

Should Christians Care About the Jewish Tabernacle?

Exodus 25:8: (NASB) *Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.*

Guest: Tom Ruggirello



As Christians, we follow Jesus. His life story is told in the New Testament of the Bible and we rightfully focus on those books. Sometimes though, our focus brings us away from the rest of the story - the Old Testament. We think, why do we need all of that Jewish history? Why do we need to know who conquered whom and how all the rituals worked that God required of the Jewish nation to show their loyalty to Him? The fact is, we NEED the Old Testament and we need it badly! This need is dramatically illustrated in the Tabernacle, the portable tent and furnishings the Jews carried with them during their 40-year wilderness experience.

The story this Tabernacle tells is a breathtaking example of God's care and foresight. The Tabernacle is like a treasure map - let's see where it leads!

Our special guest, Tom Ruggirello, has been with us on several previous episodes. He is an elder with the Chicago Bible Students. The Tabernacle is a subject he and his church group regularly study.



What was the Tabernacle?

It was a portable temple that was part of the Law given to Moses. The description and details are found primarily in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. When God gives us such extensive detail, our ears should perk up to ask why.

Exodus 25:8,22: (KJV) ⁸And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them ²²And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

The Tabernacle was a place where Israel could commune with God. We will get into the Ark of the Testimony a little later, but primarily it was a way for God to be present with Israel. We will see a number of evidences that He wanted Israel to understand His presence. They were given physical evidence of such.



Why was the Tabernacle necessary? Couldn't God just communicate through Moses, or use angels or some other way?

One reason we believe God chose to communicate through the Tabernacle was because He wanted Israel to learn there are very specific standards He requires for those who want a relationship with Him.

Rules without relationships lead to rebellion. - Josh McDowell, when talking about raising kids

We can see why a good relationship with our kids is important. It gives meaning to the rules parents impose. If we carry that principle to another level, we see it is also true with God. The breakdown of Israel's relationship with God happened many times in Old Testament history.

On so many occasions, Israel abandoned their worship of God to pursue idolatry. On these occasions, they did not value their relationship with God. Because of that, they saw the laws of God as simply depriving them of things they wanted, rather than a good Father caring for His children and giving them wise guidance.

As we get into some of the specifics of the Tabernacle, we will see the same application for Christians today. If we do not value our relationship (or potential relationship) with God, we will wander away and miss all of the blessings and benefits He brings into our lives. As we study the history of Israel and the many rituals God gave them to follow, we learn what loyalty should look like and the value of being faithful to God. We also learn the prescribed method for approaching Him.

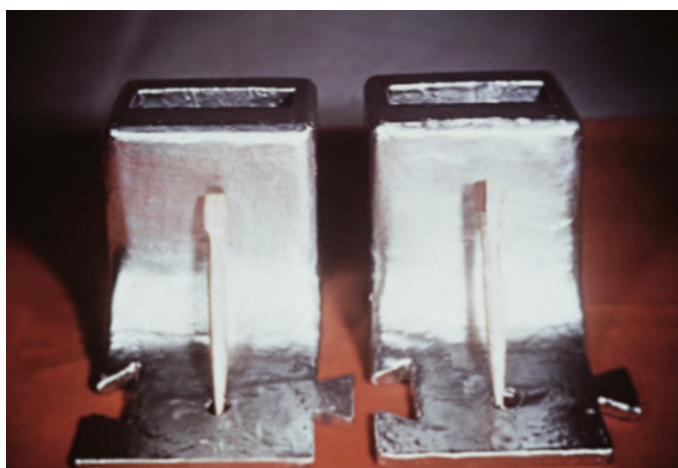
Briefly describe what the Tabernacle looked like: its size, shape, compartments, furniture, material, etc.

The Tabernacle was a small building surrounded by a large courtyard. The building was only 15 feet wide, 15 feet high and 45 feet long with two compartments, smaller than the average home.

The building part was divided into two compartments. Only priests were allowed to enter the first one. Only the high priest was allowed to enter the second compartment, and only once a year. The first room was called the "Holy." The entrance to the Holy consisted of five wooden posts overlaid with gold on which hung a beautiful embroidered linen veil ([Exodus 26:37](#)). These posts sat on sockets of copper. The Holy was 30 feet long, 15 feet wide and 15 feet high. At the back end of the Holy was another veil that divided it from the next room called the "Most Holy." The veil was held up by four wood posts covered in gold and sitting in sockets of silver ([Exodus 26:32,33](#)). The Most Holy was a square room, 15 feet wide, high and deep.

What materials were used to make the Tabernacle?

There was a lot of gold. In fact, everything except the sockets which held up the posts and sideboards were either solid gold or gold plated. The sidewalls of the Tabernacle were made of 48 individual wooden boards overlaid with gold. These were mounted into silver sockets and could be easily taken apart when the Tabernacle was to be moved, as it often was. Over the top of the structure were four soft coverings. Some authorities suggest at least two of the coverings were in a tent shape with a peaked roof for rain runoff, but the Bible is not specific.



The structure of the sockets is not mentioned in the TaNaKh. They may have interlocked as shown in the picture. This displays the inside of the sockets, a copper pin inserted, and with sand surrounding reaching their top. This would give a smooth surface to the floor and make a secure foundation for holding the boards.





The first covering was white linen. It was embroidered with blue, purple and scarlet with images of cherubs ([Exodus 26:1-6](#)).

**This covering was sixty feet long
and forty-two feet wide**

Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains: of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cherubim the work of the skilful workman shalt thou make them. Five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and the other five curtains shall be coupled one to another.

Exodus 26: 1-3

The second covering was made of goat's hair ([Exodus 26:7-13](#)).



And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle; eleven curtains shalt thou make them. Exodus 26:7



The third covering was ram's skin dyed red ([Exodus 26:14](#)).

And he made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sealskins above.

Exodus 36:19

The fourth covering was some type of leather as the outermost covering. Some authorities suggest this was either seal skin or even a manatee (Exodus 36:19).



And he made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sealskins above.
Exodus 36:19

How did these coverings appear to someone outside compared to someone in the Holy or Most Holy?



Because of the outer covering of manatee or seal skin, the Tabernacle would not have been visually appealing. In fact, it was probably rather ugly. But from within the Holy and Most Holy, when one would look up to the ceiling, it was beautiful, with an intricate design and embroidered angels.

This is certainly a message about things related to the worship of God. From the outside, serving God might look unappealing. He often asks for sacrifice and wants us to change our lives. Change is hard. Spiritual growth is difficult. From the outside, the whole process can seem unappealing.

But those who make the effort to look deeper begin to understand God does not ask for sacrifice or change simply to make life difficult. As the name of

both compartments suggests, the Holy and the Most Holy, His purpose is to make us holy. Holiness is extremely valuable because associated with holiness are all the good, wholesome qualities of God: Love, kindness, compassion, generosity and others.

If we persevere in the walk towards God and do not accept the world's perception of what God is asking of us, we will find the rewards of pursuing holiness far surpasses the cost of discipleship. There are great benefits to living a dedicated Christian life the world in general does not see.

So far, we have an unattractive portable building that God's people must haul around through the wilderness!

**We have a portable fenced-in building with heavy coverings.
What was being hidden?**

Humanity is naturally drawn to the spectacular. We want to see the Eighth Wonder of the World, or we want the most brilliant and intricate art on display for all. God is not at all about bringing everyone to see the spectacular. Instead, He is all about bringing His people to appreciate that which is sacred.

Let's take a look inside the Holy. What was in there?

The Holy contained three pieces of furniture.



Candlestick (or Menorah) - This provided the only light in the Holy. It was hammered from a piece of gold that weighed what the Bible calls *one talent* of gold. Estimates vary as to how much a talent was, ranging anywhere from 75 to 100 pounds of solid gold.

By today's standard, that amount of gold would be worth about \$2 million. Of course, being made into such a beautiful piece would make it worth far more. What it represented made it priceless.

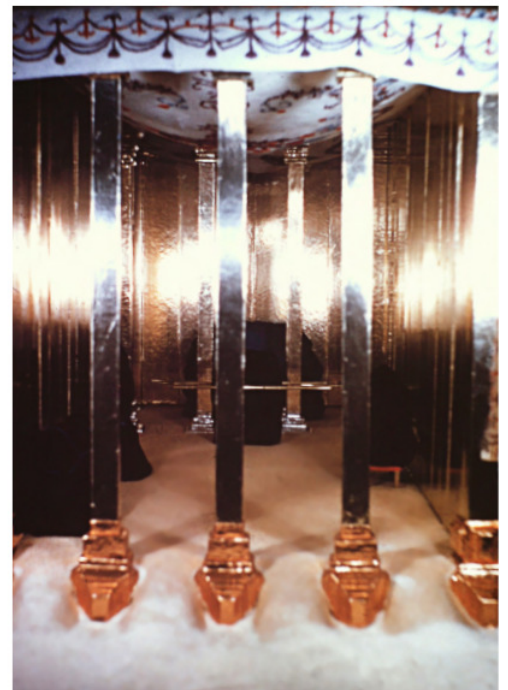
It had a main branch in the middle and three branches on each side, totaling seven branches. Each branch had shaped into it an alternating pattern of an almond then a flower. The top part had a bowl, shaped like an almond that contained the olive oil for burning the lamps. Along

with this were the necessary utensils used in caring for the burning wicks and keeping the oil filled.

Picture the lighting in the Holy. You are in a room with gold-covered walls. In front of you, behind you and above you is white linen embroidered in multiple colors in images of angels. With seven wicks burning, the flickering light against the golden walls would have created a holy and somber atmosphere. It must have been beautiful.

Interestingly, no dimensions were given for the Menorah.

It was situated on the left side as you entered the Holy (Exodus 37:17-24). These lamps were kept burning 24 hours a day, except of course when they were being moved.



The covering is lifted to show the interior of the Tabernacle as it looked when the priest entered.



Table of Shewbread - across from the Menorah was a wooden table overlaid with gold. It stood 27 inches high (about mid-thigh), 36 inches wide and 18 inches deep. It was relatively small, apparently designed for travel.



Sitting on the table were twelve loaves of unleavened bread stacked in two rows of six. On top of each stack was a portion of incense. On the table were also various utensils. The word *shewbread* can be translated *bread of [His] presence* (Exodus 25:23-30), which gives a hint of how everything we see in the Tabernacle contributed to how God would be present with Israel. We will see the contemporary application when we talk about some of the symbolism shortly.

At the end of each week, the priest would replace this bread and use the old bread for himself and the other priests (Leviticus 24:5-9).

Incense Altar - as the priest walked westward through the Holy, directly ahead of him was the last item in the Holy, a wooden box overlaid with gold and situated just in front of the second veil into the Most Holy. It was 36 inches tall and 18 inches square, called the Incense Altar (Exodus 30:1-10).

Hot coals were brought in from the altar outside in the courtyard and placed on the Incense Altar. Incense was burned on it continually.

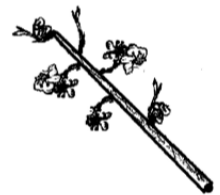
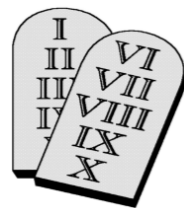


Going into the Most Holy

Only the high priest was allowed in here, and only once a year. The Most Holy contained only one item (Exodus 25:10-22).



The Ark of the Covenant or Ark of the Testimony - a wooden box overlaid with gold. Inside the box were the two tables of the Law given to Moses, a golden pot filled with manna that never corrupted and Aaron's rod that budded (Numbers 17:8).



The box was 45 inches (3¾ feet) wide, 27 inches high and 27 inches deep. Sitting on top of this box was a piece made of gold called the "Mercy Seat." It was beaten from a solid piece of gold into the shape of two angels at each end.

Their wings were outstretched and touching as they hung over the center. These angels were facing one another and looking down on the spot where the sacrificial blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement.

An interesting aspect of the Most Holy was that there was a supernatural bright light indicative of God's presence. Jewish rabbis later coined a word to describe God's glory, calling it the "Shekinah glory," which means, "He caused to dwell." This word accurately conveyed God's presence.

When the Tabernacle was first set up, the cloud resided over it and we are told *Jehovah's glory filled the Tabernacle* so that Moses was unable to enter (Exodus 40:34,35; compare 1 Kings 8:10-11; Revelation 15:8). After this the cloud stood over the Most Holy. At night it became a pillar of fire.

This cloud was probably visible from any part of the camp, since the Tabernacle was in the very center of Israel's camp. When the cloud moved, Israel broke camp and followed it to the next camping place.

Exodus 13:21: (KJV) *And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.*

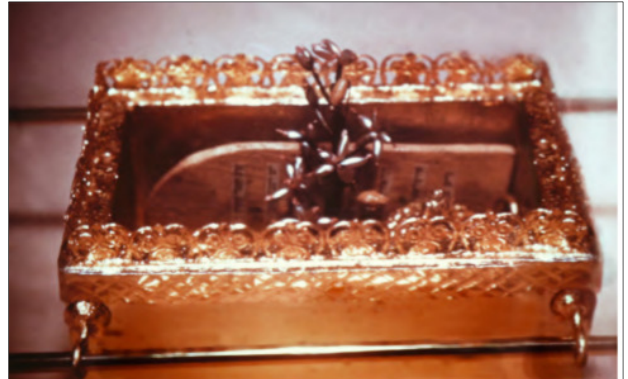
Exiting the Tabernacle structure, what do we see out in the court?

The Court (Exodus 27:9-18) - the Court was 150 feet long and 75 feet wide (a quarter of a football field) and surrounded the Tabernacle structure. The white linen curtain which formed the walls of the court was held up by wooden posts in sockets of copper. The curtain was 7 ½ feet high. People in the camp would not be able to peek in.

What furniture was out there?

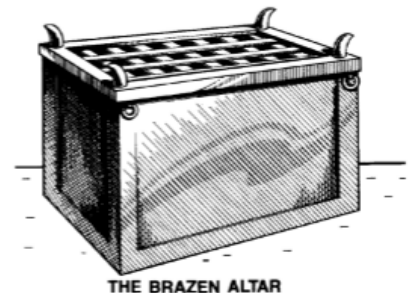
There were two pieces - the Brazen Altar and the Laver.

Brazen Altar (Exodus 27:1-8) - the word *brass* is used in the King James Version, but it should actually be translated "copper." This altar was a wooden box overlaid with copper and was 7½ feet square and 4½ feet high. It had horns at each corner with a copper grate halfway down where the animal sacrifices were burned. It was the first item one would see when entering the court. This is where all the sacrifices were offered.



The Ark of the Testimony

And they shall make an ark of acacia-wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. Exodus 25:10-11



Laver - (Exodus 30:18-21) as you walked west from the entrance and passed the Brazen Altar, you would see a polished copper receptacle of water called the Laver. It was where the priests would wash their hands and feet before entering the Tabernacle or before offering any sacrifices on the Brazen Altar. It was situated between the Brazen Altar and the door of the Tabernacle building. Like the Candlestick, there are no dimensions given for the Laver. We do not know exactly what it looked like, but it may have had a separate basin near the bottom where the priests could wash their feet and an upper basin where they could wash their hands. We are told the copper used for the Laver was donated from the highly polished looking glasses of the Hebrew women (Exodus 38:8). The Laver would have been very reflective.



The Tabernacle is mentioned in the Book of Acts. But there it is called the Tabernacle of Witness in the Wilderness. Why is it described that way?

Acts 7:44: (KJV) *Our fathers had the Tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.*

The Law, with all the features of the Tabernacle, was given just as Israel was about to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. This is why the Tabernacle was portable. Every time the cloud or pillar of fire moved, Israel had to take up stakes and move with it.

That explains why it was in the wilderness, but why was it called the Tabernacle of Witness?



The Tabernacle was a witness to Israel of God's presence with them. Notice the Ark of the Covenant was also called the Ark of the Testimony (Numbers 4:5). It was the box on which the Mercy Seat rested.

Inside the box were the two tables of the Law, Aaron's rod that budded and the golden pot of manna.

Each of these items provided evidence that God was with Israel. He was with them by giving them the Law. He was with them by authorizing a priesthood, shown by Aaron's rod, and He provided their protection and care when He miraculously sent them manna to eat as they wandered through the wilderness. Each of these was a remembrance of God's witnesses of His presence.

And I turned and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they are, as Hashem commanded me.

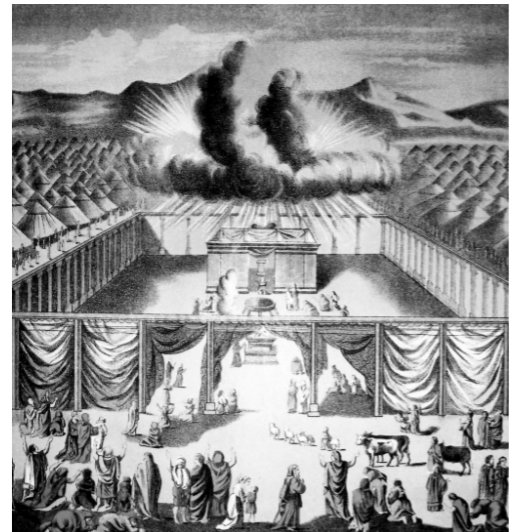
And Moshe said unto Aharon: 'Take a jar, and put an omerful of manna therein, and lay it up before Hashem, to be kept throughout your generations.'

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moshe went into the tent of the testimony; and, behold, the rod of Aharon for the house of Levi was budded, and put forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and bore ripe almonds. Deuteronomy 10:5;

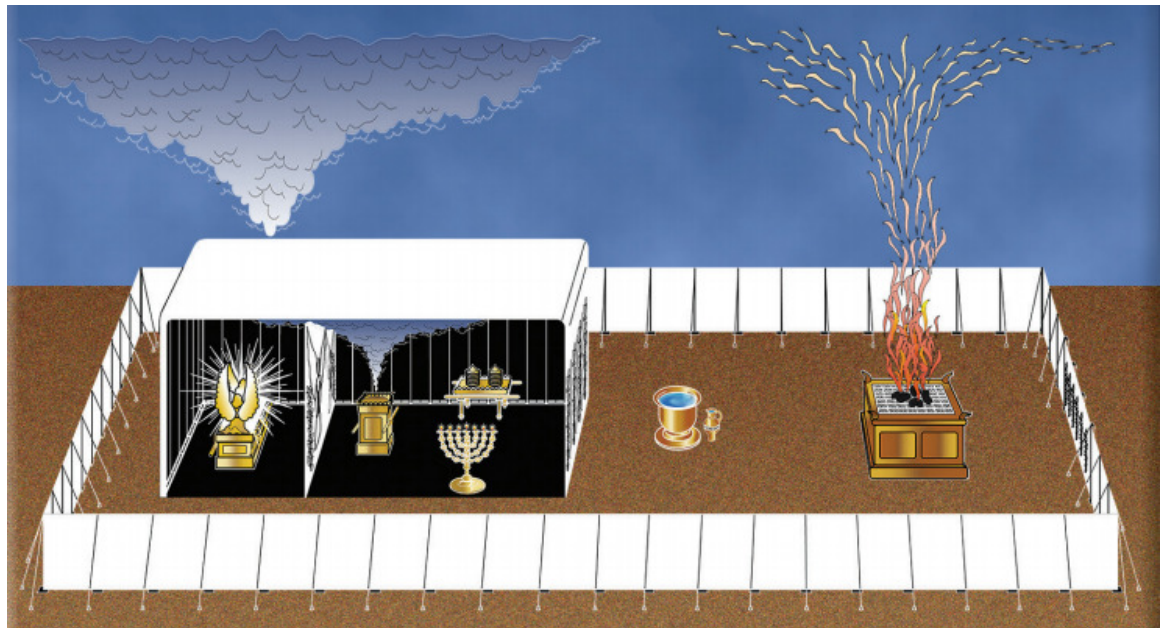
Exodus 16:33-34; Numbers 17:23

In fact, the entire Tabernacle arrangement was a witness that God was with Israel. They could see the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night as a witness that He was there. They understood the sacrifices He instituted gave them a relationship with God. The term, “Tabernacle of Witness” is significant. One last name for the ark, probably the most common one, was the “Ark of the Covenant.” Israel’s Law covenant was God’s witness to them.

So far, we have a two-room portable building lightly sprinkled with admittedly unusual furniture.



This Tabernacle is at the very least unique and mysterious.



Why would God design it this way?

God’s pattern of communication in our present evil world has always been the same. He will reveal His mind and plan to those who seek to understand them through their loyalty to Him. God wants us to look, search and discover because in so doing, we will better appreciate what we will find!

How do we know the Tabernacle was meant for Christians to study?

In the book of Hebrews, the Apostle Paul tells us the Tabernacle was a *shadow of heavenly things*. He reminds us Moses was given very specific instructions on how it should be built because it was designed to picture something greater than itself.



Hebrews 8:1-3,5: (KJV) ...¹We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens ²A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. ³For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices... ⁵Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the Tabernacle.

Paul is saying we now have Jesus as a High Priest who serves a more important sanctuary, *the true Tabernacle*. He indicates the offerings of the ancient Tabernacle were a *shadow*, or an image, of better sacrifices to come.

1 Corinthians 10:11: (KJV) *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*



The Greek word for *ensamples* is “tupos.” In English, it is the word “type.” To get the meaning, think of the old lead letter fonts that would be inked up and used for printing. The metal font was the type, and the imprint was the “anti-type.” A typewriter creates that same type and antitype. Paul is saying that by examining the Old Testament types - and the Tabernacle is full of them - we can see the meaning of the reality in Christ and New Testament concepts.

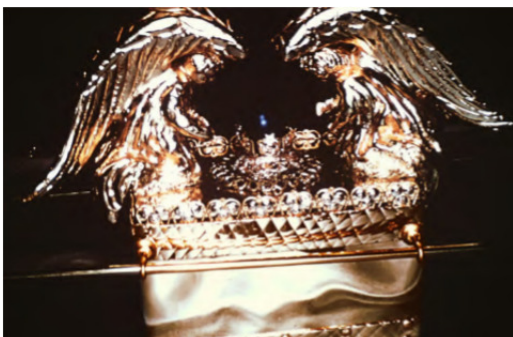
In **Colossians 2:17** (NASB) he says features of the Jewish Law are *...are a mere shadow of what is to come...* We study such things to get a clearer understanding of the good things to come in God’s plan. It helps us see how the plan deals with sin and brings blessings from this experience with sin. In the Tabernacle we see a profound instruction on how to approach God. This was Israel’s instruction book on how to approach Him, but in the antitype, we see the Christian’s blueprint for approaching God.

Describe some of the symbolism intended in the Tabernacle.

This is a big question because there is just so much. We will start at the furthest point of the Tabernacle:

The Most Holy

The Psalmist gave us some insight:



Psalm 80:1: (KJV) *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel... thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.*

God’s presence with Israel is described as between the two angels on the Mercy Seat. This means the Most Holy chamber must represent heaven itself. A very significant event happened at the moment of Jesus’ death - the second veil of the Temple was torn in two (**Matthew 27:51**). This was the divider between the Temple’s Holy and Most Holy rooms. Why would God do this at Jesus’ death?



Paul explains what this meant:

Hebrews 10:19-20,22: (KJV) ¹⁹Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh ²²Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...

Through Jesus' death, heaven, pictured in the Most Holy, would now be accessible. Those who now live by faith in that blood can, upon their death, enter heaven, an opportunity that was not available before Jesus' death. His death was the satisfaction of God's justice. This was pictured in the killing of the bull on the Day of Atonement with its blood sprinkled on and before the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy. It was because of this application of blood that God's mercy could then be extended. Once the blood "satisfied" justice, mercy would now act. This is why the angels were looking down at the place where the sacrificial blood was sprinkled.

These verses also tell us the second veil represents the death of Jesus' human life. His death opened the veil to heaven. Now that the veil was torn open, others could follow. Jesus' death was the pivot point of God's plan. This helps us see the second veil pictures the death of the Christian's flesh, and if found faithful, the passing into heaven, just as Jesus once did.

The Holy

We move back into the Holy, the room entered before the Most Holy. The room itself represents a special condition of the Christian, a special relationship with God. This is the condition that occurs while the Christian is living on earth, before the Christian receives a heavenly reward.

Psalm 91:1: (KJV) *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

This tells us the Holy was a sort of secret place where only priests could enter. Paul told us in the Hebrews text we read earlier (**Hebrews 10:22**) we should draw near to God in full assurance of faith. This describes the Holy, then, as a condition of faith in Christ. The Holy is the path to a new and living way beyond the veil.

Here is an interesting detail: Earlier we mentioned the Tabernacle building was made up of wooden boards overlaid with gold. These boards were set in 100 silver sockets. Where did the silver come from?

It was obtained from a census tax on the men of Israel:

Exodus 30:12,15: (KJV) ¹²When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them... ¹⁵The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls.

The silver came from a tax described as a *ransom* price for their souls.

Here is what was done with that silver:

Exodus 38:27: (KJV) *And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the vail; an hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket.*

Whether rich or poor, everyone had to pay the same half-shekel of silver as a ransom. By using this ransom silver for the sockets, the foundation of the Tabernacle, God is saying His plan of salvation is based on atonement. Sin is a great leveler of man. The rich die just like the poor. All pay the same price for sin. The foundation of the Tabernacle structure was built on this ransom silver, showing the whole purpose of the Tabernacle is pointing towards *reconciling mankind with God by offsetting their sin with the payment of a ransom price.*

The rooms have a meaning for Christians showing us our present and future.

**We have the general picture of what the Holy means.
What about the furniture? Why is it there?**

It is now obvious that every item and aspect of this portable Tabernacle was placed and designed for multiple purposes. For Israel, this was all a tangible doorway to the presence of God in their everyday lives. For Christians now, it serves as a powerful reminder of how we reside in the presence of God.

***Let's look at the meaning of the items within the Holy.
What symbolism is in the three pieces of furniture?***



Interior View of the Holy Place

And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen; with cherubim the work of the skilful workman shall it be made. And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, their hooks being of gold, upon four sockets of silver. And thou shalt hang up the veil under the clasps, and shalt bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony; and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. Exodus 26:31-33

Candlestick - the only source of light in the Holy. Scripturally, "light" represents truth.

Psalm 119:105: (KJV) *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

As the Christian lives a dedicated life, we are not left without guidance.

We have God's word, pictured by the light of the Candlestick, to guide our path. The light was created by the burning of oil. In the Bible, oil represents God's Spirit, His power and influence. We gain understanding from the word of God with help from the Holy Spirit.

But there is another picture here:

Revelation 1:20: (KJV) *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden Candlesticks...*

This is a very similar picture to the Candlestick of the Tabernacle. Revelation says the seven churches John will go on to describe are pictured by seven Candlesticks. We get that same concept in the Tabernacle where there are seven *branches* to this one Candlestick. In the context of Revelation, John goes on to show a progressive picture through the Christian Age of the seven stages of the true church.

But in the Tabernacle's Holy, it is meant to convey the oneness of Jesus and the church. This is shown by the fact that there is one main stem to the Candlestick and three stems coming out of each side. This is similar to what



Jesus said in John 15:5 (NAS): *I am the vine, you are the branches...* There is the intricate design of each branch with the alternating fruit and almond with a flower, showing character development. The Apostle Paul called our character development the *fruit of the Spirit*.

The Candlestick is a composite picture of Jesus and the church enjoying the light of truth. It also shows them as the light-bearers of God's truth. Jesus said in John 9:5 (KJV): *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

But he also said:

Matthew 5:14: (KJV) *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.*



CANDLESTICK

Jesus and the church as bearers of God's word

The light = God's word

Oil = Holy Spirit

(Source: *Notes on the Tabernacle*, by Anton Frey, page 147) ...The import of light in the Scriptures usually extends beyond the spheres of the intellect into that of the conscience, covering the domain of duty as well as of verity. The children of light are those who obey, as well as perceive the reality of the invisible and the eternal.

<http://www.biblestudentarchives.com/documents/FreyTab.pdf>

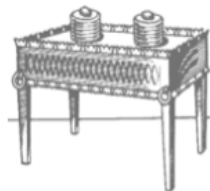
It is not enough to have the right knowledge. Knowledge of God should lead to obedience. For Christians, obedience is an all-encompassing concept affecting every aspect of our lives.

Where was the Candlestick situated in the Holy?

As you entered the Holy it was on the left side, on the south side of the room.

Let's move across the room and examine the symbolism of the Table:

Table of Shewbread - this table was situated across from the Candlestick. As we said earlier, there were twelve loaves of bread in two stacks with incense on top of each stack. Every Sabbath day the bread was replaced with fresh bread. The bread they removed was given to the priests to eat. This pictures how Christians are nourished by spiritually eating the word of God.



SHEWBREAD - nourishment from "eating" the word of God.

6 loaves and 6 loaves - 66 books of the Bible

For Israel, 12 loaves would have pictured the 12 Tribes.



At the end of the week, the priest would take the incense from the top of the two stacks and burn it on the Incense Altar. Once we take in the word of God, we have a heart appreciation and love for it. Our natural response is to want to go over to the Incense Altar and thank God and praise Him for it. There is a sense of appreciation connected with the idea of eating that shewbread.

Ephesians 3:16: (KJV) *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.*

Another aspect to this bread is how it relates to Jesus. He said that HE was the *bread of life*. In other words, his sacrificial death would mean life for the world. By spiritually partaking of that bread, we are expressing our faith in the ransom sacrifice. This is the fundamental truth of Christianity. Accepting that fact strengthens us, knowing we are not worthy of life as we are. An atoning sacrifice was needed to make that possible. Only by spiritually partaking of this bread of life can we have the witness that God is with us.

The Incense Altar - this was just in front of the second veil into the Most Holy. When incense was burned on this altar it filled the Holy and even went into the Most Holy.

Psalms 141:2: (KJV) *Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*

Incense here is a picture of prayer and praise. Remember, there was also some incense on the bread. This suggests that our appreciation of what we gained in the Holy would lead us to the Incense Altar and praise God for what He has provided.

Revelation 8:3-4: (KJV) *³And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God...*

Here an interesting distinction is being made. The incense is offered WITH the prayers of the saints. This is a good reminder not to leave Jesus out of these pictures. *The smoke of the incense* - smoke symbolically pictures something in the past. This is what makes our incense of prayer and praise acceptable to God - because Jesus offered his first. This is why it is most proper to end our prayers by saying, "In Jesus' name," or something to that effect.

JESUS as represented in the furniture of the Holy



CANDLESTICK

He is the light of the world, and we can share in that privilege.



SHEWBREAD

He is the bread of life, and we can share in that message.



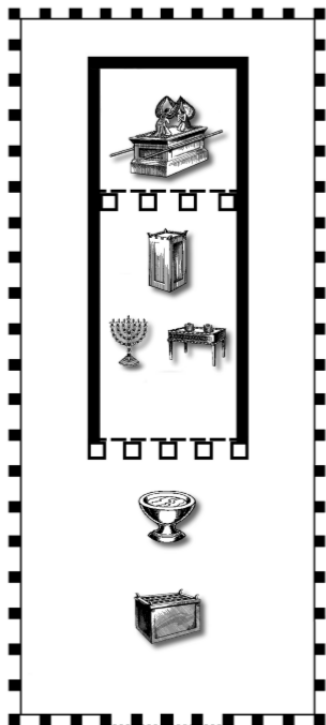
INCENSE ALTAR

He is the ingredient, the incense, that makes our prayers acceptable to God.



There is an interesting connection between the Incense Altar and the Brazen Altar out in the Court. Hot coals from the Brazen Altar were brought into the Holy and placed on the Incense Altar. The incense was sprinkled on the hot coals. There is a relationship between the two altars. This shows that when offered properly, the physical sacrifices we offer (pictured by the hot coals from the Brazen Altar), bring praise to God. God is pleased with the result.

In the Holy condition, the Christian is supplied with everything needed for spiritual growth. It also describes a certain lifestyle that is holy to God and where our prayers and praise are heard.



What symbolism do we see in the Court?

The Court is another condition that preceded what is pictured in the Holy.

Paul describes these two conditions:

Romans 5:1,8-9: (KJV) *¹Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

Being justified means being made right with God. But being justified by faith is a lower form of justification than being justified by blood. The prophets of old, who lived before Christ, were justified by faith in God. But that did not make them *sons* of God. Jesus called them servants. Now that Jesus has provided the ransom, we can be justified by blood, and that makes us sons of God, a big difference.

John 1:12: (KJV) *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*

Now that we are in the court, we are seeing there is a symbolic progression as individuals make their way towards God.

What is the Brazen Altar about?

The Brazen Altar was the first thing you would see when you entered the court. It was the place of sacrifice. On this altar the Atonement Day sacrifices were burned, specifically the liver and the kidneys of the two atonement sacrifices. These are the organs that purify the body. This reinforces the idea that the sin offerings were for the purification from sin.

The sacrifices of the Tabernacle did not actually have atoning value but were meant to foreshadow greater sacrifices:

Hebrews 10:1,4,5: (KJV) *¹For the law having a shadow of good things to come... can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect ⁴For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. ⁵Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me.*

Studying the book of Hebrews is vital for our understanding of the Tabernacle. Paul goes on to say these Tabernacle sacrifices had to be repeated every year. But when Jesus came, his sacrifice was offered just once because it was not symbolic. It was the sacrifice of a perfect human life with real atoning value.



When the blood of Israel's sacrifices was taken into the Most Holy and sprinkled on and before the Mercy Seat in the shape of a cross, it was a picture of how Christ's blood can *actually* atone for sin. That is the focal point of God's plan. It is the reason it will work and provide for the resurrection of all mankind in the millennium.

Who would have thought furnishings in two rooms and a courtyard could so clearly define our Christian walk?

**The Tabernacle clearly defines our walk towards Jesus.
What does the final big picture look like?**

We always want to get to the bottom line. This is difficult with the Tabernacle because what we have described so far is just scratching the surface of what it all means. There is one thing we can be sure of - God designed it this way for us to see what our lives are supposed to look like! Investigating these things is valuable in our walk towards God.

When we step back, we see an interesting picture being formed. The Tabernacle offers a progressive picture of the walk of a Christian. It starts out in the world, pictured outside the Court, in the camp of Israel. In the world there is no connection with God. We can have no relationship with Him in the world. As an individual is drawn to God, he symbolically approaches the Tabernacle and enters the Court.

It is important to remember there is only one way to approach God - through the blood of Christ.

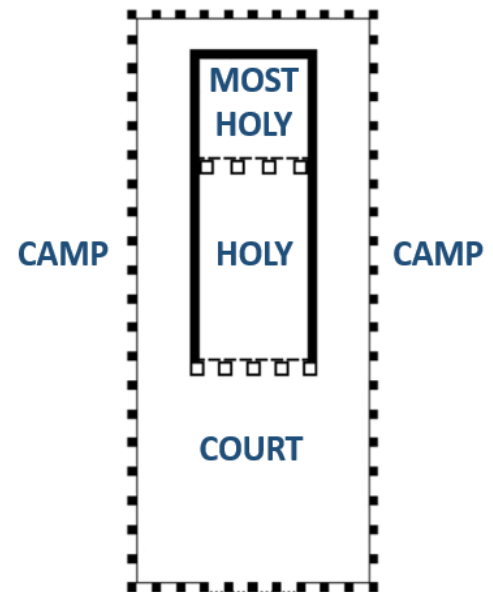
Leaving the camp to go into the Court is a step of faith, being willing to draw closer.

The first thing an individual sees is the Brazen Altar, on which the sacrifice of Christ was symbolically offered. Standing there, he or she smells the burning organs, a pleasant smell. This illustrates a measure of appreciation for the sacrifice of Christ, at least on a human level seeing something of value.

As the person progresses further, he or she comes to the Laver, the place of washing, understanding the needed cleansing from sin. If this individual wants to progress closer to God, he or she must pass under the first veil. Remember, there were five posts holding up the first veil, and they were set in sockets of copper. Copper is reddish in color, kind of like human blood, and not as valuable as silver or gold. Perhaps this represents the dedication of all five senses. We call this consecration.

Paul describes consecration. Here is the first step:

Romans 12:1: (KJV) *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*





The individual then enters the Holy condition and enjoys all the benefits illustrated there: the enlightenment of Scripture and the Holy Spirit in the Candlestick. He or she has the spiritual nourishment from the Table of Shewbread, showing God's presence. He or she has the ability to offer acceptable prayers and praise to God at the Incense Altar.

The second step starts to take place while dwelling in the Holy:

Romans 12:2: (KJV) *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

This is the purpose of being in the Holy - *be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind* so we can understand God and His will and be acceptable to Him.

This is the procedure - this is the only way to approach God that is acceptable to Him.

One last step: When proving faithful, the flesh dies and the individual passes beyond the second veil, just as Jesus once did, to the glories of heaven and God's presence.

There is much more we can learn from the Tabernacle. We have not even touched on the many different sacrifices offered and what they represent, or the symbolic function of the priesthood.

What do we learn from this Old Testament temple that we could not have learned without it?

There are many dimensions to the answer. God went to great effort in creating all of the Tabernacle services, the sacrifices, the materials, the colors and the priesthood itself over 3,600 years ago. This tells us God has had the salvation of this world planned for a very long time because it is the primary picture of the Tabernacle. In fact, we are told our salvation was planned even before the earth was formed (Revelation 13:8).

This shows God devised a long-term plan and things in the world are not just happening randomly. It shows He knew atonement would be necessary even before the fall of man. And - here is where His great wisdom comes in - God not only knew we would benefit from the experience with sin, but our sin would need to be atoned for.

Nothing in history has been out of His control. He has a timetable for everything:

Ephesians 1:7-10: (Weymouth) ⁷...So abundant was God's grace, ⁸the grace which He... lavished upon us, ⁹when He made known to us the secret of His will. And this is in harmony with God's merciful purpose ¹⁰for the government of the world when the times are ripe for it - the purpose which He has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation to find its one head in Christ yes things in heaven and things on earth, to find their one head in him.

Isn't that awesome? God cherishes the idea of bringing all creation under the headship of Christ. Before that can happen, the Tabernacle shows us God must address sin. Illustrating it so long ago shows us He was not surprised when Adam sinned. Rather, He made provisions for eradicating both the act of sin and the desire to sin.



In the Tabernacle, there were many types of sin-offerings depending on who sinned and the type of sin committed. This shows God does not just paint with a broad brush; He considers the circumstances of sin and adjusts the requirements accordingly.

Another feature supporting the concept of *two* ages of salvation is that the High Priest and his family received atonement *before* the nation of Israel. This shows that during this Gospel Age (the time we are in now), the spiritual priesthood receives atonement while mankind (pictured by the rest of Israel) will receive atonement in the Millennium. It is another proof in support of our understanding of the two ages of salvation.

For more on the concept of two salvations, please search our archives for Ep. 1034: Did Jesus REALLY Die for Everyone?

But many other offerings were not sin-offerings. There were burnt offerings, peace offerings and meal offerings - all were significant.



Listeners can write to us at inspiration@christianquestions.com for a comprehensive chart (free of charge to the United States) called *Israel's Sacrifices*, detailing these offerings and their spiritual meanings. It includes three specific priestly services that were vital to Israel and highly symbolic of the future ages. We are also offering a pdf or booklet called, *Israel's Tabernacle*.

Time did not permit us to review the priesthood. This also has important significance to the Christian, as it explains the role of Jesus and the church as God deals with the world of mankind. It really helps us see the work God has planned for the church in the next age.

Why do we study the Tabernacle?

The Tabernacle offers rich insights into the character of God, His plan of salvation and what will be required to gain eternal life. Through the progressive picture of the Tabernacle, we see there is only one path to approach God. We are not going to find Him in another religion or any other lifestyle. We must believe in the value of Jesus' sacrifice (the Brazen Altar). We understand we are sinful and are in need of cleaning (Laver). We have to dedicate ourselves to God, taking advantage of the spiritual help He has provided in the Holy.

Along the way there are obstacles that challenge us to give up, to hold back, to not remain dedicated to God. Back to the Josh McDowell quote: **Laws without relationships lead to rebellion.**

The Tabernacle is all about gaining an eternal relationship with God. If we understand the value of that relationship, we will not hesitate to do whatever He asks of us and be glad for the privilege of approaching Him. Do not let the world distract us from this one thing that will give us eternal life.



*Should Christians care about the Jewish Tabernacle?
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Think about it...!*



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Ep. 1100: Do People Turn Into Angels When They Die?



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