

The Tabernacle of God in the Days of Moses

General Outline

1. Scriptures Covered in this Study (Exodus 25-31, 35-40)
2. The Tabernacle was a large, mobile, and sacred tent, built in 1445 BC (Exodus 12:40-41; 1 Kings 6:1), just after the time of the Exodus of Israel from Egyptian bondage.
3. It was the place of God's presence on earth (Exodus 25:8).
4. Its design was given to Moses by God (Exodus 24:18, 25:9).
5. Offerings were taken, and Bezalel and Aholiab were specially commissioned (Exodus 31:1-6).
6. The Tabernacle, as with all Old Testament things, pointed to Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17-18; John 5:39; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5).
7. The Tabernacle made with hands, where man meets God, The Son of God, God meets men (John 1:14). Physical to Spiritual Tabernacle (1 Corinthians 6:19).
8. Dimensions of the Tabernacle (Exodus 27:18), 150x75x7.5', if we use the standard cubit of 18 inches, slightly larger if we use the royal cubit of 21 inches. The Holy Place, 30x15x15', The Most Holy Place, 15x15x15'.
9. We enter the Tabernacle through the door (Exodus 26:36; John 10:9, one way to God).
10. We come first to the altar of burnt sacrifice (Exodus 27:1-2; Psalm 118:25-27; Mark 10:45; Hebrews 9:22). In OT days, we bring one. In NT days, God has provided One.
11. We come to the laver for cleansing (Exodus 30:18; John 13:8). We need spiritual cleansing.
12. Having approached God through the Door, acknowledged God's perfect sacrifice, and received spiritual cleansing from our sins from God, the NT believer "enters the Holy Place."
13. The Table of Showbread (Exodus 37:10-16) teaches us that God not only saves, but also sustains (Cf. John 6:48, e.g. of feeding of 5,000 and 4,000).
14. The Golden Lampstand speaks of spiritual light (Exodus 37:17-24; John 8:12).
15. The altar of incense is used to offer up the prayers of God's people (Exodus 30:1). Today, our High Priest Jesus fills this intercessory role (John 17:9).
16. The High Priest passes through the veil once a year at the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), for the covering of the sins of the people. This had to be repeated every year. Jesus Christ

- fulfilled this perfectly with His once for all atonement (Hebrews 9, 10:12; 1 John 2:2) which was symbolically proclaimed by the rent of the temple veil (Matthew 27:50-51; Hebrews 10:20).
17. The Old Testament Priesthood (Exodus 28-29) teaches us that we must approach God with representation. Under the OT Law, this was the human priesthood. In the NT economy, we have divine representation (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:25-28).
 18. The priestly garments are mentioned in Exodus 28:4. Unger's Bible Dictionary applies them as follows (paraphrased and further expounded by this author): the breastplate speaks of holiness and judgment (Urim and Thummim in Exodus 28:30), the ephod rests the burden of sin on the shoulders, the robe represents spiritual integrity, the tunic covers the nakedness (which is associated with the shame of sin Cf. Genesis 3:10), the turban delegated authority from God, and the sash for consecrated service to God
 19. In the days of Moses, the worshiper would bring the offering to the door of the tabernacle, it would be offered, the priests would ensure that the holy oil would keep the lamp burning and offer prayers (incense) on behalf of themselves and all the people (Exodus 30:22-38, 37:29). Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the blood would be sprinkled on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, which rested on the Ark of the Covenant.
 20. The Ark of the Covenant was 45x27x27", made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold, and was to be carried by poles (Exodus 25:10-22, 37:1-9). Touching it would result in death (2 Samuel 6:6-7). Three items were kept inside (Hebrews 9:4). At the mercy seat, the most intimate divine fellowship could be found, on the basis of the Law, with shadows of the grace to be perfected when Christ came (John 1:14)
 21. Now Christ has come. We approach God through Him, through His sacrifice, and find spiritual cleansing, which is the forgiveness of sins (Psalm 32:1-2). We bask in His light, enjoy His spiritual and earthly provisions, and pray knowing that our Advocate and High Priest will take up our cause (1 John 2:1). We boldly approach God's mercy seat through His Son and find wonderful fellowship there, in the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Credits and References:

Unger's Bible Dictionary

"A Popular Survey of the Old Testament", By Norman Geisler

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Questions that Arose from this Study

1. Were women also allowed to bring sacrifices to the Tabernacle? Or men only?
 - a. Women were also allowed to bring sacrifices to the Tabernacle, although in the vast majority of cases (in actual practice) her husband or father would bring them on her behalf and behalf of the family. Women were not allowed to be priests.
 - b. Some examples of women bringing sacrifices to the tabernacle are found in Leviticus 12:6 and 1 Samuel 1:24.
 - c. It is interesting to note that women served at the door of the tabernacle (Exodus 38:8).
2. When would the Tabernacle move? And when it moved, would it go before the camp?
 - a. The Tabernacle would move when the cloud representing the Shechinah Glory of God would move (Exodus 40:36; Numbers 9:17).
 - b. Judah, located at the east side of the camp, would go first. The Tabernacle would go in the middle of the camp, surrounded by the tribes of Israel (Numbers 2, 10:13-28, 10:21 mentions the Tabernacle).
3. Who was allowed to officiate the sacrifices? And to what extent did the worshiper participate?
 - a. There must always be a priest officiating. This teaches us that we must approach God with representation (in NT days, through Jesus, Cf. Hebrews 8:1; 1 Timothy 2:5).
 - b. The worshiper was to participate in varying degrees. See Leviticus 2:1-2 and 3:2 for examples of involvement in the grain and peace offerings.
 - c. Tabernacle ministry in general was done by Levites ages 25-50 (Numbers 8:23-26). The priesthood consisted of males between the ages of 30-50 (Numbers 4:3-4, 46-47). The priestly age is also in view in 1 Chronicles 23:2-3, although in those days it is recorded that Levites as young as 20 were active in supporting roles of the ministry, with a view to temple ministry as that which would supersede the movable Tabernacle (1 Chronicles 23:27-32; Deuteronomy 12:5-11).
4. Compare and contrast the earthly and heavenly tabernacles.
 - a. The earthly Tabernacle was built according to the pattern that God showed Moses on the mountain (Exodus 25:9). It was a "copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5). As we have studied, it was a "shadow" of Jesus Christ. As a "copy", it was an exact replica of a literal heavenly Tabernacle (Hebrews 8:2, 9:11; Revelation 11:19).