

FINDING

GENESIS
EXODUS
LEVITICUS
NUMBERS
DEUTERONOMY
JOSHUA
JUDGES
RUTH
1 SAMUEL
2 SAMUEL
1 KINGS
2 KINGS
1 CHRONICLES
2 CHRONICLES
EZRA
NEHEMIAH
ESTHER
JOB
PSALMS
PROVERBS
ECCLESIASTES
SONG OF SOLOMON
JEREMIAH
LAMENTATIONS
ISAIAH
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ZEPHANIAH
HAGGAI
MALACHI
ZECHARIAH
EZEKIEL
DANIEL
JOEL
AMOS
OBADIAH
NAHUM
MATTHEW
MARK
LUKE
JOHN
ACTS
ROMANS
1 THESSALONIANS
2 THESSALONIANS
1 CORINTHIANS
2 CORINTHIANS
GALATIANS
EPHESIANS
PHILIPPIANS
COLOSSIANS
1 TIMOTHY
2 TIMOTHY
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HEBREWS
JAMES
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2 JOHN
3 JOHN
JUDE
REVELATION

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Tabernacle

Introduction

Last week we looked at how Mount Sinai reflected the Mount of Transfiguration. It was on the Mount Sinai that the Law was given. It was at this same time, that God instructed Moses to build the “Tabernacle”.

The passage of Exodus 25:1-31:17 points out two important keys to understanding the symbolism of the tabernacle.

God's Presence With His People

Exodus 25:1-31:17 points out two important keys to understanding the symbolism of the tabernacle:

First, the tabernacle is seen as **a tented palace for Israel's divine king**. He is enthroned on the ark of the covenant in the innermost Holy of Holies (the Most Holy Place). His royalty is symbolized by the purple of the curtains and his divinity by the blue. The closer items are to the Holy of Holies, the more valuable are the metals (bronze → silver → gold) of which they are made.

The tabernacle represented Yahweh's house among the Israelites. He would soon encamp in his large house in their midst, and they would encamp around his house according to their tribe.

God's Presence With His People

God himself was symbolically represented as dwelling in the “back room” of his house by means of the ark.

In the tabernacle's “front room” were several pieces of furniture, the sorts of things that represented the furniture of a home, though on a grander scale. The first of these pieces of household-style furniture to be described is the table. It was primarily for food—a dining table of sorts, symbolizing the fact that Yahweh really did live among his people and inhabit his house in much the same way that they inhabited theirs.

Reflection of Creation

The other symbolic dimension is Eden.

In creation, God created 3 spaces and then proceeded to fill them.

Day One – Space

Day 4 – Sun, Moon, and Stars

Day 2 – Air and Sea

Day 5 – Birds and Fish

Day 3 – Dry Land and Plants

Day 6 – Animals and Man

The tabernacle, like the garden of Eden, is where God dwells, and various details of the tabernacle suggest it is a mini-Eden. These parallels include:

- the east-facing entrance guarded by cherubim,
 - the tree of life (lampstand),
 - and the tree of knowledge (the law).

God's dwelling in the tabernacle was a step toward the restoration of paradise, which is to be completed in the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21-22).

Reflection of Creation

The narrative describing the construction of the tabernacle is in seven segments (Exodus 25:1; 30:11, 17, 34; 31:1,12). The sixth segment—Exodus 31:1 describes the Spirit of God filling men to create and craft the objects for the tabernacle. And the seventh segment, Exodus 31:12, reminds the nation of keeping the sabbath. These two segments both correspond nicely with the sixth and seventh days of Creation in Genesis 1.

The tabernacle used gold and onyx stones as decorating material for the tent, the objects inside, and even the priest's outfits. These materials were known to come from the pre-flood region of Havilah, likely where Eden was located (Genesis 2:12)

The Design of the Temple

Exodus 25:1-9

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² “Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. ³ And this *is* the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; ⁴ blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, fine linen, and goats’ *hair*; ⁵ ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; ⁶ oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; ⁷ onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate. ⁸ And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. ⁹ 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 Design of the Temple

Who came up with the idea of having a tabernacle? Well, it is obviously God who decided that there should be a tabernacle and its construction had to be exact to the pattern that God would give to Moses. In many different passages God restated that the construction had to be precisely as He would declare. There was no room for coming up with their own personalized touches on this one! If God said an item was 100 cubits long, then 100 cubits it was! So the next question is why? Why did God want a tabernacle constructed and why did it have to be so exact to His specifications? And what was God teaching Israel then and what is He trying to teach you and I now?.

What the Tabernacle Teaches

There are some key 'truths' contained within the tabernacle. These truths are interwoven into its size, its materials and the objects it contains. It is a divine mystery with clues scattered liberally throughout its construction. As we go through this study I will point these out (well, those that I have seen anyway!), but for now, you'll have to be content with a quick summary. Some of the fundamental core teaching of the tabernacle involves ...

The Tabernacle Ultimately Points to Jesus

First and foremost the tabernacle is a picture and type of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the true fulfilment of this structure. We will be looking at these things in more detail.

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacle] among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Hebrews 9:11-12

But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² 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.

The Presence and Holiness of God

Exodus 25:8

And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

God said that the tabernacle was constructed so that 'I may dwell among them'. God wanted to be in the midst of His people, but His people were sinful and at times that is being kind!. How could He dwell with them? The tabernacle taught God's desire for fellowship along with His pure holiness. He also is showing us the way into His presence.

The Plan of Salvation

The earthly tabernacle pictures salvation. This is true of what it cost Jesus to provide the means of salvation and also of the steps necessary for those who want to be saved. Concerning the former, Jesus had to fulfil His role as the High Priest of the New Covenant, entering into the Heavenly tabernacle as the book of Hebrews teaches: **Hebrews 9:11-12, 24** “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² 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. ... ²⁴For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

The Dispensations and Ages of the Plan of God

The tabernacle teaches about God's plan concerning the different ages or dispensations in His dealings with man. Each of the three distinct areas (the outer court, the Holy place, the Holy of Holies) represents a different dispensation and the objects found within each area are true to that age.

The Outer Court

The Outer Court contained the brazen altar and the laver. The focus was on sacrifice, judgment and cleansing and represents the age of the Law. The area of the fence surrounding the outer court was 1500 cubits squared just as the period of time that the Mosaic law was in force for was approx. 1500 years! Everything in the outer court was constructed in bronze symbolizing judgement. This is what the law did! It pronounced you guilty and that judgement and a blood sacrifice was required. But it also pointed, as the law does, to Jesus as the Way of salvation and the need for 'justification'.

The Dispensations and Ages of the Plan of God

The Holy Place

The second area of the Holy place was different for it represents the church age. Its area confirms this as it was a room of 20 X 10 X 10 cubits (representing the 2000 years of the church age). Only the Priests could come within this area and not without cleansing at the laver. But this area contained no items made of bronze (judgement) like the outer court did. It contained the Showbread (Christ the bread of Life), the Lampstand (Christ the light of the world) and the Altar of Incense (Christ our intercessor). It was made from gold, silver and wood representing the deity, redemption and the humanity of Christ. It pictures Jesus as the 'truth' and in terms of salvation it represents our need of sanctification as we walk in this life with Christ as our life and bread.

The Dispensations and Ages of the Plan of God

Holy of Holies

This contained the Ark of the Covenant. Only the High Priest could enter here and only on one day of the year! Only on the Day of Atonement could the High Priest enter the Holy of Holies and be in the very presence of God Himself. This area represents the coming Kingdom age where God shall dwell among His people once again in visible form. In terms of the aspect of a believer's salvation it represents our 'glorification' – when we are with Christ and are like Christ! As a picture of Jesus, it shows Him not just as the way or even the truth, but as 'the life'. This special area of the tabernacle contained the very real presence and power of God and if we are to know Jesus today as 'the life' (and not just 'the way') then we too, as priests of the new covenant, need to come into His very presence in the new way opened to us.

The Dispensations and Ages of the Plan of God

We will look at these areas and the objects in greater detail in coming sermons, but for now I want to draw your attention to what these areas represent.

The three areas and meanings of the tabernacle are as follows:

Area	Dispensation or Age	Area / Volume	Jesus As	Aspect of Salvation
The Outer Court	Mosaic Law	1500 cubits (years)	Way	Justification
The Holy Place	Grace (Church Age)	2000 cubits (years)	Truth	Sanctification
The Holy of Holies	Messianic Kingdom	1000 cubits (years)	Life	Glorification

Clues in the Colors and Materials

Having seen the core truths that the tabernacle teaches, let's have a look at the materials that God specifically said had to be used in its construction.

From our passage in Exodus 25:3-7 above we read:

"And this *is* the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; ⁴ blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, fine linen, and goats' *hair*; ⁵ ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; ⁶ oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; ⁷ onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate."

Everything, whether it was the curtains, the gate, the altar, the lampstand or the Ark of the Covenant itself were constructed from the materials mentioned above. Therefore, it is worth examining the meaning of these for we shall see them again.

Clues in the Colors and Materials

Item	Symbolic Meaning	References
Gold	Deity	1 or. 3:12, Rev. 21:18-21
Silver	Redemption	Ex. 36:24, 30:15
Brass / Bronze	Judgment	Ex. 27:2, Num. 21:9 Rev. 1:15
Blue	Heavens / Heavenly nature	Ex 25:4, 26:31, 28:31
Purple	Kingly / Royalty	John 19:2, Rev. 17:4
Scarlet	Blood Sacrifice	Lev. 14:4, Josh 2:18, Isa.1:18
Fine Linen	Righteousness	Lev. 6:10, Rev. 19:8
Goats / Rams Hair	Atonement	Gen. 15:9, Ex 12:5
Acacia Wood	Jesus Humanity	Ex. 26:15, Isa 53:2
Oil	Holy Spirt	Lev. 14:16, Psa. 47:7

So What ...

God has hidden so much about His Son in the Old Testament. The focus is more than just on these hidden treasures. It should bring us to the point that we renew our worship of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:6

who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The Law is the declaration of God's Holy Standard. In our fallen state, none of us measure up. We should be grateful that Jesus, as our "Tree of Life" offers us forgiveness and restoration.

Have you accepted Jesus' gift of forgiveness?