

The Tabernacle

Studies on The Tabernacle - The Measuring of God

Readings

- Ex. 25:10, 23 - These were length measurements
- Ex. 25:39 - This was a weight measurement
- Dan. 5:27 - This was the weight, the value of a life measurement
- Jam. 4:14 - This is a durational measurement

Introduction

It is of interest that Moses was not permitted to personally determine the sizes of the various pieces of furniture, neither was he permitted to allocate that decision to Bezaleel. They were measurements determined by God. The measurements were given for several reasons, such as:

- a) The furnishings were all sized according to their particular function, thus there was a practical reason for their sizes.
- b) It also was to cause mankind to consider their own measurements, such as what is life, what does it really consist of?

Due to our spiritual distortion, we do not have the ability to assess to what degree we fulfill the purpose God gave us life and maintain it. Peter calls the Lord "Master", and the word indicates valuator, appraiser, evaluator, and is only used by Luke. Only Divine persons can evaluate the degree we have fulfilled God's purpose for our individual lives.

What is life?

- a) Not fame and fortune, not money, song writers and singers, not T V personalities
 - i) The commentary of the Lord:
 - 1. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Lk. 12:15)
 - 2. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mk. 8:36)
 - ii) The commentary of the Holy Spirit:
 - 1. "For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jam. 4:14)
 - iii) The writer to Ecclesiastes presented a major truth, all under the sun is: "Vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecc. 1:14; 2:11, 26; 4:4, 16; 6:9)

Dangers

- 1) There is a danger in teaching that the half cubit (Ex. 25:10) indicates that there is so much more to be learned, and quoting the words of the Queen of Sheba: "the half was not told me" (1 Kgs. 10:7; 2 Chron. 9:6). It sounds very profound and spiritual, but then how are we to interpret the full cubit and double cubits. Clearly, they must be interpreted in the same way. Does this mean that there are areas where we can know all about God and Christ, and in other areas double? (Ex. 25:23). Such is the speech of foolishness, but as Paul says, "Bear with me a little in my folly" (2 Cor. 11:1).
- 2) There is a need to be careful that we do not read all sorts of data into the lengths, etc., of items and numbers. For instance, there were forty-eight boards. Is that to be divided into six times eight, or four times twelve, or forty-eight times one, or three times two times eight? This sort of deciphering the scriptures is foolish. If we separate the two corner boards, we are left with forty-six, how are we then to decipher this? There is a need to look at the bigger picture.

The Measuring of The Furnishings

It is always interesting the way in which God counts things. By the Sea of Galilee the Lord called to the disciples who had been out fishing. Having caught nothing, He told them to cast the net on the right side and they caught 153 fishes. The interesting thing is fish are not counted but weighed! He told Abram to walk through the length and breadth of the land (Gen. 13:17). That was a horizontal measurement, but God wants us to: "Comprehend

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with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” (Eph. 3:18). When building the boards for the tabernacle, we would say the “height” was ten cubits, yet the Lord speaks about the length being ten cubits (Ex. 26:16). Having observed this, when it comes to the Tabernacle and the furnishings it is observed that:

- a) Some were counted and measured such as:
 - i) The linen curtain for the Tabernacle (Ex. 26:1-2)
 - ii) The covering of goat’s hair (Ex. 26:7-8)

- b) Some were counted such as:
 - i) The pillars for the court, door, and vail (Ex. 26:32, 37; 27:11-15)
 - ii) The sockets for the pillars of the court, Tabernacle boards, door, and vail (Ex. 26:32, 37; 27:11-15)
 - iii) The loops and taches for the Tabernacle and goat’s hair? (Ex. 26:4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11)

- c) Some were measured such as:
 - i) Altar of shittim wood (Ex. 27:1)
 - ii) Table for shewbread (Ex. 25:23)
 - iii) Incense altar (Ex. 30:1-2)
 - iv) Ark (Ex. 25:10)
 - v) Mercy Seat (Ex. 25:17)
 - vi) Distance from the North and South sides to the gate (Ex. 27:14-15)
 - vii) The height and width of the gate (Ex. 27:16)
 - viii) The height and width of the door, it is assumed they were 10 cubits by 10 because of the height and width of the Tabernacle.
 - ix) The height and width of the vail, it is assumed they were 10 cubits by 10 because of the height and width of the Tabernacle.
 - x) The length and height of the court curtain, North and South (Ex. 27:18)
 - xi) The length of the Tabernacle boards (Ex. 26:16)
 - xii) The length of the court curtain westward (Ex. 38:12)

- d) Some were weighed such as:
 - i) The spices for the anointing oil (Ex. 30:34)
 - ii) The principle spices (Ex. 30:23)
 - iii) The silver sockets (Ex. 38:27)
 - iv) The candlestick (Ex. 25:39)

- e) Things for which no measurements or weight are given such as:
 - i) The height, breadth or width of the candlestick (Ex. 25:31-40)
 - ii) The height, circumference and depth of the laver (Ex. 38:8)
 - iii) The width, depth of the foot of the laver (Ex. 38:8)
 - iv) The thickness of the boards of the Tabernacle (Ex. 26:15-16)
 - v) The copper sockets (Ex. 26:37)
 - vi) The dimensions of the bars (Ex. 26:26-28)
 - vii) The amount of wood used (Ex. 25:5)
 - viii) The height of the Mercy Seat (Ex. 25:17)
 - ix) The size or sizes of the pins (Ex. 35:18)
 - x) The length of the cords (Ex. 35:18)
 - xi) Rams skins (Ex. 26:14)
 - xii) Badgers skins (Ex. 26:14)
 - xiii) The sizes of the taches (Ex. 36:18)
 - xiv) The size of the horns on either altar (Ex. 27:2; 30:3)
 - xv) The height of the pillars for the vail and door, but it is assumed they were 10 cubits high (Ex. 26:31-37)

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- f) The cubit, talent, hin, etc., were not measurements peculiar to the Jewish people. For a time the standards of Babylon were the rule, then later the Grecian and the Roman. The weights and measurements we would need to know would be that of ancient Egypt.
- g) The four major measurements are:
- i) A cubit was the length between the tip of the middle finger to the elbow of a man's outstretched arm. The difficulty is that distance varies with race. It varies from 18 inches for a Hellenistic cubit, to 21.6 inches for a Jewish cubit.
 1. There are two words for cubit in Hebrew: "ammah", the usual word (Gen. 6:16); and "gomed", only used in (Jud. 3:16).
 - ii) A Talent (Ex. 25:39)
 1. This was not a coin, but a unit of weight, with the Hebrew word being "kikkar" and weighed 3,000 shekels of the sanctuary (Ex. 38:25-26. There were several different talents:
 - (a) The talent of the King, which was 158 pounds.
 - (b) The talent of gold, which was approx. 131 pounds. (1 Chron. 20:2)
 - (c) The talent of silver, which was approx. 117 pounds. (1 Kgs. 20:39)
 - (d) Their precise weights are unknown for the following.
 - i) The shekel of the sanctuary. (Ex. 30:13)
 - ii) The shekel of the King. (2 Sam. 14:26)
 - iii) A Hin (Ex. 29:40)
 1. This was approximately one gallon or 4.54 liters.

What Do The Measurements Teach About God?

Moses, though trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, was not left to decide the sizes, placement, or number of pieces of furniture. It was God who determined each according to His own wisdom, thus indicating the sovereignty of God. Why does God give precise measurements? There are several reasons:

- 1) God is the God of symmetrical and aesthetic beauty, thus all was both pleasing to the eye and in perfect balance. Furthermore, He is the practical God, consequently, all the furnishings were made according to the height of the average Jewish man.
- 3) God desires things to be very practical, after all had the brazen altar only been two foot square how would one have burnt a 1500 pound bull on it? Or, had the curtains for the tabernacle been too short, what would have happened the gold plated wood underneath?
- 4) He is the Sovereign Measurer and Divine Evaluator:
 - a) Being the sovereign God and this is His dwelling place, therefore, He decides what is to be done and where things are to be placed. Just as a woman in her own home can decide what furniture she wants and where it is to be placed.
- 5) As the Great Evaluator whose assessments are always perfect, He:
 - a) Never undervalues a kindly word, or overreacts to a harsh one.
 - b) Never underestimates a deed done in His Name, for His glory, or an activity done in selfish motives.
 - c) Is characterized by:
 - i) Ineffable love
 - ii) Infinite tenderness
 - iii) Incomparable consideration
 - iv) Immortal wisdom

1. We have a perfect illustration of His evaluation when:
 - (a) He took notice of the widow with her two mites (Lk. 21:2), and of the littleness the wealthy gave.
 - (b) When there could have been waste and his prevention of such, as when the disciples gathered up the pieces which remained after the feedings of the four and five thousands. Or when man judged an activity as waste and the Lord showed it was not such. For instance, when the woman who broke the alabaster box and poured the ointment on the Lord. (Mk. 12:43; Matt. 26:8-10)
 - (c) "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed". (1 Sam. 2:3)
- d) Our True Evaluator:
 - i) Weighs the burden of every sigh
 - ii) Measures the pain of every heartache
 - iii) Senses the emptiness of every sorrowful separation
 - iv) Reads the motive for every desire
 - v) Discerns the goal of every aspiration
 1. "Oh that my grief were throughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together!" (Job 6:2)
 2. "Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity." (Job 31:6)

God Measures

- 1) **Man's days:**
 - a) "LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am" (Psa. 39:4).
- 2) **Man's faith:**
 - a) "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3).
- 3) **Man's rule:**
 - a) "But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you" (2 Cor. 10:13).
- 4) **The measuring of the gift:**
 - a) "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. 4:7).
- 5) **The working of each saint:**
 - a) "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16).
- 6) **The measuring of judgment:**
 - a) "Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom" (Isa. 65:7).
 - b) "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7:2).

7) The measuring of liberality:

- a) "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall man give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Lk. 6:38).

8) The non measuring of the Holy Spirit:

- a) "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (Jn. 3:34)

9) The measuring of faith:

- a) "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man . . . to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3).

10) The measuring of the fulness of Christ:

- a) "Till we all come in the unity of the faith . . . unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13)

11) The measuring of His disciplining of man for his disobedience:

- a) He "gave them up" (Rom. 1:24, 26); "gave them over" (Rom. 1: 28)

12) The measuring of His disciplining of His people Israel:

- a) Israel:
 - i) Sending them into servitude in Judges (Jud. 2:14; 3:8; 4:2)
 - ii) Putting them under discipline under Egypt (2 Chron. 36:3-4)
 - iii) Sending them into servitude in Babylon (2 Chron. 36:5-7)
 - iv) Sending them into dispersion in Assyria (2 Kgs. 17:6, 23)
 - v) "For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jer. 30:11).

13) The measuring of His disciplining for the local assembly:

- a) "Do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly . . . except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5)
- b) "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly" (Rev. 2:16)
- c) "I gave her space to repent" (Rev. 2:21)
- d) "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent" (Rev. 3:3)

14) The measuring of His disciplining the way and power to live a sanctified life:

- a) Not by the power of personal will (Rom. 7:14-21)
- b) Not by having a law which displays my weakness but gives no strength to obey (Rom. 7:9-11; 18-21)
- c) But by the work of the Lord and the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:2-3, 11)

Measurements Also Indicate Limitations

1) God sets limits on those who can be part of an assembly

- a) Those who are clean morally (1 Cor. 5:1)
- b) Those who are clean doctrinally (Gal. 1:8; Col. 2:8, 18)
- c) Those who can be vouchsafed for by:
 - i) Letter of commendation
 - 1. From another church (Acts 15:23; 18:27)
 - 2. From a noted individual (Rom. 16:1-2)

- 2) **God sets limits on those who can stay in an assembly**
 - a) The overtaken brother can stay in the assembly (Gal. 6:1)
 - b) The contentious agitator (Titus 1:9-16); the busybody (1 Thess. 4:11-12; 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-15). Note the successive steps to be taken in discipline. It is not always a single step as these passages show.
- 3) **God sets limits on the duration of His long-suffering before:**
 - a) The increasing of the discipline, as seen by the rebellious (Rom. 1:24; 26, 28)
 - b) The final judgment of discipline as seen in the flood (Gen. 7:6). Observe the judgment came AFTER they had the warning by Methuselah's name which apparently means: "When he dies it shall come to pass". He had lived for 969 years of warning, and in that the years of Noah's preaching, so this was not a sudden judgment, but one in which God showed much long-suffering (Gen. 5:27; 1 Pet. 3:20). (Observe they were disobedient, therefore had to hear the message of warning.)
- 4) **God sets limits on the intensity of His disciplines on His own**
 - a) "Ye shall have tribulation ten days" (Rev. 2:10)
 - b) The deliberate administering of the seals, trumpets, and vials (Rev. 6:2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1, 7, 8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13; 11:15; 16:2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 17)
- 5) **God sets limits on who can discipline another assembly**
 - a) It very clear that the only One who has the knowledge and right to discipline an assembly is the Lord, a matter evident in **His** discipline on the churches (Rev. Chs. 2-3). God never gave Ephesus the authority to determine if Thyatira was an assembly or not, nor did he give Laodicea the authority to critique Sardis. It is a lesson needed to be heeded today.
- 6) **God sets limits on how the sexes are to behave in an assembly**
 - a) The men to teach and lead in the assembly (1 Tim. 3:1-10). **HOWEVER**, that does not mean a woman has nothing to do, quite the contrary. In her own sphere she can teach (Titus 2:3-4); relieve the afflicted (1 Tim. 5:10); be a true help suitable to her husband as Priscilla was to Aquila, and with the men be a joint illustration to the angels of the Headship of Christ and God (1 Cor. 11:3, 10).
- 7) **God sets limits on how to approach God**
 - a) Only through Christ and His sacrifice. It is only through the work of the Lord we have access. (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 3:11-12)
- 8) **God sets limits on the focus of the Lord's Supper**
 - a) As to the emblems: "bread and the cup" (1 Cor. 11:23-25)
 - b) As to the subject matter: "Remembrance of me" (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25)
- 9) **God sets limits on the matter of christian liberty and life**
 - a) "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (1 Cor. 10:24). (This is their spiritual wealth)
 - b) "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31)
 - c) "Give none offence" (1 Cor. 10:32)
- 10) **God sets limits on creation**
 - a) The waves of the sea. (Prov. 8:29; Jer. 5:22)
 - b) The movements of the planets and stars for His kingdom ruleth over all. (1 Chron. 29:11-12; Psa. 103:19; 135:6)
 - c) The placements of the celestial bodies. (Gen. 1:17)
 - d) This aspect of extent and limitations is brought before us in Genesis chapter one where God created the living things "after their kind". It is an unchangeable fixed law by God. (Gen. 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25)

The Things We Ought To Measure

While it is very unwise to get taken up with ones failures, yet an honest consideration of one's spiritual condition is a very good thing. Many of us on Sunday morning remember the Lord, that is retrospect; we look onward to His coming, that is prospect; but while we live we ought to look at ourselves, that is introspect. This is very important for:

- a) Participation at the Lord's Supper: "Let a man examine himself". (1 Cor. 11:28)
- b) Seeing prayers answered:
 - i) "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Psa. 66:18)
 - ii) "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your own lusts." (James 4:3)
- c) For to know what I am:
 - i) "Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity!" (Job 31:6)
 - ii) "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me." (Psa. 139:23-24)
 - iii) "The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just." (Isa. 26:7)
- d) Preparation for the Judgment seat so that we have: "Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble". (1 Cor. 3:12)
- e) Maintained fellowship with God:
 - i) Walking in the light (1 Jn. 1:7)
 - ii) Not grieving the Spirit (Eph. 4:30)
 - iii) Not quenching the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19)
- f) When judging others:
 - i) "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matt. 7:2; Mk. 4:24; Lk. 6:38)

How Much Weight Do I Carry With God?

- 1) One of the great practical issues of the christian life is: "How much weight do I carry with God?" The answer to that will be determined by the value I put on the Lord and sincerity of my desire to walk with God. Judas would have had no weight with God, for He put a pathetic monetary little value on fellowship and the person of He who is precious to God. He was sold for thirty pieces of silver! "I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver" (Zech. 11:12). Moses knew God face to face (Ex. 33:11) and, for use of a better word, "debated with Him", arguing why He ought not to destroy Israel. (Ex. 32:10-13)
- 2) There is a frightening expression which uses the word "carcass" for those who are alive (Num. 14:29). A carcass is that which is dead! Yet, God said: "Your carcasses shall fall in the wilderness".
- 3) God looked on Christ, and we read: "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (Jn. 3:34). What weight he carried with God.

The People Of God Must Measure In Accord With His Own Character

- 1) "But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." (Deut. 25:15)
 - a) How needful this is in the matter of discipline.
 - b) There must be no double standards among the saints.
 - c) There must be no double standard in that which is taught and that which is practiced.

Sadly, There Are Those Who Learned The Seriousness of God's Measuring

- 1) **Balaam**: God counted at least eight warnings to Balaam (Num. 22:12, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31) and then Balaam says: "I have sinned; for I knew not that Thou stoodest in the way" (Num. 22:34), and finally he says: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (Num. 23:10). He had learnt too late the measuring of God.
- 2) **Belshazzar**: Despite his knowledge of God's dealings with his grandfather, he refused to bow, but indeed went more evil than his grandfather. Eventually there was that fateful night when the hand of God wrote on the wall: "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN". "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Dan. 5:26-27). Belshazzar discovered he was too late, God had come to an end of His measuring!
- 3) **Pilate**: He asked the question: "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38) and apparently without waiting for an answer, went out and ultimately delivered the Lord to the people. God had given him several opportunities for repentance, but we never read of it coming. God had measured Him and he was found wanting.
- 4) **Felix**: Felix and his wife Drusilla, and although Felix trembled, he spurned the proffer of grace. (Acts 24:25)

Deep is the tragedy when man failed to know when the measurements and limitations of God's call ended.

The hymn writer has penned the words:

There's a line that is crossed by rejecting our Lord,
Where the call of His Spirit is lost,
As you hurry along, with the pleasure-mad throng,
Have you counted, have you counted the cost?

Have you counted the cost, if your soul should be lost,
Though you gain the whole world for your own?
Even now it may be that the line you have crossed,
Have you counted, have you counted the cost?

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia