

The Tabernacle (An Introduction)

Why study the Tabernacle?

- It declares the glory and Person of Christ (Luke 24.27, John 5.39, 46).

Psalms 19.1: The heavens declare the glory of God (Elohim, the glory of a creator God)

Psalms 29.2: Give unto the LORD (Jehovah, the covenant God) the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. This might be rendered “worship the Lord in His glorious sanctuary”. In David’s time there was no temple. He is speaking of the Tabernacle which exudes the glory of Christ!

Psalms 29.9: And in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. This should read: *The tabernacle speaketh the glory of Jehovah, every whit (small amount) of it.*

- It declares divine truth in language which is readily understood by mankind.

All the measurements of the Tabernacle were taken from the human body (cubit, span, hand breadth). The Tabernacle was an earthly picture and pattern (representation) of things in heaven. This indicates divine wisdom and revelation displayed for man to comprehend.

- Scripture devotes many pages to the subject.

Note that Moses used two chapters to write of creation, but there are 15 chapters concerned with the Tabernacle in Exodus. Creation took 6 days; the Tabernacle was 9.5 months in making.

Some General Principles

The Hebrew word Tabernacle is <04908> *mishkan*, meaning dwelling place. God wanted His people to make Him a dwelling place so that He might dwell among them (v.8). God’s desire has ever been that He might have fellowship and find a dwelling place with His people. Note that this was only on the basis of redemption completed from Egypt.

- **In the past:** God dwelt amongst His people in the Tabernacle and Temple (Exodus 25.8, 1 Kings 8.10-11).
- **In the present:** the local assembly is God’s dwelling place. 1 Timothy 3.15 (House of God), 1 Corinthians 3.16, Ephesians 2.22 (Temple of God).
- **In the future:** in the Eternal State, the Tabernacle of God will be with men (Revelation 21.3).

It is beautiful to notice that God arranged His people around the Tabernacle. Their lives were governed by it and the pillars of cloud and fire associated with it. So our lives should be arranged around the local assembly.

When the Tabernacle is viewed as the dwelling place of God; it can be pictured in a threefold way.

1. The Person of Christ (as indwelt by the fullness of the Godhead) Colossians 2.9, cf. John 1.14. Christ said: “I am the way (the Outer Court), the truth (the Holy Place) and the life (the Holy of Holies).
2. The Individual Believer (as indwelt by the Spirit of God) 1 Corinthians 6.19-20. Here the Outer Court may be seen as representing the body of man, the Holy Place; the soul and the Holy of Holies (the place of God’s habitation), the spirit.
3. The Local Assembly (as the dwelling place of God today) 1 Timothy 3.15, Ephesians 2.22.

There are three key themes of the Tabernacle. First there is **salvation**; there was only one entrance through the **gate** into the Outer Court. Second there is **sanctification**; the priests must wash daily at the **laver**. Third, there is **service**; as illustrated in the **Holy Place** (*Hebrews 9.6: Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle (Holy Place), accomplishing the service of God*).

The Tabernacle has seven distinct names:

- **Tent** (Psalm 78.60). A tent indicates that this was a temporary structure which could be moved according to God’s will. We should remember that we too are strangers and pilgrims in this world. We are merely passing through.
- **Tabernacle** (Leviticus 1.1). The term tabernacle means dwelling place; God dwelt amongst His people. God now abides in believers (John 14.23, Ephesians 3.17).
- **Sanctuary** (Exodus 25.8). The word Sanctuary comes from a root meaning holiness. The Tabernacle was a holy place where God displayed himself as holy. All who approach Him must do so on this ground, hence the brazen altar, the laver etc. Today, the individual believer and the church are God’s sanctuary, therefore we too must be marked by holiness.
- **Tabernacle of the Congregation** (Exodus 27.21, Leviticus 1.1, Numbers 1.1), or Tent of Meeting, or Tent of Appointed Place. The idea is that God communed with His people who were marked by unity (‘the’ congregation). There is also one congregation today that God meets and communes with; the church (Matthew 18.20). There is no approach to God except in His appointed place (through Christ!).

- **Tabernacle of the Lord** (1 Kings 2.28). This phrase emphasises the fact that the Tabernacle was God’s instruction to Moses and originated in His mind and will (Exodus 25.8). It also emphasises that this is where God dwells.
- **Tabernacle of Testimony/Witness** (Exodus 38.21). The law contained in the Ark of the Covenant was known as the ‘testimony’. The law testified to God’s righteous standards as did all the ceremony surrounding the Tabernacle. As believers we are to testify to God’s holy standards by our lives.
- **House/Habitation** (Hebrews 3). A habitation is a place where one dwells or occupies (possibly temporarily). A house is one’s own possession. They must therefore make God’s house according to the pattern He gave as it belongs to Him. Likewise, God’s assembly is His house. We cannot add or take away from its construction or order. In Exodus 25-27 (God’s instruction to Moses) there are 98 verses. In Exodus 36-38 (Moses’ instruction to the people) there are 98 verses. Thus everything was carried out according to God’s commandments.

The dominant theme in Exodus 25-40 is the Tabernacle. There is much profit in analysing these verses and ascertaining the key sections.

Scripture	Main Theme	Description/Notes
Exodus 25.1-9	Freewill Offerings	
Exodus 25.10-22	The Ark of the Covenant	
Exodus 25.23-30	The Table of Shewbread	
Exodus 25.31-40	The Lampstand	
Exodus 26.1-6	The Curtains of Blue, Linen and Scarlet	
Exodus 26.7-13	The Curtains of Goats Hair	
Exodus 26.14	The Coverings of Rams Skins and Badgers Skins	
Exodus 26.15-30	The Boards, Sockets and Bars	
Exodus 26.31-33	The Veil and Four Pillars	
Exodus 26.34	The Placing of Vessels in the Holy of Holies	
Exodus 26.35	The Placing of Vessels in the Holy Place	
Exodus 26.36-37	The Door of the Holy Place	
Exodus 27.1-8	The Brazen Altar	
Exodus 27.9-15	The Court of the Tabernacle and its Pillars	
Exodus 27.16-17	The Hanging for the Gate of the Court	
Exodus 27.18-19	The Composition of the Vessels in the Court	
Exodus 27.20-21	The Pure Oil Olive	
Exodus 28	The High Priestly Garments	
Exodus 29	The Consecration of the Priests	
Exodus 30.1-10	The Golden Altar (Incense)	
Exodus 30.11-16	The Ransom Money	

Scripture	Main Theme	Description/Notes
Exodus 30.17-21	The Brazen Laver	
Exodus 30.22-33	The Holy Anointing Oil	
Exodus 30.34-38	The Incense	
Exodus 31.1-11	Bezaleel and Aholiab	
Exodus 31.12-18	The Sabbath	
Exodus 32-34	The Golden Calf	
Exodus 35	The Gifts Brought	
Exodus 36-39	The Work Done	
Exodus 40	The Tabernacle Reared	

The Structure and Dimensions of the Tabernacle

