

# The Tabernacle

## *Exodus 25-31. 38-40*

### Opening Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise you for being both the God of the Israelites and our God today. Thank you for the ways you revealed yourself to the Israelites then and how you reveal yourself to us today in Christ. Grant that we may always be encouraged by the atoning sacrifice won for us through your Son. In his name we pray, Amen.

### Introduction

*The tabernacle (the tent of worship built in the desert) is rarely mentioned in the rest of Scripture. Here in Exodus it achieves major importance. A large percent of the book is devoted to the instructions for its construction and use (25:1–31:18) and to the way in which those instructions were carried out (35:1–40:38). After the covenant ratification, Moses went up to Mount Sinai to meet with God. There he stayed for 40 days and 40 nights, receiving precise instructions from the Lord on how the tabernacle was to be constructed (Exodus 24:15–18). This tabernacle was the place where God promised to dwell among His people (25:8). Of course God is present everywhere, but this tabernacle was to be the visible reminder to the people of God's invisible presence. It was to be the center of their worship. Moses was instructed to follow exactly the pattern given to him by God for the tabernacle's construction (26:9). These precise instructions emphasize that communion with God can take place only on His terms.*

### The Tabernacle and Its Furnishings

The tabernacle needed to be portable so the Israelites could carry it from place to place during their travels in the desert. Each of the furnishings in the tabernacle had a special function and a deep significance. Each of the tabernacle furnishings had a special significance and an important function.

— The table (Exodus 25:23–30): The table held the bread of the Presence (referring to God's presence). The table was located in the Holy Place. (Lev. 24:5–9).

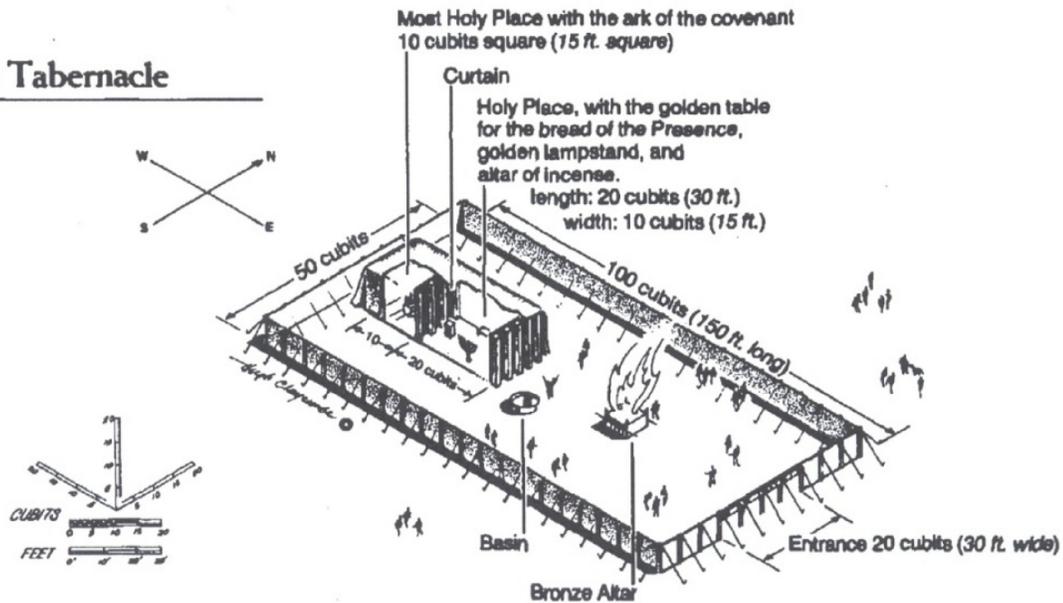
— The lampstand (Exodus 25:31–40; 27:20–21): The lampstand, also located in the Holy Place, was used to provide light. The priests were commanded to keep the light burning throughout the night, every night.

— The altar of burnt offering (bronze altar; Exodus 27:1–8; Leviticus 3:3–5): The altar of burnt offering was for burning sacrifices to the Lord. It was located in the courtyard of the tabernacle.

— The altar of incense (Exodus 30:1–10): The altar of incense was used for burning sweet-smelling incense to the Lord. It was located in the Holy Place in front of the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.

— The basin (Exodus 30:17–21): The basin was located in the courtyard of the tabernacle, between the tabernacle and the bronze altar. It was used by the priests for washing their hands and feet before entering the tabernacle or presenting an offering on the altar of burnt offering.

## The Tabernacle



1. The tabernacle served the Israelites until the time of Solomon, who built a permanent structure, the temple. This temple followed much the same pattern as the tabernacle, as did the temple of Herod where Jesus worshiped and taught. In Solomon's time, the temple replaced the tabernacle as the dwelling place of God among His people (1 Kings 8:10–13). How does John apply the tabernacle and the temple to Jesus in the following verses.

John 1:1-14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (14) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2. Today, how does God dwell among us? How is God revealed to us?
3. According to following passages, who is our mediator with God the Father?

1 Tim. 2:5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

Heb. 9:15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

4. How does the new covenant work?
5. Why will there be no temple in Heaven?

Revelation 21:2-4, 22 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ...And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

## **The Ark and the Curtain**

Exodus 25:10-22 “They shall make an ark of acacia wood. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside shall you overlay it, and you shall make on it a molding of gold around it. You shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. And you shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark by them. The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. And you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give you. “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

Notice the description of the ark of the covenant. Of all the things housed in the tabernacle, the ark was the most important. It was a box, covered with gold, about 3¾ feet long and 2¼ feet wide and high. The lid of the ark was called the atonement cover (or sometimes the mercy seat). In Hebrew the word translated “to atone” literally means “to cover over.” On the Day of Atonement, sacrificial blood was sprinkled in front of and on this lid to cover over, or atone for, the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:15–17).

6. At each end of the atonement cover was a cherub (a kind of an angel). Here between the cherubim was God’s throne.. How is God described here? What did God promise Moses that He would do from the “mercy seat” on the ark? (Exodus 25:22)?
7. Extra credit! The ark contained some important things. Does anybody remember what they are? Of what was each item to remind the Israelites? (Exodus 25:16; 34:27–29; 16:33–34; Numbers 17:1–11).
8. The ark of the covenant was placed in the holiest part of the tabernacle and later the temple, the place called the Most Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies. The Most Holy Place was separated from the rest of the tabernacle (the Holy Place) by a curtain. Besides Moses, only Aaron and the high priests who came after him were allowed to enter the Most Holy Place. And the high priest could only enter it once a year, on the Day of Atonement, for the purpose of making atonement for the people. According to the following passages, why was access to the Most Holy Place so limited?

Leviticus 16:1-2 The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died, and the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

9. What was the significance of the tearing of the curtain (from top to bottom) at the death of Jesus?

## **Building the Tabernacle**

The tabernacle was to be the place where God would dwell with his people. It was a symbol of the covenant relationship he had with His people. This is all significant in Exodus because it shows a shift from serving under King Pharaoh to serving under the LORD as King.”

10. How were materials to build the tabernacle to be obtained?

Exodus 25:1–7 The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats’ hair, tanned rams’ skins, goatskins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

11. How did the people respond?

Exodus 36:2–7 And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whose mind the LORD had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to do the work. And they received from Moses all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him freewill offerings every morning, so that all the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task that he was doing, and said to Moses, “The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do.” So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, “Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary.” So the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more.

12. According to the following, how did God provide for the actual building of the tabernacle?

Exodus 35:30–36 Then Moses said to the people of Israel, “See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft. And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of workman or skilled designer.

13. Why was such care taken that God’s plans for the tabernacle be followed correctly? What did the carefulness say to the people about the importance of the task?

14. What sign of God’s acceptance of the completed tabernacle did the people have? What significance did Yahweh’s presence in the tabernacle have for the people?

Exodus 40:34-38 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (35) And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (36) Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. (37) But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. (38) For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

### **Closing Prayer**

Take my life, O Lord, renew, Consecrate my heart to You;  
Take my moments and my days; Let them sing Your ceaseless praise.  
Make my will Your holy shrine, It shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is Your own; It shall be Your royal throne. Amen.