

The Tabernacle, the Dwelling Place of God

In Exodus 25:8-9, God gave specific instructions to Moses on Mount Sinai for building the Tabernacle to house His presence. *And let them make a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.* The Tabernacle was a tent-like structure inside a rectangular courtyard, facing East, surrounded by a fence made of pillars, linen hangings and covered an area 45' long, and 15' wide with a 15' high covering. In the outer courtyard were brazen altar nearest entrance gate, and the laver of water. The Tabernacle that could only be accessed by the priests, was divided into two parts: The Holy Place and The Most Holy Place. The Holy Place has three pieces: candlestick, table of shewbread and altar of incense. And the Most Holy Place where the Ark of the Covenant rested. In and above the Holy of Holies, God appeared as a pillar of cloud or fire. *Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.* (EXO35:4-40:38) This tabernacle would be where God's presence would dwell with His people and where the people would offer sacrifices and worship. Whenever they would move the Tabernacle from one location to other they would have priests carry the Ark with poles. Tabernacle means "to dwell." The tabernacle was considered to be the earthly dwelling place of God. The portable sanctuary built by Moses as a place of worship for the Hebrew tribes before they entered Promised Land. After Solomon built the Temple, God would dwell in the Holy of Holies, the most inner room of the temple. (HEB9:7) God did not dwell in the hearts of humans until after Christ's death and resurrection

The Tabernacle was "*who serve the copy and shadow of what is in Heaven*" (Heb.8:5) so that humanity would have a glimpse of what is to come. Pitched in the center of the 12 tribes of Israel, the location of the Tabernacle symbolized God at the center of all things; worshiping God was meant to be central to every aspect of life. The concept and manner of worship of the Tabernacle are a pattern for worship, and holds spiritual significance for us as believers. While the Tabernacle is no longer with us physically, there are many parallels for us as New Testament believers to draw from. God intended for people to draw close to Him thru Jesus, for sin to be forgiven through Jesus, for people to worship Him through Jesus. So, book of Hebrews shows how Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God's love and mercy and is worthy of our devotion. It compares and contrasts Jesus to events from Old Testament. Through comparisons, we see His superiority. He is greater than angels, Torah, Moses, Promised Land, priests, sacrifices, and the covenant. Moses was merely a servant, but Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is superior because He is the perfect one. Jesus is superior to levitical system, high priest and sacrificial system. Jesus is superior to priesthood based on Melchizedek! (HEB8:4-5;9:1-12)

The tabernacle showed Israel that God is a Sovereign God, that in His kindness, God meets His people. In Genesis 2 where God would come down to Adam and Eve and walk with them in the garden of Eden in the cool of the day. And here where God comes down to be in relationship with His people. But we must connect the tabernacle to the New Testament, to Christ Jesus. The sacrificial system provided for sin was only temporary in that people had to sacrifice year after year, but the system was giving way when Jesus was given as its fulfillment. *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* (JOH1:1,14) Through the sacrificial system held at the Tabernacle, Israelites learned gravity of their sinfulness and how much they needed a Savior. Jesus, paid the penalty for us when he came to earth to save us from sin that separated us from the presence of God. The tabernacle was a sign of Jesus who was to come, types and shadows that exist between Old and New Testaments. The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. He came and temporarily lived with us, and dwelled with us. We no longer have to offer up lambs for sacrifice, because Jesus is the Lamb of God as the perfect and ultimate sacrifice for sin. Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter the Most Holy Place and sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice upon the cover of the ark. This action atoned for the sins of the whole nation. A thick curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. This curtain, or "veil," symbolized the separation of the sinful people from the holy presence of God. Veil represents the flesh of Jesus rent in the final sacrifice. Jesus had connected the Temple to Himself. (JOH2:19) By "this Temple," He meant the Temple of His body. He speaks about destruction of His body in His coming death on the cross. At that moment when Jesus died on the cross, Jesus' body was torn in death, the veil was miraculously torn in two. *And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.* (MAT27:51) The tearing of Jesus' flesh secured the reconciliation between God and His sinful people. The torn veil symbolizes the ability of every believer to approach God, to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus. The High Priest wore a simple, white linen robe. We, too, must lose our identity when we enter the Holy of Holies to worship and commune with God. It is here in quietness, in prayer that we are in the Holy of Holies before the Great and Holy King any place or house of worship, or a large congregation. Thank God for His death on the cross and for the new and living way He has prepared for us through His flesh." (HEB10:22) Thank God that salvation is extended to all, that anyone can enter into God's presence. Thank God for better way in the New Covenant. Now, we can approach God, throne of grace every hour of every day and pray boldly! Now, each one of us is called to build a tabernacle for God in our hearts, preparing ourselves to become a sanctuary for God. Since we are God's Temple, so glorify God in your body. (2CO6:14)

Israelites who wanted to meet with God were required to come to the Sanctuary. The entire area, which includes the Tabernacle and the Courtyard, was known as the Sanctuary. There was only one entrance into the Courtyard, located on eastern wall. The Gate was always open and all who entered did so with the understanding that they were coming to worship God. What is significance of having one entrance? It represented there was only way to God. For worshiper today, only way to God is through Jesus Christ. *"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved"*(JOH10:9) Is Jesus absolute Lord of our life? Are there things, situations that hold us back from worshipping God in spirit and in truth? Let's take time to realign our hearts and put God as the only one worthy of our worship. Honor Him in how we prepare ourselves for worship. Come with hearts of expectation to meet Him in worship. Each article of furniture represents different prayer focus that has unique meaning corresponding with its original purpose defined by God.

1. The Gate : There is only one way to enter into the Tabernacle and there is a way to enter into singing praises to God. *we Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.* (PSA100:4) We begin here. Thank God for every blessing and praise Him for His mighty acts. Start your prayer with thanksgiving, praise and blessing His name. Thank God for the truth of His Word and for the path to eternal life. Praise differs from worship. Praise—Magnify God and exalt His Name! Loudly adoring Him. Worship—Reverence, submission to God. Worship is an altar we place ourselves on. *"prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only"*(ISAM7:3)

2. The Brazen Altar : The altar is a place where ancient Israelites sacrificed animals to atone for their sins. It reminded them they were not worthy to approach holy God without first offering a blood sacrifice for their sins. God's plan for salvation of humanity for a spotless, sinless sacrifice. Only Jesus met that requirement, where He paid ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Christ was sacrificed on the altar of the cross as an atonement for sins of all of mankind. For sinful man to approach a holy God, there must be a blood sacrifice. We must all come by the cross. It is the place of shedding of blood. The Brazen Altar (the Cross) is a place of repentance and forgiveness. *And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*(HEB9:22) Remember sacrifice He made for our redemption and the blessing that it has brought to our lives. Jesus died so that we might live. At the altar we search our hearts, acknowledge/confess our sins, repent to insure you are free from all sin. and ask God to forgive us.

3. The Laver of Water: The laver, Bronze Basin is a place of cleaning. After having atoned for the sin of individuals or the community, the next, the priest would approach is the Bronze Basin to wash his hands and feet with water—a symbol of being cleansed. Made from mirrors, the priests could then see the dirt on themselves and wash thoroughly before they proceeded into the Tabernacle. Once sins were atoned for, cleansing was necessary before serving in the Holy Place. We must look into the mirror of; be washed by; and apply His Word as cleansing so we may serve and minister before Him. Here we take time to read and meditate on God's Word and allow it to wash over us. When we examine ourselves with His Word as our guide, Word will sanctify and cleanse us. The Laver was a place of cleansing and sanctification. It is a place of seeing through the reflection of God's word and asking for mercy and help. At the laver we recognize our need of purification and declare our desire to be like Jesus. To be like Jesus. Purify my mind – Keep mind on things that are above. Purify my ears—Let my ears hear your voice, Lord. Purify my eyes – Keep my eyes from evil. Purify my mouth—Keep my mouth from speaking evil. Purify my hands – Teach my hands to do your work and not be involved with evil. Purify my feet—Keep from going to wrong places, let me go proclaiming Gospel. Purify my heart—Let my heart be filled with good motives and decisions. We are told that Christ has made us holy, cleansing us by the washing of water through the Word.(EPH5:26) Word is a mirror (JAM1:23) *and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"*(HEB4:12) True worship is living our lives in pursuit of holiness and close fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Just as the Old Testament priests are careful to clean themselves before entering the Tabernacle, we, as God's royal priesthood, are called to *"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy;"*(HEB 12:14)

4. The Lamp Stand: The first room of the Tabernacle where Golden Lampstand with a six-branch seven-lamp menorah. The Lamp stand represents the Spirit of God. The lampstand was only source of light in the Holy Place. The seven lamps symbolically guided by the light of God. The priest's duty was to keep the wicks trimmed and filled with pure olive oil. The lamp needs to be trimmed of indifference, laziness, gossip, greed, etc. so the lamp would radiate pure light. This oil is symbolic of illuminating power of Spirit. At this source of light as God for spiritual revelation, direction and guidance. Pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit to be active in our lives. Jesus is the light of the world and those who follow Him will never walk in darkness.(JOH8:12) In order for our light to shine continually, "be filled with the Spirit!"(EPH5:18) Once we have passed through gate of praise, spent time at altar of sacrifice, washed at the laver of cleansing we are ready to enter behind the first veil into the tent of blessing. We need to ask God to bless us with the Gifts of His Spirit. We need to pray in the Spirit. Speaking Gifts; Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues, Prophecy. Power Gifts; Miracles, Healings, Faith. Mind Gifts; Wisdom, Knowledge, Discerning. Thank God for His guidance, light and protection. Ask God to provide guidance, light, protection to leadership of the church. Believers are God's light (witness) to the world. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

5. The Table of Shewbread: (sustenance and strength) - 3 -

On Sabbath day, twelve loaves of unleavened bread covered with frankincense were placed “arranged” in order on the golden table before the Lord. It was renewed regularly just as the Word of God should be renewed in our hearts. Bread is typical of provisions of life and represent God providing for His people. The showbread provided sustenance for the priests. Jesus is the bread of life and His Word is also the bread from heaven. *“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”*(JOH6:35;51) Christ is not only our Life-giver – He is also our “Sustainer,” as well. Eternal life can be found through His Word. The table/bread symbolized God’s willingness to fellowship with man and him to be in His presence. Ask God to speak to our hearts and allow us to commune with Him, hear His voice and follow Him. We must allow God to speak to us through His Word. We need to get a word for the day and claim the promises of His Word. In meditation God will give us revelations, ideas, truths. Read–You must take time to read Word of God. Study–Get into the Word, seek understanding of God is speaking. Memorize–the Word in your heart and recalling it to mind. Perform–Now you go doers what the Word has revealed.

True worship is seeking God as sustenance of our lives. Christ provides bread that satisfies the soul. We are to allow our spirit-man to be satisfied by the Lord and turning away from the temporal things of the world. It’s time to get hungry for God. Choose to set aside time for God to dwell in His presence, engage in prayer, meditate on the Word. The assembly of the saints should be a time of worship, devotion, feasting upon Christ, the Living Bread. Feed on the bread of life, allow the Holy Spirit to fill each day of your life. Thank God for His Word and the strength in the Lord our God!

6. Golden Altar of Incense: The altar of incense symbolized prayers of God’s people. The altar of incense filled the tent of meeting with fragrant smoke. Sweet-smelling smoke from incense represented the people’s prayers ascending to God. As the priest interceded in prayer on behalf of the community, we would offer incense—a sweet pleasing aroma to God. Aaron was instructed to burn incense on the altar every day as a regular offering to the Lord. Burning this incense was a continuous act, just as we are to pray without ceasing. (1TH5:17) *“Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”*(PSA141:2) The altar of incense was called most holy to the Lord. It is important proper incense, having a proper heart before God.(ISA1:13) Jesus continues as High Priest, *“is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us”*(ROM8:34) John saw the prayers of the saints ascend to the altar in heaven before the throne of God.(REV8:3-4;5:8) True worship is interceding and standing in the gap. It is carrying God’s will to restore what was lost. Let’s continue to intercede for every nation, tribe, language, people, winning for Jesus. Let God’s will be done also in the earth, just as it is in Heaven. We raise our voices; we look upward toward Heaven. Just as the incense carried a perfumed odor, our prayers are fragrant with the righteousness of the Savior. The golden altar of incense is where every request can be presented to a prayer-answering God. May our thankful prayers rise daily before God like incense. Ask God to prepare your heart for even deeper communion with Him. This is intimacy with God. Learn and understand the attributes of God. Our Heavenly Father will provide good gifts for you, Good Shepherd wants to guide you, The Spirit of Truth gives you confidence, comfort. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

7. The Ark of the Covenant – The ark was one of most instrumental symbols of faith and to signify the presence of God. It contained three items: a golden pot of manna, Aaron’s staff that budded, and the stone containing the Ten Commandments. The Ark required “an atonement cover,” called the Mercy Seat, to be built with pure gold. There had to be one cherubim of gold on both ends of the mercy seat. It were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. It was important to have the cherubim have their wings spread and facing one another, symbolizing the angels’ attention and readiness to do God’s will. The Mercy Seat was where God would dwell, rested as the top of the ark. The Mercy Seat, where God communed with man. Because the ark was God’s throne among His people, it was a symbol of His presence and power. *“There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites”*(EXO5:22) The Ark was assurance that God was dwelling among His people. Once a year High priest would enter the holy tent. This old covenant on the Day of Atonement is no longer needed as Jesus Christ became a new covenant in which His sacrifice on the cross. The prophet saw God’s temple in heaven opened, “and the ark of His covenant was seen within his temple.”(REV11:19) that it will appear again one day as part of God’s end-time plan. God has made it possible for us to have a relationship with him. He invites us to respond passionately. *“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”*

Come near to God and He will come near to you”(JAM4:8) The presence of the pot of manna symbolized God’s constant provision for His people. Manna sustained the Israelites when they wandered in the wilderness. Heavenly food that was always fresh that our relationship with God is fresh every day(great is thy faithfulness) Tables of Stone–God’s law and commandments written with the finger of God, it reminds man’s obligation toward God and toward our fellow man. Rod of Aaron –The rod represents authority. Pray with authority for the needs in your life, your family, and the church. Pray for Authorities and Bless them. Our need end with Thanksgiving. Thank God, declare how Great He is. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*(HEB4:16)