

- *Instructions*

The four parts of the tabernacle

- *The outer courtyard*

- *The framework*

- *The covering*

- *The symbolic furniture*

- *The tabernacle – not a place of worship for the people*

- *Its structure teaches how to approach God*

While Moses is in the thick cloud of the presence of God, he is given instructions concerning 'the tabernacle'. Everything in Exodus 25:1–31:18 takes place on this occasion.

The tabernacle was a tent, a temporary and transportable place for the priests of Israel to conduct daily symbolic worship. It consisted of four parts.

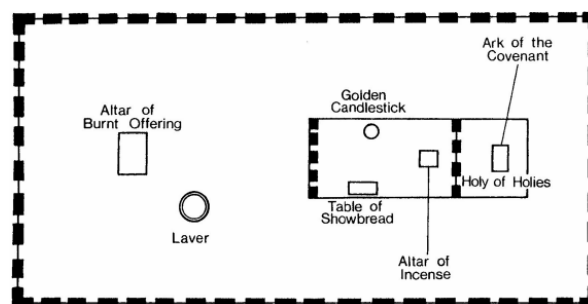
1. **There was the outer courtyard**, with two places where there was symbolic furniture.

2. **There was the framework of the tabernacle**. The north, south and west walls of the tabernacle has a framework of upright poles and cross-beams.

3. **Another part consisted of the covering**. Over the framework were placed linen curtains, and two weather-proof coverings made from different animal-skin materials.

4. **Then there was the symbolic furniture**. Inside the structure were two rooms, divided by a veil with major items of symbolic furniture at four points (one point in the holy of holies; three points in the holy place).

The tabernacle was not a place of worship for the people generally. No one went inside it except the priests. No one ever went inside the holy of holies except the high-priest. It was the place where God was specially and visibly present in Israel (although it was not possible for anyone to see His radiating glory). At the same time the structure of the tent taught Israel some major lessons concerning how to approach God. It gave a symbolic preview of salvation, although the Christian appreciates this more than the Israelites could have done. It teaches us a style of thinking which will help us appreciate what God did in the death of His Son upon the cross.



- *Fellowship with God*

Moses was at the bottom of the mountain when he received the law, but he was at the top of the mountain when he received instructions concerning the tabernacle. The system of tabernacle-worship is altogether greater than the legislation in the 'Book of the Covenant'. God did not say 'When you have brought the people out you will receive my law on this mountain.' Instead He said 'When you have brought the people out you will worship God on this mountain'^{Ex 25:1}. Fellowship with God will come by the daily presentation of the blood of sacrifice, within the courts of the tabernacle.

Ex 3:12

- *The law – a pointer to Jesus gets fulfilled in another way*

The law, including the tabernacle-regulations, was a system of national conduct and ritual, for Israel. It has now been abolished, although some parts of it overlap with 'life in the Holy Spirit'. However the Christian does not throw away the Mosaic law. He is not under the law; he is under Christ. But when he reads the law he sees it as a signpost pointing to Jesus. Is the law abolished? Yes, but it is not abolished because it is thrown away as worthless. It is abolished because it gets fulfilled in another way. Does the Christian despise the law? Not at all. He fulfils it by the Holy Spirit. He fulfils its call for righteousness. He has his own way of entering into the tabernacle and even pressing on to enter into the holy of holies. For him, as for the people of God before Pentecost, worship will be the way in which he gives recognition to his King.

The tabernacle symbolised God's way of salvation

1. It was the earthly dwelling-place of God

• The manifest presence of God

• God's presence

2. It was to be a shadow of the gospel

3. It was to be a model of heaven and earth

The tabernacle had two compartments in it, and a few items of furniture. It was a dwelling-place for God in Israel, and it symbolised God's way of salvation for His people.

1. **The tabernacle was the earthly dwelling-place of God.** God makes this point right at the beginning^{□1} and after the structure is built the divine glory comes down and fills the tabernacle^{□2}. Although God is everywhere and there is no place when God is not present, yet it is also true that there are places where God is specially present. One of them was the tabernacle.

God is present in heaven. He dwells in the high and lofty place^{□1}. This does not mean that heaven contains God, but it means that it is the centre of His government, the place from which He rules, the realm in which there is perfect obedience and angels do His will unfaithfully. 'Yahweh has established his throne in the heavens'^{□2}. The tabernacle was an earthly copy of God's heavenly throne-room. It was an extension of heaven here on earth. So God would be present in the tabernacle, and (at one stage of its history) in the temple. Solomon knew that the temple could not be a true dwelling place of God^{□3}, but he also knew that God specially revealed Himself there. When we think of God being specially 'present' in these places and in these situations, it is the 'manifest' presence of God that we are thinking about. Of course God is present everywhere all the time, but there are times and place where He specially reveals Himself.

Jesus went specially into the presence of God when He passed through the heavens^{□1}. He appears now in the presence of God for us. The holy of holies in the tabernacle was among other things a representation of heaven.

2. **The tabernacle was to be a shadow of the gospel.** Hebrews 10:1 says the law was 'a shadow of the good things to come'. The entry of the high-priest into the holy place once a year was a picture and an anticipation of Jesus' passing through the heavens to present His blood to the Father.

3. **The tabernacle was to be a model of heaven and earth.** Heaven is a sanctuary; it is a true tabernacle^{□1}. The earthly tabernacle was a 'copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary'^{□2}. The earthly sanctuary, says Hebrews 9:24, is 'a copy of the true one'. The various aspects of the tabernacle are 'copies of the heavenly things'^{□3}.

The open courtyard of the tabernacle represents this world. The tent represents heaven, the place where God manifests His glory.

□1 25:8

□2 40:34

□1 Isaiah 57:15

□2 Psalm 103:19

□3 1 Kings 8:27

□1 Hebrews 9:24

□1 see Hebrews 8:1-2

□2 Hebrews 8:5

□3 Hebrews 9:25



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