

Christ in the Tabernacle

A Foreshadow of What Was to Come

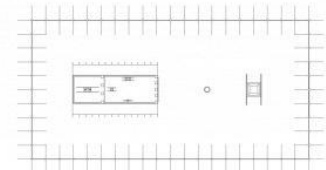
"...When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered into that holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." - Hebrews 9:11,12

Of all the pictures of Christ in the Old Testament, the Tabernacle of Moses may be the most vivid and clear. The life and ministry of Jesus are all over this particular place. Though God was providing Israel a way to approach Him and remove their sins temporarily, He was foreshadowing a permanent way that man would be freed from sin — by the death of His Son. Here are just a few of the symbolic elements of this wonderful picture of Christ.

THE TABERNACLE AND COURT

The tabernacle was a portable temple—a "tent of meeting"—within a movable courtyard (Exodus 25-31; 35-40). It was constructed after the pattern that Yahweh revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, and was assembled in the desert as Moses led the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. For an enlargement of the tent itself, see p. 186. The tabernacle courtyard was 150 feet (46 m) long and 75 feet (23 m) wide, totaling 11,250 square feet (1,045 square meters).

Tabernacle and Court Architectural Plan



The Most Holy Place of the tabernacle tent was a 15-foot (4.6 m) cube, containing only the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10-22; 37:1-9). It was here that Yahweh would descend to meet with his people in a cloud of theophany (divine appearance).

The Holy Place of the tabernacle tent was 30 feet (9.1 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high. It housed the table (Ex. 25:23-30), the golden lampstand (Ex. 25:31-40; 37:17-24), and the altar of incense (Ex. 30:1-5; 37:25-29).

The veil separating the Holy Place from the tabernacle courtyard was similar to the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, except that cherubim were not embroidered on it (Ex. 26:36-37). It hung on five golden pillars.

The bronze altar, also known as the altar of burnt offering (Ex. 27:1-8; 38:1-7), was made from a hollow wooden box (7.5 feet/2.3 m long and wide, and 4.5 feet/1.4 m high), overlaid with bronze. It had four horns at its corners. It was transported by means of two poles on its journey through the wilderness.

The framed structure was covered by four layers of cloth and skin (Ex. 26:1-14).

The entire tabernacle tent was 45 feet (14 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high. It was a wooden skeletal structure, overlaid with gold, with no solid roof or front wall (Ex. 26:15-29). Five wooden bars (overlaid with gold) passed through rings attached to each frame (Ex. 26:26-30).

The bronze basin with its stand was for ceremonial washings (Ex. 30:17-21; 38:8).

The 30-foot (9.1 m)-wide gated entrance to the courtyard was covered with a screen made from blue, purple, and scarlet dyed yarns that were woven with fine twined linen (Ex. 38:18-20).

The surrounding hangings (fine twined linen curtains connected to pillars and stabilized by guy ropes and pegs) stood about 7.5 feet (2.3 m) high. The 60 wooden pillars were overlaid with bronze, stood in copper sockets, and had capitals overlaid with silver (Ex. 27:9-19; 38:9-17).

The Courtyard and East Gate

While the courtyard curtain (or fence) was made of fine white linen (His holiness), the East Gate had three colors added to it (the trinity) — blue (for heaven), purple (for royalty), and red (for blood). The gate was the only entrance into God's presence, whereas Christ is the only way to God (*John 14:6*). The courtyard is representative of the Law Age, in which animal blood was shed to remove sin.

The Brass Altar of Sacrifice

The altar is a picture of the cross; there a spotless lamb was slain for the sins of all, and its blood was the key that allowed the High Priest to enter into God's presence in the Holy of Holies. Brass symbolized suffering and the horns on the altar foreshadowed a name that we would call Jesus — the "Horn of our Salvation" (*Psalms 18:2; Luke 1:69*).



The Brass Water Laver

The laver was fashioned from the women's mirrors, therefore reflective of the sinful priests making the sacrifices. However, priests washed in the water to cleanse themselves before entering into God's presence; we too are forgiven by the blood and washed by the "Water of the Word" (*Ephesians 5:25,26*). While the priests washed, they demonstrated externally what had been done internally. Once again, brass symbolized purging of sin (like the altar).

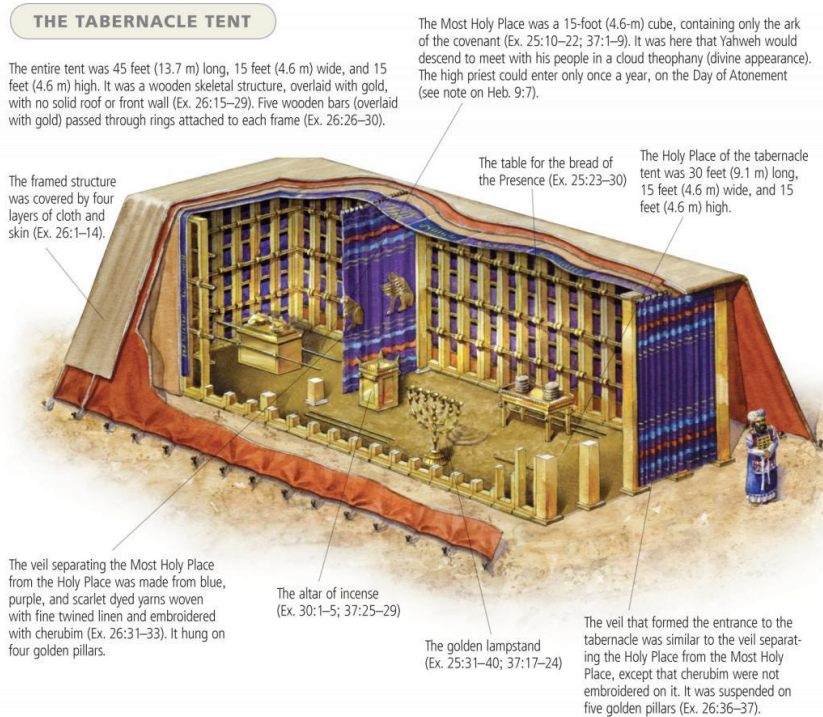


The Tent of Meeting

The Tent hung on a framework of boards, each the same height, set in sockets of silver (ransom money from Egypt). The boards represent believers who are all equal in Christ, who alone has ransomed us with His blood. The entrance to the Tent was barred by five pillars (books of the law) and an outer veil, which again had three colors (blue, purple, and red). The Tent was covered with four symbolic curtains, and the first room was called the Holy Place.

The Holy Place

This room is representative of the New Testament Church Age in which we live. No sacrifices were allowed in this room; in fact, priests had to be completely clean to enter. The articles in this room symbolized a believer's relationship to God; there is fellowship at the table (reconciliation), light from the lampstand (God's Word), and prayer at the altar of incense (communication with the Lord).



The Golden Lampstand

The first article that one saw in the Holy Place was the lampstand, for it gave light to the rest of the room. This lampstand was beautifully designed with 66 ornaments, symbolic of the 66 books of the Bible, which is a "lamp to our feet and a light to our path." The lamp was made of gold, a symbol of perfection (or as close to perfect as can be here on earth).



The Golden Table of Bread

The Table is a symbol of our communion and fellowship with God after our acceptance of Christ. Because of Him, we are reconciled to God, and through His power, we are able to endure by the "Bread of Life." Notice that the table held unleavened bread, another picture of Christ's holiness (as leaven represented sin). Gold is used again, a reflection of our status — able to meet with God again.



The Golden Altar of Incense

This altar demonstrated the importance of prayer. The Israelites believed that whatever was prayed at this altar was carried to the Lord through the smoke and smell of burning incense. The altar was the tallest of the articles and it was nearest to the Ark. Because of the blood of Christ, we are able to appeal to God through prayer.



The Holy of Holies

This room was the most sacred of the Tabernacle, for it was the earthly "throne room" of God, His dwelling place. It was barred by four pillars, symbolic of the Gospels, which, of course, tell us of the only way to God's presence — Christ. The Holy of Holies is also symbolic of heaven; it was a perfect cube in measurement and it is the place where God dwelt. No man, other than the High Priest, and once a year, could enter this room, without the blood of the lamb.

The Ark of the Covenant

The word "ark" literally meant "treasure chest," which was appropriate, because it held the Ten Commandments (Christ fulfilled the Law), a jar of manna (Christ is the Bread of Life), and the budding rod of Aaron (symbol of resurrection). The Ark was representative of God's presence to the Israelites, the "Shekinah Glory"; Christ was the Ark of the Covenant, the "Shekinah Glory" in the flesh. On the Ark was the name, "YHWH" (in Hebrew), meaning "I AM."



The Mercy Seat

The Ark was a box; the Mercy Seat was the lid. The Ark was also a picture of the judgment seat of God; before Him, all sinners are guilty and deserve to die. However, because of the blood of the Lamb, and the Great High Priest (Jesus), we are able to stand before God's judgment and receive His mercy. Because of Christ, we are holy and blameless and clean in the eyes of God.

The High Priest

The High Priest and his staff were never done with their work; they were always sacrificing animals, for their offerings were only temporary. However, Christ, our Great High Priest, died once for all and finished the sacrifices; then, He sat down at the right hand of God in heaven.

