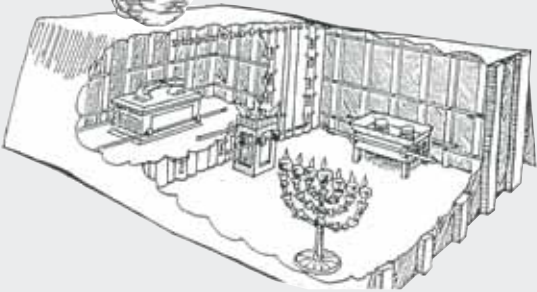


Secrets of The Tabernacle



by Jason Peebles

The book of Hebrews gives a good deal of attention to the Old Testament Tabernacle and the lessons that we can learn from it. Everything from the floor plan to the furniture has spiritual significance. Paul specifically mentions the candlestick, the table of showbread, the ark, and various other aspects (Heb 9:1-5). As we approach this subject, keep in mind that the plans for the Tabernacle came from God and not man. Exodus 25:8,9 is very clear on this point. God told Moses -- *“make me a sanctuary according to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle.”* **Thus, the lessons of the Tabernacle are really lessons from the heart of God.**

Spiritual Realities

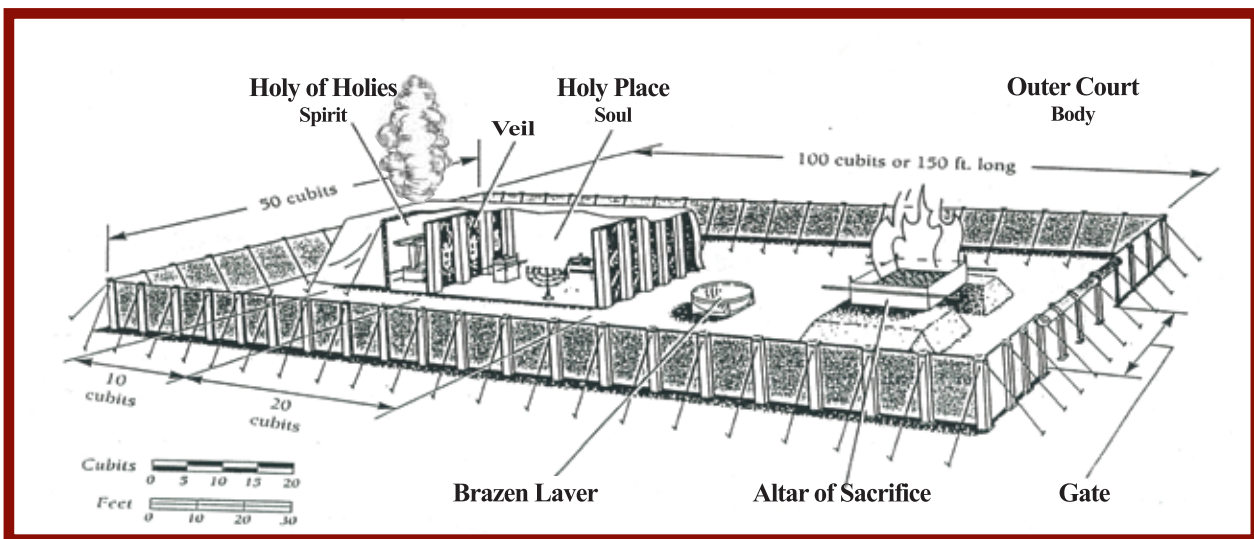
Hebrews 10:1 says that the law and the sacrifices were *“only a shadow of the good things to come.”* Likewise, Hebrews 8:5 says that they *“serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.”* **In other words, they were meant to give us pictures and illustrations of true spiritual realities.** Thus, it is important for Christians to study the Tabernacle for several reasons: 1) First of all, the apostle Paul taught on it in Hebrews chapters 8-10, 2) Every aspect of the Tabernacle reflects spiritual truths, 3) It illustrates God’s prescribed way of salvation, 4) It gives us a picture of God’s pathway for acceptable worship, and

5) Most importantly, it helps us fully appreciate God's redemption plan in Christ. This study will briefly examine some of the spiritual secrets of the Tabernacle, starting from the outer fenced area and progressing to the innermost chamber.

The Fence & Gate of Entry

For the remainder of this study, I want you to take an imaginary journey with me. Pretend like you are a person living in Moses' day and seeing the Tabernacle for the first time (*see both illustrations during this study*). As you approach it, the first thing you notice is that the Tabernacle is separated from the world by a large **FENCE**. Exodus 27:9-19 goes into great detail on the various parts of how the fence was assembled, all of which contain lessons. The fence was made of poles, sockets, connecting bars, and fabric. The apostle Paul may have had all of this in mind when he wrote about the spiritual connection that exists between the members in the body of Christ (Eph 4:16). However, for the sake of this study, suffice is to say that the main lesson of the fence is the principle of *separation*. The fence served as a boundary between the life of God and the world. **If you want to experience God's life, then you must leave from where you are and enter by the gate that God has provided.**

The fence was designed with one point of entry -- the **GATE** on the East side (Ex 27:16,17 / Ex 38:13-15). The primary lesson of the single gate is obvious -- there is *only one path* into the life of God. In John 14:6 Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me.*" Jesus is the gate that God has provided for us to enter into the life of God. Hebrews 9:11,12 says, "*But Christ came as a High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands . . . not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*" **To enter the life of God, you must enter by God's gate and follow His path to the inner chamber. This is perhaps the most important lesson of the Tabernacle.** There are not two gates or multiple gates -- there is only one gate and one path. 1 John 5:11,12 says, "*And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has*



life; and he that has not the Son of God has not life.”

Altar of Sacrifice

On our imaginary journey, we will assume that you have entered by God’s gate. Immediately, you are faced with a horrifying sight -- the **ALTAR OF SACRIFICE** (Ex 27:1-8). There is no escaping it, no way around it. No one can enter into God’s presence without first having their sins purged at the altar. You can’t “meditate” or “work” your way in. No, God’s prescribed path requires that you deal with the Altar of Sacrifice. At the altar, the priests would lay their hands on innocent animals and confess the sins of the people over them. **As you gaze at this process, you begin to realize the terrible price of sin. The animal is being sacrificed FOR YOUR SINS. The animal is taking YOUR PLACE.** This is very different than ancient religions that forced people to pay for sins with human sacrifices. Thank God, our heavenly Father is merciful and provides a substitute in our place. Romans 6:23 says, “*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

As you stand there on your imaginary journey, you are gripped with the awful consequences of sin. You can hear the cries of the animals as their very life is drained away. **May we never treat lightly the blood sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for our sins! Jesus took our place!** If we had more time in our study, we would discover that every part of the altar and the

utensils have spiritual lessons. There was a large grate on top of the altar to spread out the various parts of the animal as they were burned by fire. God wants every “part” of your life to be given over to Him. Romans 12:1 says “*present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.*” The priests used hooks and poles for the work involved (Ex 27:3) – indicating that God works through His representatives. The fire at the altar foreshadowed the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation. Matthew 3:11 says that Jesus baptizes with “*the Holy Spirit and fire*” – indicating the purifying and cleansing work of the Holy Spirit.

Outer Court & Inner Chambers

As you pass the Altar of Sacrifice, you realize that you are now standing in an **OUTER COURT** area (see diagram). You notice several things. You can see a large *basin of water* that stands between the altar of sacrifice and a structure on the other side, which has two **INNER CHAMBERS**. **And so the thought comes to you – “Do I want to continue further into the life of God or simply remain in the outer court?”** If you want to go further, then you must learn the lessons of the basin of water and the inner chambers. It’s sad that many Christians cease to move forward in their walk with God once they come to Christ. But God is calling you to go further. He wants you to move beyond the knowledge of your salvation into all that God has

prepared for you. Hebrews 10:19 says, *“Having therefore brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”* *“Hearts sprinkled”* is a direct reference to how the priests applied the blood -- *“bodies washed”* is a reference to the basin of water. **Jesus does not want you to stop on your journey – he wants you to “press in” and “move forward” into all that He has.**

Basin of Washings

On your imaginary journey, you are still in the outer court, but you now realize there is more. You can see the awesome **CLOUD** of God’s presence hovering over the Holy of Holies (Ex 40:30-38). At night it is a pillar of fire, and by day a cloud. Yet, if you want to move closer to God’s presence and power, you must first stop at the **BASIN OF WATER** (*or brazen laver -- see diagram*). **The basin of water teaches us the lesson of daily consecration and cleansing from sin.** Before the priests could enter the Holy Place, they were required to *“wash their hands and feet that they die not”* (Ex 30:17-21). The book of 1 John was written to help Christians live in a *“washed state”* in order to experience God’s best. 1 John 1:9 says, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* Even before taking Communion, we are admonished to *“examine ourselves.”* **If you want a closer walk with your Lord, and have His best, then you must learn to walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7).** Will you be perfect? No. 1 John 2:1 says that when we sin Jesus is our Advocate. Your job is to walk honestly and bring all things into the light. Thus, you must learn to quickly deal with sin to avoid problems (1 Cor 11:28-32 / Gal 6:7-8).

Lampstand, Table of Showbread Altar of Incense, the Veil

Before we continue your imaginary journey, pause a moment to locate the two inner chambers on the diagrams. The first chamber was called the **HOLY PLACE** and could only be entered by the priests. The second chamber, called the **HOLY OF HOLIES**, could

only be entered by Moses or the High Priest. But for the sake of our study, let’s remember that as Christians we have been made *“priests unto God.”* Revelation 1:6 says, *“And has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father.”* Praise God, we can “enter in” because of what Christ accomplished!

As you approach the structure, you notice that it is covered with various types of animal skins (Ex 26:14). These skins reflect the humanity of Christ. Outwardly, it is not very beautiful. You would never guess at the treasures and power within. Isaiah 53:2,3 says, *“He has no form or comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”* We, too, have *“this treasure in earthen vessels”* (2 Cor 4:7). As you enter the Holy Place, you are immediately struck with the colors, the light, and the beauty. The light from the lampstand reveals gorgeous curtains of white, blue, purple, and scarlet that have the figures of angels embroidered on them (Ex 26:31-33). White speaks of holiness, blue of heaven, purple of royalty, and scarlet of the blood covenant. The angels remind us of the true spiritual realities around us.

The first thing that you notice is the **GOLDEN LAMPSTAND**, for it gives light to the entire room (Ex 25:31-40). It allows you to see all the treasures of God, just as the Holy Spirit reveals them in our lives (Jn 16:13). The lampstand was fashioned from pure gold. It had flowers, branches, and almonds carved into it – all lessons within themselves of the fruit and life that the Holy Spirit produces. It was fueled with pure olive oil (Lev 24:1-4).

The next object is the **TABLE OF SHOWBREAD** (Ex 25:23-30). On it were kept twelve fresh loaves of bread, one for each tribe of Israel. The priests were required to consume it each week (Lev 24:5-9). The lessons are obvious. God has provision for us, both spiritual and natural. Fresh bread speaks of fresh union and communion with our Lord. Jesus, the bread of life, said: *“Man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God”* (Mt 4:4, Jn 6:35).

The next item in the Holy Place that you see is the **ALTAR OF INCENSE** (Ex 30:1-10), signifying prayer and worship. Just as incense rises and spreads its aroma, so your prayers and praise ascend with great influence. **It is notable that this piece of furniture is the closest to the Holy of Holies and the presence of God.** As you grow in your walk with the Lord, you will

discover that prayer and worship help you commune with Him and hear His voice.

Finally, you see the thick curtain that separates the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies -- **THE VEIL**. The historian Josephus tells us that in the temple of Jesus' day, the veil was as thick as a man's hand (about 4 inches) and that a team of horses could not tear it. Yet, when Jesus took his last breath, the Bible says that this veil was ripped from top to bottom by the power of God, indicating that the way was now open for us to have fellowship with our heavenly Father (Mt 27:50-54). The fact that it ripped from top to bottom indicates that it was a work of God and not man.

The Ark, Mercy Seat, and the Cloud of His Presence

On your journey, you now enter the **HOLY OF HOLIES** and see the **ARK OF THE COVENANT** and the **CLOUD** of His presence. You are now standing in the very presence of God where His voice can be heard! The **ARK** was a beautiful chest made of wood and overlaid with beaten gold, illustrating the humanity and divinity of the Messiah (Ex 25:10-22). The lid to the chest was called the **MERCY SEAT** and had two angels on it with wings covering the chest. And resting on the ark was a **CLOUD** by day and a **FIRE** by night that rose through the roof into the heavens. It was the presence of God Himself and could be seen by all (Ex 40:33-38 / Num 9:15-23). Inside the ark were the *Ten Commandments*, the *Testimony* (a longer version / Ex 25:21), *Aaron's Rod* that budded, and a *golden pot of Manna* that never spoiled – all of which have lessons in themselves. The **ARK OF THE COVENANT** is where God spoke (Ex 25:22) -- “*And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony.*”

Finally, your journey is complete. You are back to the place that Adam and Eve once knew before they sinned, when they walked and communed with God and had dominion over all the earth (Gen 1:26-28). In Christ, you have been restored to God's plan! Amen.

Dear friend, I pray that this study will cause praise and gratitude to arise for what Christ has done! Abide in Him. ■ -- Jason Peebles

Key Memory Verse:

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Hebrews 9:24

Prayer of Thanksgiving

“Father, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I accept His sacrifice and commit my life to Him. Thank you that I can have boldness to enter into Your presence by the blood of Christ and draw near with full assurance of faith. Thank you for your great love. In Jesus Name – Amen.”

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