

A STRATEGIC GRASP OF THE BIBLE-9 THE TABERNACLE LESSONS FROM CAMPING WITH GOD IN EXODUS

The Tabernacle is God's photo journal documenting salvation. It is not an after thought, it is His premeditated explanation of what Jesus would do perfectly on the Cross. The Tabernacle is the clearest portrait of Christ and His redemption to be found in any part of the Old Testament. While God only uses one verse to record Creation (Genesis 1:1), and two chapters (Genesis 1-2) to explain it, He takes 15 chapters (Exodus 25-40) to explain the construction of the Tabernacle and 27 more to describe it in action (Leviticus). This task was so important that God did not depend on the ingenuity of craftsmen to follow a blueprint, He actually came into them through His Spirit (Exodus 31:1-6) and guided each step of their work.

Before God sent a Person named Jesus Christ, He sent a picture called the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle is a photo album of the most detailed explanation of salvation in the Old Testament. The Tabernacle is the ABCs of Christian Doctrine, it is a systematic Theology that Paul actually uses in Romans to explain salvation. In the Old Testament the Tabernacle is the dwelling place of God. In the New Testament the Church becomes the dwelling place of God.

The key to the Tabernacle, then, is Christ. In the volume of the Book it is written of Him. As a whole and in each of its parts the Tabernacle foreshadowed the person and work of the Lord Jesus. Each detail in it typified some aspect of His ministry or some excellency in His person. Proof of this is furnished in John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us" (R. V. margin). The reference here is to the Divine incarnation and first advent of God's Son to this earth, and its language takes us back to the book of Exodus. Many and varied are the correspondences between the type and the anti-type. We take leave to quote from our comments on John 1:14.

1. **The order in which the Tabernacle and its contents are described is most significant.** The first thing mentioned is the ark (25:10) and last comes the brazen altar (27:1). Thus it will be seen that the order is from the interior to the exterior. It is the order of sovereign grace, God coming from His throne right to the outer door where the sinner was! How this reminds us of the Incarnation; the sinner in his sins could not go from earth to heaven, so God in the person of His Son came from heaven to earth, and died the Just for the unjust "that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18). From the Brazen Altar to the Ark and Mercy Seat is

the pathway of faith. From the Mercy Seat to the Altar of Brass is the pathway of grace.

2. **The second description of the Tabernacle, where we have the record of its manufacture and set up, there is a notable variation.** Instead of beginning with the contents of the holy of holies where Jehovah dwelt, we have described the Tabernacle and curtains of the outer court, which the common people saw. **Here the order is from without to within**—the experimental order, the order in which Divine truth is apprehended by the soul. This same twofold order may be seen in the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians. In Romans it is the sinner going in to God; in Ephesians, God coming out to the sinner. Such is the double teaching in the twofold order of the description of the Tabernacle.
3. **The placement of each piece of the Tabernacle points to Christ.** Marvelous is the progressive order of teaching in connection with the various objects in the Tabernacle.
 - o At the brazen altar sin was judged, and by blood-shedding put away.
 - o At the laver purification was effected.
 - o In the holy place provision was made for prayer, food and illumination. In the holy of holies the glory of the enthroned King was displayed.
 - o The same principle of progress is also to be seen in the increasing value of the sacred vessels. Those in the outer court were of wood and brass; whereas those in the inner compartments were of wood and gold. So too the various curtains grew richer in design and embellishment, the inner veil being the costliest and most elaborate.
 - o Again, the outer court, being open, was illumined by natural light; the holy place was lit up by the light from the golden candlestick; but the holy of holies was radiated by the Shekinah glory of Jehovah.
 - o Thus the journey from the outer court into the holy of holies was from sin to purification, and from grace to glory. How blessedly did this illustrate the truth that "the path of the Just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

The Tabernacle was dictated by God Himself. No less than seven times are we informed that Moses was commanded to make the Sanctuary after the pattern of it which was shown him in the Mount—see Exodus 25:9; 25:40; 26:30; 27:8; Numbers 8:4; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5. Nothing was left to man's wisdom, still less to "chance"; everything was to be in exact accordance with the Divine model. Does not this teach us that everything concerning Christ and His people has been wrought out according to the eternal purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will! May Divine grace enable us to rest there in perfect peace and Joyous worship.

The Tabernacle was made to be temporary. Like when our blessed Lord tabernacled here among men. His stay was but a brief one—less than forty years; and, like the type. He abode not long in any one place, but was constantly on the move, unwearied in the activity of His love.

The Tabernacle was for use in the wilderness. The wilderness strikingly foreshadowed the conditions amid which the eternal Word tabernacled among men at

His first advent. The wilderness-home of the Tabernacle unmistakably foreshadowed the manger-cradle, the Nazareth-carpenter's bench, the "nowhere for the Son of man to lay His head," the borrowed tomb for His sepulcher. A careful study of the chronology of the Pentateuch seems to indicate that Israel used the Tabernacle in the wilderness rather less than thirty-five years!

The Tabernacle was unattractive outwardly. Altogether unlike the costly and magnificent temple of Solomon there was nothing in the externals of the Tabernacle to please the carnal eye. Nothing but plain boards and skins. So it was at the Incarnation. The Divine majesty of our Lord was hidden beneath a veil of flesh. He came, unattended by any imposing retinues of angels. To the unbelieving gaze of Israel He had no form or comeliness; and when they beheld Him their unanointed eyes saw in Him no beauty that they should desire Him.

The Tabernacle was God's dwelling place. It was there, in the midst of Israel's camp, that He took up His abode. There, between the Cherubim. upon the mercy-seat He made His throne. In the holy of holies He manifested His presence by means of the Shekinah glory. And during the thirty-three years that the Word tabernacled among men. God had His dwelling-place in Palestine.

The Tabernacle was the place where God met with man. It was termed "the Tent of Meeting." If an Israelite desired to draw near unto Jehovah he had to come to the door of the Tabernacle. When giving instruction to Moses concerning the making of the Tabernacle and its furnishings, God said, "And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee" (Ex. 25:21-22). How perfect is this lovely type! Christ is the meeting-place between God and man. No man cometh unto the Father but by Him (John 14:6). There is but one Mediator between God and men—the Man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). He is the One who spans the gulf between Deity and humanity, because Himself both God and Man.

1. **The Tabernacle was the center of Israel's camp.** The Tabernacle was the great gathering-center. As such it was a beautiful foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus. He is our great gathering-center, and His precious promise is that "where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).
2. **The Tabernacle was the place where the Law was preserved.** The first two tables of stone, on which Jehovah had inscribed the ten commandments were broken (Ex. 32:19); but the second set were deposited in the ark in the tabernacle for safe keeping (Deut. 10:2-5). It was only there, within the holy of holies, that the tablets of the Law were preserved intact. How this, again, speaks to us of Christ! He it was that said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me; I delight to do Thy will, O My God: Yea, Thy Law is within My heart" (Ps. 40:8). Throughout His perfect life He preserved in thought, word, and deed the Divine Decalogue, honoring and magnifying God's Law.
3. **The Tabernacle was the place where sacrifice was made.** In its outer court stood the brazen altar, to which the animals were brought, and on which they were slain. There it was the blood was shed and atonement was made for sin. So it was

with the Lord Jesus. He fulfilled in His own person the typical significance of the brazen altar, as of every piece of the tabernacle furniture. The body in which He tabernacled on earth was nailed to the cruel Tree. The Cross was the altar upon which God's Lamb was slain, where His precious blood was shed, and where complete atonement was made for sin.

4. **The Tabernacle was the place where the priestly family was fed.** "And the remainder thereof shall Aaron and his sons eat: with unleavened bread shall it be eaten in the holy place; in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation they shall eat it . . . The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it: in the holy place shall it be eaten" (Lev. 6:16-26). How deeply significant are these scriptures in their typical import! And how they should speak to us of Christ as the Food of God's priestly family today, i.e., all believers (1 Pet. 2:5). He is the Bread of life. He is the One upon whom our souls delight to feed.
5. **The Tabernacle was the place of worship.** To it the pious Israelite brought his offerings. To it he turned when he desired to worship Jehovah. From its door the voice of the Lord was heard. Within its courts the priests ministered in their sacred service. And so it wins with the anti-type. It is by Him we are to offer unto God a sacrifice of praise. (Heb. 13:15). It is in Him, and by Him, alone, that we can worship the Father. It is through Him we have access to the throne of grace. **All the pieces of furniture also picture Christ. Everything in the outer courtyard was connected with salvation and the cleansing of sins.** Jesus accomplished His sacrificial work on earth, outside God's heavenly presence. The outer court was accessible to all the people, just as Christ is accessible to all who will come to Him. But in His heavenly sanctuary He is shut off from the world, temporarily even from His own people.
 - ✓ From His heavenly place now, Jesus lights our path (pictured by the golden **lampstand**), "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world," Jesus said (John 9:5). When He left the world, the world was left in darkness, and only for believers is He the light of life. He is the light that directs our paths, the One who, through the Spirit, illumines our minds to understand spiritual truth. He is the One who, by the indwelling Spirit, guides us through the world of darkness. He is our light.
 - ✓ He feeds us (pictured by the table of **sacred bread**), and Jesus is our sustenance. He is our table of sacred bread. He is the One who feeds us every day, who sustains us with the Word. The Word is not only our food but our light. And the oil is the Spirit of God, who lights the Word for us.
 - ✓ He intercedes for us (pictured by the **altar of incense**). The altar of incense pictures Jesus interceding for us, the perfect Sacrifice becoming the perfect Intercessor.
6. **The Tabernacle had but one door.** Think of such a large building with but a single entrance! The outer court, with its solid walls of white curtains, was pierced by one gate only; telling us there is, but one way into the presence of the holy God. How this reminds us of the words of that One who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me!" Access can be obtained only through Him who declared "I am the Door" (John 10:9).

7. **The Tabernacle was the way in which a sinner might approach God.** First of all, he was most forcibly reminded that sin had separated him from God. The Tabernacle was God's dwelling-place, and it was enclosed, being encircled by walls of pure white curtains. This at once taught Israel the holiness of the One who had come to dwell in their midst; they were shut out and He was shut in. Their sinfulness unfitted them to enter His holy presence. O my reader, have you ever pondered the Ineffable holiness of God, and realized that your sins have placed you at a guilty distance from Him?

SEVEN CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE HEART OF GOD

1. **GOD DESIRES TO RECEIVE WORSHIP FROM US.** Exodus 23:15 "You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); Exodus 28:38 "So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord. **NOW HE RECEIVES OUR WORSHIP IN JESUS.** Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.
2. **GOD DESIRES TO DWELL WITH US.** Exodus 25:8 "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. Exodus 29:45-46 "I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.46 "And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the Lord their God. **NOW HE DWELLS IN US THROUGH JESUS** Matthew 1:23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.
3. **GOD DESIRES TO MEET WITH US.** Exodus 25:22 "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel. Exodus 29:42-43 "This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you.43 "And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory. **NOW HE MEETS US IN JESUS** 2 Corinthians 5:19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.
4. **GOD DESIRES TO SPEAK WITH US.** Exodus 29:42 "This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you. Leviticus 1:1 Now the Lord called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying, **NOW HE SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THE WORD OF JESUS** John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the

Word was God. John 8:43 "Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 47 "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." Hebrews 1:2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

5. **GOD DESIRES TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO US.** Exodus 29:46 "And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the Lord their God. **NOW HE REVEALS HIMSELF IN JESUS** John 14:7-9 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." 8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"
6. **GOD DESIRES TO ACCEPT US.** Leviticus 1:4 "Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. **NOW HE ACCEPTS US IN JESUS.** Ephesians 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.
7. **GOD DESIRES TO FORGIVE US.** Leviticus 4:20 "And he shall do with the bull as he did with the bull as a sin offering; thus he shall do with it. So the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them. 26 "And he shall burn all its fat on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of the peace offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him. 31 "He shall remove all its fat, as fat is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offering; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a sweet aroma to the Lord. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him. 35 "He shall remove all its fat, as the fat of the lamb is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offering. Then the priest shall burn it on the altar, according to the offerings made by fire to the Lord. So the priest shall make atonement for his sin that he has committed, and it shall be forgiven him. **NOW HE FORGIVES US THROUGH THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS.** Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace