits long, which is 45 inches long or 3.75 feet long.
25:10b

The length of this box was to be just under four feet long.

(Detail #3) - The ark box was to be 1 ½ cubits wide, which is 27 inches wide or 2.25 feet wide.
25:10c

The width of the box was to be just a little over two feet wide.

(Detail #4) - The ark box was to be 1 ½ cubits high, which is 27 inches high or 2.25 feet high.
25:10d

The height of the box was to be a little over two feet high.

We may assume that this was to be the exterior dimensions of the box God wanted built.

By general observation, we would say this is not a real impressive size; but what would be impressive was its appearance, its value and its contents.

I think this is significant. It is not the size of the church that makes it impressive; it is how focused it is on God's written Word and how much that church is a beautiful reflection of what that Word teaches. A church that is focused on the Word of God is very valuable in the sight of God.

(Detail #5) - The ark box was to be overlaid with solid gold inside and out. **25:11**

Not only was the entire box to be overlaid and inlaid with gold, but a molding, which was a trim around the edges was also to be in gold. The dimensions of the molding are not given, but it would be expected that the molding would follow the edges on the box.

So this box would have been elegant and beautiful.

Now to take solid gold and overlay and inlay this entire box with it, including the molding and the trim, we may certainly see that this will be one very valuable box.

One Jewish scholar estimated that if the gold were overlaid 1/64th an inch over the entire dimensions, the total weight of gold on this one box would be 82.86 pounds. He said if you add the rings and the poles to this we must add another 3 pounds of gold. He claimed that the cherubim would need to be at least twice the thickness to maintain stability overlaid with 1/32nd of an inch. If you add the wings and the bodies, the total is about 92.25 pounds.

This Jewish scholar said that to build the entire ark of gold we are looking at about 177.61 pounds. Now it is estimated that today one pound of gold is worth over \$22,000 dollars. If we take and multiply this number by 177 pounds the total dollar value for this small box/chest is nearly 4 million dollars (3,894,000).

Why did God want such an expensive box built? This box would house His precious Word. Do you see how valuable God's Word is to Him and should be to us?

The sanctuary that we are building for God and for His Word cannot be too good for Him. All it can be is the best we can give Him.

(Detail #6) - The ark box was to have four gold rings attached to four feet of the chest. **25:12**

It is obvious that God did not want the bottom of the ark to touch the ground, so there needed to be some bottom feet put on the ark. The dimensions of the feet are not stated, but they could not have been real long because there were to be gold rings put on those feet so that poles could slide through the rings in order to carry this box. If the feet were real long, then the box could become unbalanced in transport.

(Detail #7) - The ark box was to contain poles through the rings made of acacia wood and gold. **25:13-15**

Now the poles were to remain in the rings and were not to be removed. This would prevent the possibility of damaging either the box or poles. These poles were to be viewed as an important part of this ark.

ARK REALITY #2 – God reveals the contents to go in the ark. **25:16**

It is very clear that this ark was to contain the Word of God. This ark was a sacred container built for the purpose of housing the sacred Word and testimony of God. Now God says in this verse that He was going to give His Word to His people and this document was to be housed in this ark.

So at the beginning of this sanctuary construction, it started with a focus on the written Word of God. Not the building; the written Word of God.

We are living in a time when many so-called churches and sanctuaries are doing everything they can to minimize the significance of the sacred, written Scriptures. Those places will never actually have the presence or power of God.

ARK REALITY #3 – God reveals the atonement cover to cover the ark. **25:17-22**

Now God wanted a very special and specific lid built for this ark. There are five specs for the lid:

(Spec #1) - The mercy seat lid was to be made of pure gold. **25:17a**

Now the box was made of wood overlaid with gold, this lid was to be pure gold.

(Spec #2) - The mercy seat lid was to be 2 ½ cubits long, which is 45 inches long. **25:17b**

(Spec #3) - The mercy seat lid was to be 1 ½ cubits wide, which is 27 inches wide. **25:17c**

These dimensions match the length and width of the box. So this top was designed to fit over this box exactly and precisely.

(Spec #4) - The mercy seat lid was to have two hammered gold cherubim at each end.
25:18-20

We do not know the exact height of these cherubim. The cherubim were high-ranked angels and obviously there were to be two designed and put at the ends of this lid. There are three facts we learn about this:

Fact #1 - The cherubim were to have their wings spread upward. **25:20a**

Fact #2 - The cherubim were to have their wings cover the mercy seat lid. **25:20b**

Fact #3 - The cherubim faces were to face each other toward the mercy seat. **25:20c**

(Spec #5) - The mercy seat lid was to be put on top of the ark/chest covering the Word of God inside the chest. **25:21**

The chest featured the mercy of God and the Word of God.

ARK REALITY #4 – God will meet with Moses at the mercy seat of the ark. **25:22**

Now the pronoun “you” in **verse 22** is singular, not plural. So this would become a very important spot to Moses and His successors. Moses would actually go to this sacred spot and even though he would not see God, he would be in His special presence and he would hear from God.

So before any design for the construction of the sanctuary, it all began with a serious focus on the Word of God and the grace of God.

What happened to the ark is a mystery. In Jeremiah 3:16-17, it seems to present the idea that it could have been destroyed or taken captive by the Babylonians. Jeremiah says there will come a day when it will not be missed or remembered because Jerusalem will be called the Throne of God.