

# KNOWING JESUS THROUGH THE STUDY OF THE TABERNACLE

(Part 1 – Introduction, purpose of study, overview of structure)

## Introduction:

Mentioned at least 320 times in the Bible. While creation has only two chapters devoted, there are 50 chapters devoted to the Tabernacle in the Bible.

- Exodus has 13 chapters devoted to the Tabernacle.
- All throughout OT, mostly Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Chronicles
- In NT, mostly in Acts, Revelation & Hebrews. Hebrews has 4 chapters devoted to the Tabernacle.

## First & last mention of the Tabernacle:

**First: *Exodus 25:9 – Have the people of Israel build me a holy sanctuary so I can live (tabernacle) among them. You must build this Tabernacle and its furnishings exactly according to the pattern I will show you. Exodus 25:8-9 KJV***

**Last: *Revelation 15:5 – And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. Revelation 21:3 KJV***

## What is a tabernacle?

The Tabernacle (which in Hebrew is: מִשְׁכָּן, mishkan. It means residence, abode, dwelling place, sanctuary, place where you live, tent). The word “tabernacle” is English and comes from the Latin word tabernāculum—a ritual tent or hut. Greek, including the Septuagint, it is translated σκηνή (skēnē) a tent or light building of wood and was a temporary structure.

**John wrote, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt (literally, tabernacled) among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).** (took up residence, reside, to fix one’s tabernacle/tent)

This word is used to refer to 5 different things in the Bible.

1. tabernacle, a house or dwelling-place (Job 5:24; 18:6, etc.). ***You will know that your tent is secure, For you will visit your abode and fear no loss. (nomad's tent)***
2. tabernacle, a portable shrine (compare Acts 19:24) containing the image of Moloch (Amos 5:26; margins. and Revised King James Version, "Siccuth")
3. tabernacle, the human body (2 Corinthians 5:1, 4); a tent, as opposed to a permanent dwelling. ***For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.***

Difference between tabernacle (temporary; weak; A tent is quickly up and quickly down) & house; (made with solid structure- wood, stone )

4. tabernacle or tent, translated from the Hebrew word 'ohel) in the King James Version of Exodus 33:7. (This tent at Sinai simply denotes a tent, probably Moses' own tent, for the tabernacle of meeting with God was not yet erected.) ***Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tabernacle of meeting which was outside the camp. So it was, whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, that all the people rose, and each man stood at his tent door and watched Moses until he had gone into the tabernacle. And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man in his tent door. So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle. —Exodus 33:7-11 NASB***

##### 5. The Holy Tabernacle:

This was the sacred tent (**Hebrew: mishkan** מִשְׁכָּן, "the dwelling-place"); the movable tent-temple sanctuary which Moses erected for the service of God in the wilderness, according to the "pattern" which God himself showed to him on the mount (Exodus 25:9; Hebrews 8:5).

**The architect was God Himself, Moses was just shown the pattern (Exo 25:8-9)**

### **Words used interchangeably –**

Tent (Exodus 39:33,38)

Sanctuary (Exodus 25:8)

Tabernacle (Leviticus 1:1)

Tabernacle of congregation/ meeting (Exodus 27:21, Deuteronomy 31:14)

Tabernacle of the Lord (1 Kings 2:28)

Tabernacle of testimony (Exodus 38:21)

Tabernacle of witness (Numbers 17:7-8)

A little background: Scanning through the Old Testament history, we see the Israelites left Egypt, but they didn't settle right away. They wandered the desert for 40 years before they entered the Promised Land.

God spoke to Moses in **Exodus 25:8,9** *“And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. 9 Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.” (first mention of tabernacle).*

It was the first temple dedicated to God and it served as a place of worship and sacrifices during the Israel's 40 years in the desert while conquering the Promised Land .

The Tabernacle was God's first dwelling-place on earth. This is significant as the people never had a formal established physical tent/ sanctuary prior to this.

He walked in the company of Adam in Eden. He visited Abraham at Mamre but He had no dwelling-place there.

At the completion of the Tabernacle, He came down to dwell with His redeemed people, and from then on He will have a dwelling-place on earth.

After the Tabernacle, God dwelt in the Temple in the land (2 Chron 6:3-6).

Then the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (John 1:14), when the Son of God came to earth to dwell among men. In this dispensation, each scripturally gathered assembly is the dwelling-place of God, (Matthew 18:20; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Timothy 3:15).

In a day yet to come “the Tabernacle of God” will be with men and “He will dwell with them and they shall be His people” (Revelation 21:3).

**God is expressing that He wants to dwell among the people. How can a holy God dwell in the midst of a sinful people? How can God be among this people without destroying them?** Just like a flame will consume paper, so God's Holy character consumes anything that is not holy.

The whole tabernacle was completed in 7 months. On the 1st day of the 1st month of the 2nd year after the Exodus, it was formally set up, and the cloud of the divine presence descended on it (Exodus 39:22-43; 40:1-38).

When the Israelites camped in the desert, the tabernacle was situated in the very center of camp, with the 12 tribes encamped around it.

**Transport:** During its use, the tabernacle was moved many times. Everything could be packed into ox carts when the people left, but the ark of the covenant was hand-carried by Levites. Once the Tabernacle was dismantled, it all had to be packed up and transported partly on men's backs and partly in covered wagons, each drawn by a pair of oxen (Num. 7, 1-9). Presumably two dozens of men were able to assemble and complete the entire Tabernacle in a morning.

Each task were attributed to the Levite families. These operations were performed by men of the Levite families of Gershon, Keat and Merari. Each person from that family were in charge of carrying utensils, curtains, furniture, covering, hangings. These were weighty ones – wood 1500 kgs , metals -700 kgs.

**Construction:** A particular account of the materials which the people provided for the erection of the building itself is recorded in Exodus 25-40. The execution of the plan mysteriously given to Moses was intrusted to Bezaleel and Aholiab, who were specially endowed with wisdom and artistic skill, probably gained in Egypt, for this purpose (Exodus 35:30-35).

The people provided materials for the tabernacle so abundantly that Moses was under the necessity of restraining them (36:6). These stores, from which they so liberally contributed for this purpose, must have consisted in a great part of the gifts which the Egyptians so readily bestowed on them on the eve of the Exodus (12:35, 36).

Regarding offerings for the tabernacle – Accept the contributions from all whose hearts are moved to offer them / willing heart. Let those with generous hearts present the gifts for the tabernacle / dwelling place. God will not force anybody for His dwelling place. Willing heart- *Behold I stand at the door and knock (no barging in) – He who hears my voice and opens the door I will fellowship with him.*

The tabernacle's journey began at Sinai, then it stood for 35 years at Kadesh. After Joshua and the Hebrews crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, the tabernacle stood at Gilgal for seven years. Its next home was Shiloh, where it remained until the time of the Judges. It

was later set up in Nob and Gibeon. King David erected the tabernacle at Jerusalem and had the ark brought from Perez-uzzah and set in it.

### **Why do we need to study about the tabernacle, a structure made 3500 years before?**

1. Everything we see in the tabernacle was a shadow and picture of the real one in heaven.

*They serve (the priests served) in a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven. For when Moses was getting ready to build the Tabernacle, God gave him this warning: "Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain." Hebrews 8:5*

Is there a tabernacle in heaven? Yes, not a spiritual concept but literally present.

Every colour used in the tabernacle- gate, curtain, priestly garments, every metal piece used, the number of hooks used, even the location (entrance from east to west), the services done has a tremendous significance. That is why God was very specific in every detail when He was giving His blueprint for the tabernacle. Moses make sure you don't mess with my ETERNAL PATTERN IN HEAVEN. God even anointed two lead craftsmen to build the tabernacle. He filled them with Spirit of God in wisdom, understanding, knowledge and in all kinds of craftsmanship skills to make artistic designs.

**Hebrews 9:23 That is why the Tabernacle and everything in it, which were copies of things in heaven, had to be purified by the blood of animals. But the real things in heaven had to be purified with far better sacrifices than the blood of animals.**

**24 For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf. 25 And he did not enter heaven to offer himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal. 26 If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice.**

Some of the items of tabernacle in heaven :

Rev 1: 12 Seven golden candlesticks

Rev 6:9 altar

2:17- hidden manna

11:19 Ark of covenant

**2. Because a knowledge of the Tabernacle is foundational to an understanding of Christ's fulfillment of God's redemptive program (understand the work of Christ on the cross.) Everything in the tabernacle is fulfilled in Jesus.** Jesus is the great fulfillment of these Old Testament symbols. On the Cross, Jesus completed the work as the great Mediator between God and man.

Tabernacle furniture was a constant reminder of man's sinfulness and need for a Savior. Today, the tabernacle furniture is a great reminder of what Jesus has already fulfilled.

- Christ became the perfect sacrifice: ***So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. 12 With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. Hebrews 9:11-12***
- Gate – Jesus said I'm the way, the truth and the life . (only one gate to enter in )– no other mediator , no other name under heaven for salvation
- Lampstand – Jesus said "I'm the light of the world " .
- Table of shewbread – Jesus said "I'm the bread of life".  
(These are just few of the examples)

**3. Because an understanding of the Tabernacle enables us to have a greater appreciation of our privileges in Christ:**

- The whole concept of Tabernacle is God desiring to dwell among His people. This Holy God doesn't want to be someone who is far away in a remote place but once to have fellowship with us. God whose unfiltered holiness is unbearable to endure wants to live, dwell, abide among His people. God who is Holy and omnipresent, wanted to dwell among His people, be with them, be in their midst.

Why did they need a specific place for God to dwell? Tabernacle means "to dwell." Because God did not dwell in the hearts of humans until after Christ's death and resurrection, he would dwell in a certain place during the time of the Old Testament. God cannot be contained in buildings , we cannot limit Him . ***'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you build me a temple as good as that?' asks the Lord.(Acts 7:49)***

But where does He dwell now? **We are His dwelling place, His temple, Tabernacle.**

**1 Cor 6:19-20 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.**

Don't take it lightly. We are CARRIERS OF GOD'S PRESENCE. REPRESENTATIVES.

- **No more separation (no veil) – direct access to our heavenly King.**
- **We are redeemed. The need for atonement was symbolized daily in the tabernacle**  
*Only the high priest could enter the “holy of holies” once a year, during the Day of Atonement. It was sectioned off by a special curtain, symbolizing that people can't come into God's presence because their sinfulness conflicts with God's holiness. In the outer courtyard stood an altar of burnt offering. if a person had sinned, he should bring an animal to the priests and this animal should be killed and burned on the altar. The only way to avoid the Lord's judgment, is if somebody else dies in their place.*

**4. Because a study of the priesthood is foundational to an understanding of Christ's priestly ministry.**

**5. A good grasp of the Tabernacle is necessary for understanding more than half of the Book of Hebrews as well as other portions of the New Testament.**

**6. An understanding of worship – outer court - Holy place – Holy of Holies**

It points to a deeper fellowship with the Lord as we enter in. We'll see the work of the Holy Spirit (lampstand, oil); importance of God's word (shewbread), prayer & intercession in our approach to God (altar of incense).

Holy of Holies -Here contains the ark which represents the full manifestation of the presence and glory of the Lord. This is the throne room of heaven. The Holy of holies is a confined space; there is only room for God and us. As we draw near to Him and come “within the veil” we hear His voice and His heartbeat. This is the place where He divulges the secrets of His heart. It is also where we see His face and behold His glory. In the throne room there is also a different sound. The sound is pure with no contaminates at all. There is no residue left from when we lived outside the perimeter of the tabernacle. Transformation happens here, self is lost, complete surrender takes place.

**Often times we are in the outer court just feeling the good music. We don't enter further. Let us draw near. True worship now brings the worshiper into the very presence of God.**

**7. An understanding of how we are created in the image of God – Body, soul & spirit.**

**A general overview of the structure of the Tabernacle.** We will have a detailed study in the lessons to come.

- An external courtyard –
  - Brazen Altar
  - Brazen Laver
- Holy place –
  - Table of Showbread
  - Golden lampstand
  - Golden altar of Incense
- Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) –
  - Ark of the covenant covered by Mercy seat

### The Structure and Dimensions of the Tabernacle





