

**The Tabernacle  
Testimony  
of Jesus Christ and  
His Message**

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Testimony  
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His Message**

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*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*

John 5:39

## The Testimony of the Tabernacle

A study of the Jewish tabernacle provides us with insight into the Gospel message and the role of Jesus Christ in salvation. The earthly tabernacle was **patterned** after the heavenly tabernacle that was “not made with hands.” Therefore, a careful look into the earthly tabernacle is a glimpse into heaven.

### *Heavenly blueprints*

God commanded Moses to follow the divine blueprints very carefully. A mistake in dimension, color, or materials would misrepresent the heavenly tabernacle and falsify the Gospel message. God told Moses numerous times to “make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount” (Exodus 25:40).

### *God as the center of life*

The tabernacle was centrally located among the tribes of Israel making it the focal point of life (Figure one). There were three tribes on the east side of the tabernacle, three tribes on the north side, three tribes on the west side, and three tribes on the south side (Numbers 2:1-34). The three tribes on the east side were Issachar, Judah, and Zebulun; on the north side, Asher, Dan, and Naphtali; on the south side, Gad, Reuben, and Simeon; and on the west side, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of Joseph, who was granted a double portion in the promise land. All the tribes were located “far” away from the tabernacle to depict God’s holiness and separation from worldliness (Numbers 2:2).

The tribe of Levi was camped between the tabernacle and the other twelve tribes to protect them from the wrath of God (Numbers 1:47-54). They represented the necessity of having a mediator between man and God. The tribe of Levi was divided according to the three sons of Levi and their families: the Gershonites, the Kohathites, and the Merarites (Numbers 3:17-37). The Gershonites camped on the West side of the tabernacle, the Kohathites camped on the South side, the Merarites camped on the North side, and the families of Moses and Aaron, who were descendents of Kohath, camped on the east side.

Placement of the tabernacle in the center of the tribes shows us that God wants to be at the center of our lives. He wants everything we do to revolve around Him. This desire of God is expressed in First Corinthians 10:31 which says: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Also, Colossians 3:17 exhorts: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." And, Colossians 3:23 states: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

### *The Tabernacle belonged to God*

**G**od claimed the tabernacle as His special place on earth. Leviticus 17:4 calls it the tabernacle of Jehovah. Numbers 19:20 calls it the sanctuary of Jehovah. Judges 18:31 calls it the house of God. First Samuel 1:7 refers to it as the house of Jehovah, and First Samuel 1:9 calls it the temple of Jehovah.

God wants to be the focal point of our lives. Because the tabernacle represented the special dwelling place of God on earth, it naturally became the hub of life. When people rejected the Lord or turned to other gods, they withdrew from the tabernacle of God and went to the hills and the high places (Second Kings 12:3).

The first biblical reference to the tabernacle calls it the sanctuary (Exodus 25:8). The word *sanctuary* is special because it refers to a place set apart for God. It was a holy place, distinct and separate from the ordinary, the common, and the world.

### *The Tabernacle was a testimony*

**T**he tabernacle is also referred to as the tabernacle of the testimony (Numbers 1:50; Acts 7:44) and the tent of testimony (Numbers 9:15). The tabernacle was a physical, earthly testimony of God's presence among men. It was a witness to both the Jews and to the world of God's miraculous work of salvation. It was a witness of man's need for God, the wages of sin, and the purification through sacrifice. God said in Exodus 29:45: "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God."



## The Tabernacle was the place to meet God

The tabernacle was also the place to meet God and to assemble for all important matters. Thus, it was called the tent of the congregation (Exodus 27:21). When God wanted to meet with Moses, He said, “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” (Exodus 25:22).

There was a special presence of God in the tabernacle. This was where He met with Moses face to face (Exodus 25:22) and where He manifested Himself to Israel as the shekinah glory (Exodus 40:34).

### *The special presence of God*

You may be wondering why this earthly tent in the desert was called the house of God? After all, God is present everywhere. He is omnipresent. There is no space, no hiding place, no void anywhere in all of creation that is not occupied by God. So, did God confine Himself to this tiny tent made by men? No.

In Second Chronicles 6:18, king Solomon says: “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!” Obviously, the tabernacle was built for the benefit of men not for God.

The Lord designated a location on earth so people would focus on Him. He wants our attention, and the best way to do that is to give us something to focus on. God was in the tabernacle as He is in every place. However, He manifested Himself in the tabernacle in a very special way. This was a special place. God wanted it to represent heaven and heavenly truths. Everything in the tabernacle was holy. Obviously, people could pray to God and serve Him anywhere, but there was only one place that was designated as God’s special place on earth—the tabernacle. Today, the tabernacle does not exist. Instead, there are churches scattered all around the world. A person can pray to God and serve him apart from a church, but the special place to meet with God is in a local church.

What is the difference between a church, a building, and a group of Christians? A church is a body of believers who have made a covenant with one another to serve God and to conduct authorized ordinances committed to the church. They usually assemble in a

designated building or place for worship. In contrast, a group of believers not associated with a local church is a collection of Christians without a covenant or without authority to conduct ordinances. There are many Christians in this category. Many pray, study the Bible, and serve God. But, they are missing out on the special presence of God reserved for the local church.

The tabernacle was the place designated and designed by God to be His special dwelling place on earth at the time. It was here that He manifested Himself in the shekinah glory, a bright, glowing cloud, that filled the tabernacle. It was here that He met with Moses and the children of Israel. It was here that He wanted the sacrifices to be offered. There was no other place on earth as special and as unique as the tabernacle of God.

## The Tabernacle Design

God designed the old testament tabernacle to be an example and testimony of spiritual truths. God gave Moses the blue prints and told him to follow the instructions exactly. An error in the materials, colors, or dimensions would misrepresent the pattern of the heavenly tabernacle and falsify the message it represented.

The instructions for building the tabernacle are recorded in Exodus 25—31. The events of material collection and construction of the tabernacle are found in Exodus 35—39, and Exodus 40 describes the tabernacle being erected, dedicated, and filled with God’s glory.

### *The tabernacle court yard*

The tabernacle was set inside a large court yard that was surrounded by wood posts and a white curtain. The court yard is described in Exodus 27:9-20. It was one hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and five cubits high. One cubit is about eighteen inches, the length of a man’s arm from the elbow to the finger tip. So, the court yard was approximately one hundred fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and seven and one half feet high. These dimensions are equivalent to about one fourth of an acre.

The posts used for court yard fence were made of acacia wood. Acacia trees were abundant in the Jordan valley. These posts were set in bases made of brass and were capped with silver. The posts were stabilized by ropes tied to silver hooks on the posts and anchored to the ground with brass stakes. A silver rod called a “fillet” connected the top

of the posts. A white curtain made of fine, twined linen called *byssus* was hung on the fillet. The entrance to the court yard faced east, and the entrance curtain was made with four different colors: blue, purple, red, and white.

Sixty posts were used to surround the court yard. The Bible describes their position as twenty on the north side, twenty on the south side, ten on the west side, and ten on the east side. The entrance gate was thirty feet wide (twenty cubits) suspended between four posts in the space of fifteen feet (ten cubits) and three posts on either side of it. If you were to draw this out on paper or try to make a model of it, you might have difficulty because the corner posts were counted as half for the length and as half for the width. Likewise, the posts supporting the ends of the entrance curtain counted as half (Figure two). Each post was spaced five cubits apart.

The posts holding the curtains around the court yard were set in brass and capped with silver. The brass represents humanity and the world. The silver represents Christ and the work He has done to save us. The only way sinful man can cross the holy barrier of righteousness into the presence of God is by looking up to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The court yard wall was a barrier between the world and the holy things of God. The panels of white curtain (seven and one half feet tall and seven and one half feet wide) between the posts were a striking contrast to the earthy surroundings and would be noticed by anyone looking towards the tabernacle. It represented the holy barrier of righteousness that separates sinful man from a righteous God. No sin is allowed in heaven. One had to be qualified to enter the court yard. It was holy territory.

The four colors of the entrance curtain depict elements associated with meeting God. Blue represents heaven, purple is royalty, red is blood from the sacrifice, and white is purity. Entering the court yard meant you were approaching God in His territory and on His terms.

Interestingly, there were three curtains that one passed through to reach God at the seat of mercy: the entrance curtain into the court yard, the entrance curtain into the tabernacle, and the entrance curtain into the holy of holies. Each curtain was made of the same four colors to remind us how to approach God. As we approach God, we enter into His heavenly presence (blue). As we approach God, we approach God's throne from which He rules (purple). As we approach God, we must be covered with the blood of Christ because without the shedding

of blood there is no remission of sins or fellowship with God (red). And, as we approach God, we must be made pure, righteous, and spotless which results from being born again (white). Sin is not allowed in heaven.

These colors epitomize the work of Christ. He is the one that leads us to heaven (blue). He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (purple). He is the one who shed His blood for us (red), and He is the one who cleanses us from all sin making us pure and acceptable (white) before God. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). And, in John 10:9, He says, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

### *The brazen altar of sacrifice*

As you pass through the entrance curtain, the first thing you see in front of you is the brazen (brass, bronze) altar of sacrifice. A fire burned in this altar all day and all night. There was a continual presence of smoke and flames, the crackling sound of burning wood, and the smell of burning sacrifices.

Exodus 27:1-8 describes the brazen altar of sacrifice. It was a hollow box of acacia wood encased in brass. It was seven and one half feet long (five cubits), seven and one half feet wide (five cubits), and four and one half feet tall (three cubits). Each of the four corners of the box had a brass horn. A brass grating net was made to hold the wood and burning sacrifices. It was placed inside the altar box from underneath with side arms extending down and curving up on the outside of the box so it could be used to pick up the entire altar. The carrying rods were made of brass-covered acacia wood, and all of the utensils used for the sacrifices and the altar, such as the basins used to carry the blood, the shovels used for digging out the ash, the firepans used to hold the ash, and the fleshhooks used for the sacrifices were made of brass.

The use of brass was used only in the court yard. Once inside the tabernacle, only silver and gold were used. This is because brass represents the world and carnality. Everything associated with sin is made of brass. Thus, brass is never positioned above silver because brass represents things on earth, and silver represents the mediator (Jesus) who leads us into heaven.

The brass altar was originally made smooth. However, after the rebellion of Korah, the brazen altar had additional plates of brass

pounded into its sides which were from the incense censors of Korah and his followers.

It is noteworthy that this major rebellion and sin of Korah was made a part of the altar of sacrifice because the altar represents the wages of sin (Romans 6:23). Sacrifices for sin were burned on the altar (Exodus 29:38-39). The fire was kept burning day and night, twenty-four hours a day because it represents the eternal fires of hell. Revelation 21:8 tells us that “the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death,” and Revelation 14:11 refers to “the smoke of their torment.”

A sacrifice was burned on the altar all day and then another sacrifice all night. This depicts two things. First, there are souls burning in hell both now and forever. Second, Jesus, as the sacrificial lamb that was slain and sacrificed for us, was sacrificed and experienced the full, eternal worth of punishment for our sins.

The four horns on the four corners of the altar remind us that only an authorized sacrifice is acceptable to God. Horns in the Bible are often used to signify authority or honor. In this case, the blood of the sacrificed animal was sprinkled on each horn before being poured out on the ground in front of the altar. This was to emphasize the fact that sins are paid for and forgiven only by shedding the blood of an acceptable sacrifice.

The need for an acceptable sacrifice actually begins at the entrance curtain of the court yard. No one could enter the court yard without an acceptable sacrifice. The acceptable offering which allowed passage into the court yard was a ram without spot or blemish. This of course, was a picture of Jesus Christ, the holy and sinless lamb of God.

The lesson to be learned from the ever-present flames and burning sacrifices in the altar is that the wages of sin is eternal torment in the flames of hell. This is probably the best portrayal of hell we could imagine. If you do not accept the lamb of God to be your sacrifice, then you will pay for your sins in hell.

### *The brazen laver of water*

**A**s we pass by the brazen altar of sacrifice, we come to the brazen laver of water. Exodus 30:17-21 describes this as being a big brass basin set on a brass foot to hold it steady. It was made from women’s, brass looking-glasses. Before entering the tabernacle,

the priests were required to wash their hands and their feet with the water from the brazen laver.

The brass laver of water reminds us that we cannot enter into the presence of God with sin. We must be cleansed from all sin and be made pure and righteous. Titus 3:5 explains that we are made acceptable to God “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

Second Corinthians 5:21 explains that Jesus “was made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” It may, at first, appear difficult to imagine that God could make us as righteous as Himself. But, the Bible explains that this takes place spiritually not physically. God is spirit (John 4:24), and when you are born again of God, you are born spiritually (John 3:6). Our spirit is born again and made with the righteousness of God. This is why First John 3:9 says, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” The only way to get into heaven is to be sinless which requires that we be as righteous as God.

To clarify any misunderstanding, it is important to explain that Christians have two natures. The body is sinful, but the spirit is righteous. The body sins but the spirit does not. The apostle Paul describes this conflict of natures in Romans 7:15-25 and makes two important statements. The first is that he does not sin, but his body or outward man does (vss. 17-18). Second, he “delights in the law of God after the inward man” (vs. 22). When a Christian dies, his body remains in the earth because it is sinful, but his soul goes to heaven because it is righteous.

The brazen altar of sacrifice and the brazen laver of water illustrate two conditions that are taken care of in salvation: number one, the payment and forgiveness of sins, and number two, the cleansing of the soul from all sin thereby making it righteous. These two events take place when a person commits His life to Jesus Christ for salvation.

In review, we can see that the court yard is a picture of salvation. Before one can enter into the court yard, he must accept the terms of God, namely, to take with him the qualified sacrifice, a spotless lamb. This represents the decision point of a person under conviction of the Holy Spirit. By choosing Jesus Christ (the Lamb of God) as his Lord and Savior, he can enter into the holy presence of God.

Once the decision to accept Jesus Christ is made, the brazen altar of sacrifice reminds us that Christ died for our sins to save us from the eternal, fiery punishment in hell, and, then, the brazen laver reminds us that Christ cleanses us from all our sins and makes us new creatures (Second Corinthians 5:17).

### *The entrance veil of the tabernacle*

**N**ow, we come to the colorful entrance curtain of the tabernacle. The colors in the curtain are blue, purple, red, and white to remind us that we are approaching God who is in heaven (blue), who rules over all of creation (purple), on the condition that our sins are paid for by the shedding of blood (red), and that we have been cleansed from all sin and made pure (white).

The entrance veil was hung on five gold-encased acacia wood pillars, set in brass bases, and capped with gold crowns. This is the last time we will see brass as we progress towards the throne of God. The brass-gold combination at the entrance reminds us that at the point of salvation we have died to sins, the flesh, and the world (brass). We are now alive unto God in the Spirit (gold). As we pass through the curtain, we pass from death into life: our sins paid for and our souls purified. Leaving the world behind, we now enter into the joy of God's salvation to live for Him and to serve Him. Thus, the first room of the tabernacle, also called the Holy Place, represents the Christian life.

### *The tabernacle walls*

**T**he tabernacle had a curtain entrance, three solid walls, and two rooms divided by a colorful curtain. The tabernacle was forty-five feet long (thirty cubits), fifteen feet wide (ten cubits), and fifteen feet tall (ten cubits). The entrance faced eastward, just as did the entrance to the court yard. The description of the tabernacle is recorded in Exodus 26:15-30. The tabernacle was small enough to fit inside many of today's church buildings.

The three walls of the tabernacle were made of forty-eight acacia wood beams encased in gold; twenty beams on the north side, twenty beams on the south side, and eight beams on the west side (Figure three). Each beam had two bases of silver placed side by side.

The two bases of silver for each pillar depict the dual nature of Jesus Christ and the two conditions for salvation. Jesus was both God and man. Because He was God, He was able to pay the eternal worth of punishment for our sins. By becoming man, He qualified to be a

faithful and merciful high priest to intercede for us before God the Father (Hebrews 2:17). With regard to the two conditions needing to be resolved for our salvation, Christ makes it possible for our sins to be paid for and for us to be cleansed from our sins.

As we pointed out before, there was a definite order in the placement of the three metals used in the tabernacle. Brass was used in the court yard and was associated with man, sin, and the world. Whenever brass and silver were used together, silver was always above brass. Silver was used both in the court yard and in the tabernacle because it represented the transition between man and God. Thus, whenever silver was used with gold, gold was always above silver.

The transition between man and God is Jesus Christ. Jesus came to earth as a man in order to bring man to heaven with God. Hebrews describes Him as the mediator (Hebrews 9:15). It is also significant that part of the silver used in the tabernacle came from **ransom** money given by the soldiers of Israel. This was appropriate because the silver represented the work Christ did to bring us to God. He is our ransom (First Timothy 2:6).

### *The lampstand*

Once inside the tabernacle, the first thing you would see are the flickering lights of the golden lampstand to your left on the south side of the room. Exodus 25:31-40 describes it as being made of ninety-three and three quarter pounds (one talent) of solid gold including the tongs and snuffdishes. The center shaft of the candlestick had three branches on one side and three branches on the other side (Figure three). Altogether, there were seven shafts that held oil in their wells. On the six side branches, there were three almond shaped bowls, a knop, and a flower. The center shaft had four almond shaped bowls, four knops, and four flowers.

The oil used in the lampstand is described in Exodus 27:20-21. It was pure olive oil. The burning oil was the only source of light in the tabernacle, and it reflected off the walls of gold.

This lampstand represents the Holy Spirit who is given to us to guide us into all truth. He is the one who gives us spiritual insight and vision. The seven lights remind us that the Holy Spirit is God, completely divine, all knowing, ever-present, and the source of all wisdom.



### *The table of showbread*

**T**o your right, on the north side of the room, was the golden table of show bread described in Exodus 25:23-30. The table was made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold. It was three feet long (two cubits) one and one half feet wide (one cubit) and two and one quarter feet tall (one and one half cubit). A gold border, one hand-breadth tall, surrounded the top edge of the table. Each corner of the table had a gold ring near the top of the table. The carrying rods were made of acacia wood encased in gold. Associated with the golden table of showbread were gold dishes, spoons, bowls, and covers. Leviticus 24:5-6 tells us that twelve loaves of bread were baked and set on the table of showbread in two stacks of six loaves each.

The showbread represented the Word of God that satisfies and nourishes our souls. In addition, it is a lamp unto our feet and is provided to sustain us in our spiritual walk. First Peter 2:2 exhorts to “desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby,” and, Jesus said, in Matthew 4:4 that “man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Also, we should not overlook the fact that Jesus Himself is called the bread of life (John 6:33), the provider and sustainer of the souls of all men, women, and children. John 1:1 points out that “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.” Jesus is the Word of God.

The golden lampstand and the table of showbread remind us that the Holy Spirit and the Word of God are resources that God provides us with to strengthen us and to help us in our Christian life. The Holy Spirit comforts us and guides us. The Word of God is given to us to nourish us and to help us grow spiritually.

### *The house of God*

**I**t is significant that the lampstand and the table of showbread are found inside the tabernacle. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God are available to everyone anywhere, but they have a special association with the temple of God. It is no surprise, then, that Ephesians 4:12 tells us that the church is for “the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ.” It also protects us from deceivers and “every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14).

The church is called the “house of God,” “the pillar and ground of the truth” (First Timothy 3:15). It is the special place where the Word

of God is taught and preserved and where a special presence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit is found. God has provided us with these three special resources to help us in our Christian life: the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the church of God.

### *The golden altar of incense*

**A**t the west end of the first room, in the tabernacle, in front of the veil of the Holy of Holies, was the golden altar of incense described in Exodus 30:1—10. It was made of acacia wood encased in pure gold. It was one and one half feet long (one cubit), one and one half feet wide (one cubit), and three feet tall (two cubits). The top was bordered with a gold crown, and the four corners each had a horn. Two gold rings were attached to opposite corners of the altar, and two carrying rods were made of acacia wood encased in gold.

The tabernacle was filled with the sweet smell of incense burning on the altar. Jesus said, “my house shall be a house of prayer.” This is the meaning of the burning incense. God wants His house to be filled with the prayers of the saints.

The association of incense, prayer, and fellowship with God is emphasized in two ways. First, the golden altar of incense stood in front of the veil of the Holy of Holies, where the throne of God was, to remind us that we have access to God through prayer. This is our means of communication with God while alive on earth. Prayer allows us to fellowship with God. Second, in Hebrews 9:4, the golden censor of the altar was described as being in the Holy of Holies because the censor of incense was carried into the Holy of Holies by the high priest during the offering of the atonement blood. Thus, by prayer we come face to face with God.

The Christian life has so much to offer, and God has provided us with resources to experience these blessings. Do not neglect all that God has done for you. Serve Him, and live for Him. Use the Word of God daily, and yield yourself to the Spirit of God. Pray for fellowship and strength to make your Christian life as fruitful as possible.

### *Angels in the tabernacle*

**A**nother significant feature about the first room of the tabernacle is the colorful ceiling of blue, purple, red, and white with pictures of angels sewn into the fabric. There were pictures of angels sewn into the side curtains of the tabernacle as well, and pictures of angels were also sewn into the veil of the Holy of Holies. The

presence of angels all around the tabernacle reminds us of the heavenly host surrounding the throne of God and that we are in holy territory (Revelation 5:11).

### *The veil of the Holy of Holies*

**B**ehind the golden altar of incense, separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, was the veil of the Holy of Holies hanging from four golden pillars set on silver bases (Exodus 26:31-33). The veil had four colors, blue, purple, red, and white. Unlike the other two entrance curtains, it had pictures of angels sewn into it.

As we enter into the Holy of Holies, the golden pillars with silver bases remind us that we are passing into heaven to the throne of God by means of Jesus Christ. When the high priest entered, it was required for Him to carry with him burning incense from the altar and blood from an acceptable sacrifice.

The veil separating us from the throne of God represents two things. Hebrews 9:6-8 reveals that the veil indicated that the way to God had not yet been manifested to men. This is referring to Jesus Christ, who is described as our forerunner into the veil (Hebrews 6:20). Without Jesus Christ, there would be no access to the throne of God.

Jesus Christ was slain from the foundation of the world and has provided salvation to everyone since the time of Adam (Revelation 13:8; Luke 1:70). Historically, however, Jesus did not come as a man until many years after the tabernacle. Therefore, the heavenly pattern of the tabernacle and the Jewish laws were a prophetic testimony of Christ's coming as well as showing the immediate availability of God's salvation at the time. It was significant that Christ came after the law was given to the Jews because He represents deliverance from the bondage of the law into grace. Thus, God wrote the Gospel message into the history of man by first giving the law (old covenant), then sending Christ to fulfill the law, and then establishing His church (new covenant). This typology parallels with an individual being saved from the law by Christ into grace.

Hebrews 10:19-20 describes another interesting perspective of the veil. It says, "having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Notice, that this passage equates the veil with the flesh of Christ. First Peter 2:24 tells us that Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree." When Christ crucified the carnal body of sin, He conquered sin and

demonstrated victory over death, thus, opening the way for us to fellowship with God. In Christ, we have direct access to the Father, and sin can no longer separate us from God.

Hebrews 2:14 tells us that “forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [Jesus] also likewise took part of the same.” Verse sixteen tells us, “for verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” This means that the body of Christ was the same sinful, carnal flesh that we possess. Hebrews 4:15 explains that “we have not a highpriest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

Although the flesh of Christ was made with the nature of man, and, therefore, experienced all of our weaknesses, He, nonetheless, being God, conquered the sinful, carnal body of man, never yielded to sin, and finally crucified it. Thus, the veil to the Holy of Holies represents the barrier of sin that exists between man and God. When Christ crucified the body of sin, the veil of the temple was literally ripped down the middle from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51) to signify that sin had been conquered and that Christ had opened the door to the throne of God. Christ removed the barrier of sin that separates man from God.

The only barrier that still exists for the Christian is his own sinful, earthly body. Once a Christian dies, he passes into the heavenly, Holy of Holies to the throne of God. Thus, the veil represents not only the body of Christ, but the body of man.

To summarize, passing through the first veil into the tabernacle represented passing from spiritual death into spiritual life. Passing through the second veil signifies the passing from the physical world into heaven.

### *The Holy of Holies*

**T**he interior of the Holy of Holies was surrounded by angels on the entrance veil, in the ceiling, and on the outside of the three gold walls. The room had three solid walls made of gold-encased acacia wood beams. It was a perfect cube being fifteen feet long (ten cubits), fifteen feet wide (ten cubits), and fifteen feet tall (ten cubits). This reminds us that God is infinitely righteous, equally just, and equally loving as described in Jeremiah 9:24.

### *The throne of God*

**T**he throne is the only thing in the room depicting that God is the center of creation and the center of attention. Nothing in all of creation can or should compete with Him. God wants to be number one in our lives and the focus of all that we do. In Matthew 22:38, Jesus said that the first and greatest commandment was to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

The isolation of the throne inside the Holy of Holies also reminds us that God is holy and separated from sin. There is no sin in heaven. He will not tolerate it and will not condone its presence. Second Peter 3:13 says that righteousness dwells in heaven. And, Revelation 21:27 declares that nothing shall enter into it anything that defiles, works abomination or makes a lie.

The isolation of the throne also helps us to better appreciate the longing in God's heart for fellowship with His creation. As John 3:16 explains: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." *Everlasting life* is defined in the Bible as a never-ending relationship with God. First John 5:12 tells us that "He that hath the Son hath life; and He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Therefore, life is a relationship with Jesus Christ. If this life or relationship with Jesus is eternal, then it will never end.

### *The ark of the covenant*

**T**he ark of the covenant was the base of the throne and is described in Exodus 25:10-16. The ark was a box made of acacia wood encased in pure gold. It was three and three quarter feet long (two and one half cubits), two and one quarter feet wide (one and one half cubits), and two and one quarter feet tall (one and one half cubits). This was a good size box. Three specific items were placed inside the box: the commandments written on tables of stone by the finger of God, Aaron's rod that budded, and a golden pot of manna (Hebrews 9:4). These three items represent the conditions in the covenant of salvation that God has decreed.

The law written on the tables of stone shows us that God requires all worshippers to be perfect and righteous (Hebrews 10:1). Anything less is unacceptable. God will not allow sin into heaven and will not receive worship from sinners. Anyone who comes to God must be in complete and total conformity to the law of God. Of course, this is impossible to achieve as far as man is concerned. Romans 3:10 tells us,

“there is none righteous, no, not one,” and Romans 3:23 declares that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

However, through Jesus Christ, man can be perfected in righteousness. Second Corinthians 5:21 explains that Jesus was made “sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Being made as righteous as God occurs in our spirit, not in our body. Romans 3:22 tells us that the righteousness of God is given to all those who believe. No wonder, then, that King David declared “the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” Righteousness must come from God. It cannot and does not come because we act righteousness.

The rod of Aaron represents the necessity of authority in salvation. On one occasion, Moses’ and Aaron’s authority was challenged by a group of rebellious leaders in Israel. The test for proving who was God’s authority involved leaders from each of the twelve tribes of Israel leaving a staff or rod in the tabernacle overnight. The following morning, the rod that budded would prove who was God’s chosen authority. Aaron’s rod budded. By placing it in the ark of the covenant, it reminds us that God has chosen a special mediator for making salvation possible. Only the God’s chosen representative will do.

Acts 4:12 tells us that “neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Jesus is the only acceptable, authorized lamb of God. He alone is “the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by” Him (John 14:6).

The golden pot of manna represents the promise of God to provide for our needs and to sustain our lives. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they lived on the manna that was given to them by God. Without it, they would have perished.

Jesus said in Matthew 4:4 that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. In John 6:33, Jesus compares Himself with the manna from heaven by saying: “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.” Thus, the manna in the ark reminds us that God promises to give us spiritual life and to provide for our needs.

It is interesting to note that these provisions in the covenant all require the work of God. Man cannot make himself righteous. He cannot appoint himself as God’s approved authority, and he cannot sustain himself or give himself life. Man is totally dependent upon God

for all things that pertain to life and heavenly fellowship. God is the provider, and man is the benefactor.

### *The mercy seat*

**O**n top of the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat was appropriately placed to complete the throne. Understanding the provisions of the covenant and the helplessness of man helps us realize that we are in need of the mercy of God. Without His help, we would be banished forever from God and His throne. It is by the mercy of God that He offered His Son as a sacrifice for our sins and desires to cleanse us from our sins.

Exodus 25:17-22 tells us about the mercy seat. It was made of pure gold, three and three quarter feet long (two and one half cubits) and two and one quarter feet wide (one and one half cubits). Two cherubims were molded from the mercy seat at opposite ends facing each other and their wings spread over the seat. Numbers 7:89 shows us that God spoke from between the angels on the mercy seat. This throne of pure gold was His. From here, God shows mercy on those who come to Him with a humble and trusting heart.

## **The message of Christ in the tabernacle**

**I**n review, the court yard and the tabernacle faced eastward, and, interestingly, the Gospel message is depicted in the east to west design of the court yard and the tabernacle leading to the throne of God. The court yard represented the conditions for salvation, that is, the payment for sins at the brazen altar and the cleansing from sin at the laver of water. The first room in the tabernacle, called the Holy Place, represented the Christian life. The Holy of Holies represented heaven where God rules from His throne.

It is also interesting that the arrangement of the altar, the laver of water, and the furnishings in the tabernacle form a cross (Figure four). This shows that the way to God is by faith through Jesus Christ. The altar and laver formed the base of the cross. The lampstand and the table of showbread formed the arms of the cross, and the altar of incense and mercy seat formed the top of the cross. This is a good way to remember the tabernacle design.

### *The roof of the tabernacle*

**I**n addition to the message of the tabernacle from east to west, there is a message in the roof of the tabernacle from the inside out and from the outside in. The roof of the tabernacle was made up of four coverings. The inside covering was made of fine twined cloth of blue, purple, red, and white. Pictures of angels were sewn into it. On top of this, there was a cloth woven with goat's hair. Next, there was a covering made of ram skins that had been dyed red. And, the outside covering was made of badger skins. To appreciate the message in the coverings of the tabernacle roof, we need to examine the materials.

### *The colorful, angelic ceiling*

**E**xodus 26:1-6 describes the colorful, angelic ceiling. The angelic covering was made up of ten curtains sewn together. Each curtain was forty-two feet long (twenty-eight cubits) and six feet wide (four cubits). Five curtains were sewn together to form one panel, and the other five curtains were sewn together to form a second panel both being forty-two feet long and thirty feet wide. These two panels were connected by fifty gold hooks and fifty blue loops. This final panel was sixty feet long and forty-two feet wide (Figure five).

The curtain was draped over the sides and the back of the tabernacle. The first five curtains sewn together covered the first room of the tabernacle and the gold hooks laid over the veil of the Holy of Holies separating the two rooms. The second panel of five curtains covered the Holy of Holies.

Perhaps, the most significant feature of the inside covering were the fifty gold hooks placed over the veil of the Holy of Holies. It coincided with the transition of passing from life on earth to life in heaven. The number fifty represents liberty, reconciliation, and restoration when all things are made right. The year of Jubilee was such an event (Leviticus 25:10). Every fifty years everything was restored and started over again. Bond servants were released, and debts were wiped out.

When we die as Christians, we stand before the mercy seat of God to be judged. As Christians, our souls are judged righteous because of the work of Christ. Salvation is ours. Through Christ, we gain liberty from the bondage of the law and sin. Our debt of sins has been paid for by Christ. We are restored to what God originally intended us to be. When we die, we are delivered completely from the body of sin and from the world.



The linking of the two panels with gold hooks also shows us that there is continuity between our life on earth and our life in heaven. We are saved in Christ now and always will be in heaven. Once saved, always saved.

Nonetheless, our lives as Christians will be judged, and we must give an account to God for the way we served Him. First Corinthians 3:11-15 describes the judgment of Christians. It tells us that if we are faithful to God, we will receive a reward. But, if we waste our lives as Christians, we will suffer loss, but still be saved. When we stand before the throne of God, all things will be made right. Including the wrongs that we have done.

### *The covering of goat's hair*

The next covering layered over the colorful cloth was made of goat's hair described in Exodus 26:7-13. Instead of ten curtains, this covering had eleven curtains. Each curtain was forty-five feet long (thirty cubits) and six foot wide (four cubits). Six curtains were sewn together to cover the first room of the tabernacle, and five curtains were sewn together to cover the Holy of Holies. These two panels were connected together as was the colorful cloth, but with fifty brass hooks and fifty loops (Figure six). The first curtain of the front panel was folded back on top of the second curtain, so it did not drape over the front entrance. This allowed the brass links connecting the two panels to coincide with the veil of the Holy of Holies and the fifty gold links in the colorful covering.

The hooks were made of brass because they were not inside the tabernacle. Brass is associated with humanity and the physical world. Thus, we see the brass to gold combination as we did at the entrance of the tabernacle. This reminds us that we are passing from earth to heaven.

The fifty brass hooks also show us the continuity of the Christian life on earth and in heaven. The goat's hair represents servanthood, and as Christians, we are God's servants. We serve Him in this life, and we serve Him in heaven too.

### *The red ram skin covering*

The two outer coverings of the roof were made from animal skins. The covering immediately over the goat hair blanket was made from ram skins which were dyed red. This is described in Exodus 26:14. The skins from rams represent the lamb of God who

was sacrificed for our sins. Jesus is the only acceptable sacrifice for sins. The red represents the blood that Jesus shed for us. “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins” (Hebrews 9:22). Unlike the two inside coverings, there are no dimensions given. This is to remind us that the blood of Jesus Christ has no limits and no restrictions. It is sufficient to cover all sins completely and totally.

### *The badger skin covering*

**T**he outermost covering of the tabernacle was made of badger skins and is described in Exodus 26:14. It was an earthly color and represents man and carnality. No dimensions were given for it because all men can be saved. There is no limit placed on the number of people who can come to Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:22 tells us that Jesus tasted death for every man, and Romans 10:13 declares that “whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Likewise, John 3:16 says: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

### *Two messages in the roof design*

**T**here are at least two messages in the roof of the tabernacle. The message from the outside to the inside shows how man can come to God. The message is that all men (badger skins), are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ (red ram skins), are made servants of Christ (goat hair), and through Him are able to fellowship with God in heaven (angelic covering).

The message from the inside to the outside shows us how God came to man. This message says, God so loved the world (colorful curtain), that He sent His servants, including His Son, to tell others about the good news of salvation (goat’s hair), about the blood of Jesus Christ that takes away all sins (red ram skins), and that eternal life is available to all men (badger skins).

The tabernacle was designed to represent important heavenly truths. What a message it was and continues to be! Some people think that the Jews did not know about the grace of God and that the law was their only hope of salvation. But, this is not true. As Hebrews 4:2 points out, “for unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them.” The message of the gospel was the same for the Jews as it is today for us. This is because God is unchanging. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Likewise, man has the same problem with sin today that

has plagued all men since the time of Adam. It is no surprise, then, that God's solution for man is the same today as it has always been.

## Dedicating the tabernacle

**E**xodus 40:1-16 tells us that the tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month of the first year after God gave Moses the blueprints. But, before it was ready to be used, it had to be anointed with a special holy, anointing oil. This oil is described in Exodus 30:22-33 and 40:9-10. Four principal spices were used: myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia all mixed into olive oil. This special anointing oil was to be unique and holy. If anyone tried to duplicate it or put it on a stranger, he was to be cut off from Israel. Everything inside the court yard and inside the tabernacle was anointed with this holy oil thereby making it sanctified and sacred.

### *God's Spirit fills the tabernacle*

**O**nce everything had been anointed, God manifested Himself to Israel. Exodus 40:34-38 describes how a cloud covered the tabernacle, and the shekinah glory filled it. This was God's tabernacle, and He was claiming it. It was here that He met with Moses and the children of Israel. God was uniquely present in this tabernacle.

Jesus made an interesting statement in Matthew 23:38-39 when He said: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Jesus was referring to the temple of the Jews. On two previous occasions, Jesus referred to the temple as **His** house. However, in Matthew 23, He said it was their house. The temple was no longer acceptable to Him, and He told the Jews that it would be desolate of His presence.

Leaving the temple desolate, however, did not leave the world without a special presence of God. Instead of being in the temple, God's Spirit now fills local churches. Certainly, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent just as He always has been, and He dwells in the hearts of all believers. But, there is a special presence of Him in His churches just as there was in the tabernacle.

Notice that immediately after Christ was resurrected and taken into heaven, the next major event recorded was the establishment of churches: first in Jerusalem, then in Antioch, and then in Asia Minor,

Macedonia, Greece, etc. Local churches were established all over the known world. Why? Because the Lord wanted to meet with His people in a special way in a special assembly.

## The metals of the tabernacle

**I**n our study, we have learned that the walls of the tabernacle, the lampstand, the table of showbread, the altar of incense, the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat in the presence of angels, and the front pillars were all made of gold or encased in gold. Silver and brass were used extensively too. How much was there? How much did all of this weigh?

Exodus 38:24 tells us that there were 1.65 tons (seven hundred thirty shekels plus twenty-nine talents) of gold, 4.85 tons (one thousand seven hundred seventy-five shekels plus one hundred talents) of silver, and 3.3 tons (twenty-four hundred shekels plus seven talents) of brass. That is a lot of metal!

## Summarizing the Message of the Tabernacle

**W**hen God gave Moses the instructions on how to build the tabernacle of witness, He told Moses in Exodus 25:40, “look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.” Hebrews 9:23 points out that the tabernacle was patterned after the heavenly things.

If you understand the design of the tabernacle, then you realize that you can explain the Gospel of salvation. It begins in the pagan nations surrounding Israel. Following is a description of one's journey to God as depicted by the testimony of the tabernacle.

Imagine yourself wandering through the pagan nations that surrounded Israel. The further away from God's people you are the less likely you are to hear the wonderful news about God. This is what it is like to be a part of the world, and its culture, and its values, spiritually depraved, and without God.

As you travel closer to the tribes of Israel, you meet some of God's people more frequently and learn about God. As you come into their camps, you notice that their lives physically and socially revolve

around the tabernacle of God. Also, there is much activity in the court yard behind a wall of posts and white curtains. There is fire and smoke billowing from the court yard, the sound of animals, and a ram's horn being blown. You smell burning flesh and see an unusual cloud above the tabernacle.

Under conviction and desiring to approach God and to have a part in serving God, you are told about the necessity of having a sacrifice; not just any sacrifice, but a lamb that is spotless and without blemish. This is the only way to approach God in the tabernacle without being rejected at the entrance of the court yard.

Accepting the conditions for coming to God, you take a lamb with you into the court yard, and pass through the entrance curtain marking the first change in your life. You lay your hands on the head of the lamb to pass your sins from yourself to the lamb. The lamb becomes your substitute and is killed on your behalf because the wages of sin is death. Then, the lamb is burned on the altar of sacrifice to remind you that the punishment for sins is eternal death in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

As you continue to approach God, you come to the laver of water where you wash yourself, being reminded that you must be cleansed from all sin. No sin is allowed in heaven. Anyone coming to God must be righteous.

As you draw nearer to God, you enter into the first room of the tabernacle by passing between the brass-based, gold pillars reminding you that you have passed from spiritual death into life. The colorful entrance curtain reminds you who you are approaching and how to reach Him. Inside the holy place, the golden lampstand reminds you that the Holy Spirit is your guide. The table of showbread reminds you that the Word of God is for spiritual nourishment and strength. The temple reminds you that you need the shelter and protection of God's sanctuary. The golden altar of incense reminds you that you need to pray for fellowship and communion with God.

The last curtain reminds you that you are passing from earthly life to heavenly life. Passing between the pillars of gold in double sockets of silver remind you that you enter the presence of God because of Jesus Christ. As you stand before the throne of God, you see God face to face, sitting on His throne, and surrounded by angels. The Holy of Holies is bright and shining with the shekinah glory of God. There is no night nor darkness in the presence of God. Here you will live forever in fellowship with God. Have you begun this journey yet?

## The Typology of Jesus Christ

After Jesus was resurrected from the grave, He manifested Himself to His disciples and to others for forty days (Acts 1:3). On one occasion, Jesus walked with two men on their way to Emmaus. During this journey, Jesus “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, ... expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:13-27). The Old Testament scriptures are all about Jesus Christ. Jesus told the Jews to “search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

The tabernacle is about Jesus Christ too. Hebrews 8:5 reminds us that God told Moses to see to it that he followed the pattern given to him. And, Hebrews 9:23 tells us that the earthly tabernacle and ordinances were patterns of the heavenly things. The true tabernacle was pitched by God not by man (Hebrews 8:2, 9:11). But, Revelation 21:22 tells us that in heaven there is “no temple ... for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple.” This leads us to one conclusion. The tabernacle was not patterned after a building in heaven, but, instead, after the person of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. Following is a list of tabernacle features and their associated meanings depicting Jesus Christ.

1. **The court yard posts:** The silver capped posts tell us that Jesus Christ was lifted up (crucified on the cross) to bring us to God (John 3:14-15).
2. **The colorful entrance veils:** Jesus is the door to salvation. He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 10:9 & 14:6).
3. **Blue:** Christ came down from heaven to bring man up to heaven (John 6:38).
4. **Purple:** Christ is King of Kings (Revelation 17:14).
5. **Red:** Christ shed His blood for our sins (Matthew 26:28 & Revelation 5:9).
6. **White:** Christ conquered the flesh of man by being sinless (Hebrews 4:15).
7. **The altar of sacrifice:** Christ experienced the infinite wrath of the Father against sin (Hebrews 9:28).
8. **The laver of water:** Christ cleanses us from all sin (First John 1:9).
9. **The tabernacle:** Christ is the heavenly tabernacle (Revelation 21:22).
10. **The lampstand:** Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12).

11. **The table of showbread:** Jesus is the bread from God (John 6:33).
12. **The altar of incense:** Jesus is our intercessor (Hebrews 7:25).
13. **The veil of the Holy of Holies:** The flesh of Christ, representing the barrier of sin, was conquered and destroyed (Hebrews 10:20).
14. **The ark of the covenant:** Jesus is the mediator of the covenant (Hebrews 9:15).
15. **The law:** Christ was without sin (Hebrews 4:15)
16. **The rod that budded:** God approves of and accepts only Jesus Christ to be our savior (Acts 4:12).
17. **The manna:** Christ is the bread of life (John 6:35).
18. **The mercy seat:** Jesus is our merciful high priest (Hebrews 2:17 & Jude 21).
19. **The colorful ceiling:** Jesus is the Lord of heaven (First Corinthians 15:47).
20. **The goat hair covering:** Jesus became a servant to save us from sins (Philippians 2:7).
21. **The red ram skin covering:** Jesus is the lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).
22. **The badger skin covering:** Christ became a man to conquer sin and to be our high priest (Romans 8:3; Hebrews 4:15 & First John 4:2).

We can learn many things from patterns, typologies, events, people, and parables. Sometimes, there are more than one lesson to be learned. The tabernacle is a good example. There are many more things to be learned from the tabernacle than what has been mentioned in this study. I hope you will take the time to search for more truths in the message of the tabernacle.

## Metal and Color Index

**Brass:** Represents the world, man, and earth. Used for the altar of sacrifice, the laver of water, all court yard utensils, the hooks for the goat hair panels, and the bases for the court yard posts and the front, tabernacle pillars.

**Silver:** Represents Jesus Christ, the ransom for man, the mediator between man and God. Used for the caps, fillets, and hooks of the court yard posts, the bases for the tabernacle wall beams and the inside pillars.

**Gold:** Represents God the Father and heaven. Used for the pillars and wall beams of tabernacle, the lampstand, the table of showbread, the altar of incense, the ark of the covenant, the mercy seat with angels, and the hooks for interior ceiling panels.

**Brass-silver combination:** Used in the court yard posts. Depicts Christ between man and God. Silver (Christ) is always above brass (man).

**Brass-gold combination:** Used in the front tabernacle pillars. Depicts the transition from earthly things to heavenly things. Gold is always above brass. The gold hooks of the colorful linen covering is between the tabernacle interior and the brass hooks of the outer goat hair covering.

**Silver-gold combination:** Used in the tabernacle wall beams and interior pillars. Depicts Christ as the mediator from earth to heaven. Gold is always above silver.

**Blue:** Represents heaven. Used in the three entrance veils and the interior roof covering.

**Purple:** Represents Royalty. Used in the three entrance veils and the interior roof covering.

**Red:** Represents Christ's shed blood for sins. Used in the three entrance veils and the interior roof covering.

**White:** Represents righteousness, holiness, and purity. Used in the three entrance veils and the interior roof covering.





