Tabernacle Instructions

Each Sunday we deposit our tithes and offerings into the collection box with the understanding that the money collected will be used in accordance with our annual budget. Our church supports a number of ministries such as A.C.T.S., the Aiken County Baptist Association and the Southern Baptist Cooperative program. We also support the ministries of our staff through salaries. There are also operational expenses such as utilities and maintenance that are paid. Each year the finance team submits a proposed budget to the church for approval. The budget from the previous year provides a template so normally the line items are carried forward with some minor adjustments. We will soon begin the budget process for 2022 so it can be voted on in December. In Exodus chapter 25 we read about the first recorded churchwide offering.

The chapter begins with God telling Moses to tell the people to bring an offering. Notice the following about the offering:

1. It was to be brought to God
2. It was to be collected from those giving willingly with their heart. It was not a confiscatory tax to be paid. *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver* (2nd Cor. 9:7).
3. The offering was to be a number of specified materials including precious metals and stones, thread, linen, skins, wood, oil and spices.
4. The offerings were to be used to build a sanctuary.
5. God would give Moses a pattern for the tabernacle and its furnishings. In Hebrews we learn that the pattern God showed Moses was actually a heavenly tabernacle (8:5).

God’s instructions for the tabernacle began with its innermost furnishing, the ark which would be placed in the Most Holy Place separated from the rest of the tabernacle by a curtain. God referred to the cover of the ark as the atonement cover (mercy seat KJV) and 2 cherubim were to be affixed to the cover of the ark just as 2 cherubim were posted at the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were cast out. God then gave specific instructions for the table and lampstand which were to be placed in the Holy Place. The table was to hold dishes and pitchers for offerings as well as the bread of Presence (showbread KJV). The bread would symbolize Jesus who is the bread of life. The lampstand was to have a base with 3 branches extending from each side and a total of 7 lamps which symbolize the 7 churches in Revelation (1:20). The lamps were to be constantly lit symbolizing that Jesus is the light of the world. Ezekiel had a vision of a lampstand with 7 lamps being fed a continual supply of oil from 2 olive trees that were the 2 anointed ones (4:14).

As I was preparing this lesson, I read the following written by David Guzik: *God said “You shall take* ***My*** *offering”. The offering belonged to God, and was held by Moses and the nation on God’s behalf.* Thinking about our offerings in that way will certainly change our perspective. We make our checks payable to First Baptist Church of Montmorenci. What if they were payable to God? Would that change anything? Would the checks be larger? Would we question how the money is spent? Would our budget look different and would we devote more prayer time to its preparation? Just like the Old Testament church, our offerings belong to God and they are held by our church on God’s behalf. Our budget is prepared by imperfect humans seeking to deploy God’s assets in accordance with His perfect will. In Hebrews 8:5 we read that the tabernacle was a copy and shadow and in 9:23-24 we read that Jesus did not enter a man-made sanctuary with inferior sacrifices. This is a reminder that the church is a shadow of our heavenly home.

One final thought regarding the tabernacle. It was portable be design as it was carried from place to place as the Israelites traveled through the desert. The good news of Jesus is meant to be portable as we are called to carry it to the ends of the earth.