

*A Portrait of*  
**CHRIST**

The Tabernacle, The Priesthood,  
The Offerings

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# Importance of the Tabernacle

The tabernacle with its priestly system has been called “God’s masterpiece of typology.”

Nothing has helped me better understand the Triune God and the salvation that He has purchased for man.

## **The tabernacle’s importance is evident by the amount of space it occupies in God’s Word.**

Whereas the record of the creation of the universe takes up two chapters of the Bible and the fall of man takes up one chapter, the tabernacle, with its priesthood and offerings, takes up 50 chapters (13 in Exodus, 18 in Leviticus, 13 in Numbers, 2 in Deuteronomy, 4 in Hebrews), and references to the the tabernacle in other parts of the Bible occupy many more verses!

It is sad that this important part of the Bible tends to be so neglected.

## **The very details of the tabernacle teach us that God wants us to meditate on it and learn from it in all of its facets.**

An Old Testament type is not the same as a biblical parable. A parable has one main lesson. The details are given to support that one lesson. Consider Christ’s parable of the widow and the judge in Luke 18:1-5. The one lesson of the parable is stated in verse 1 - “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” The details of the parable are there only to support the one lesson.

But an Old Testament type has multiple lessons.

“We have it upon the highest authority, that, not only in its grand outlines, but in all minutest details, everything was to be made ‘after the pattern’ which God showed to Moses on the mount (Exod. 25:9). And so we also read in Acts 7:44 and Hebrews 8:5; 9:23, teaching us, that Moses was

shown by God an actual pattern or model of all that he was to make in and for the sanctuary. This can convey only one meaning. It taught far more than the general truth, that only that approach to God is lawful or acceptable which He has indicated. For, God showed Moses every detail to indicate that every detail had its special meaning, and hence could not be altered in any, even the minutest, particular, without destroying that meaning, and losing that significance which alone made it of importance. Nothing here was intended as a mere ornament or ceremony, all was symbol and type” (Alfred Edersheim, *History of the Old Testament*).

### **The tabernacle creates peerless images in the believer’s mind about Christ.**

Once understood, the images linger in the mind and are brought back repeatedly by the Holy Spirit.

“The Types are, in fact, a set of pictures or emblems, directly from the hand of God, by which He would teach His children things otherwise all but incomprehensible. In the Types, if I may be allowed the expression, God takes His Son to pieces. By them does He bring within the range of our capacity definite views of the details of Christ’s work, which perhaps but for these pictures we should never fully, or at least so fully, apprehend. The realities which the Types represent are in themselves truths and facts the most elevated, facts which have taken place before God Himself, facts in which He has Himself been the actor. These vast and infinite objects He brings close before us in emblems, and presents them to our eyes in a series of pictures, with the accuracy of One who views these things as they are seen and understood by Himself, and in a way in which they may be seen and understood by us” (Andrew Jukes, *The Law of the Offerings*).

# Design of the Tabernacle

The tabernacle was a sanctuary where God dwelt among His people.

Exodus 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

From the tabernacle, God spoke to His people and guided them in their wilderness journeys.

Exodus 25:22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which *are* upon the ark of the testimony, of all *things* which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

Exodus 13:21-22 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: 22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, *from* before the people.

The tabernacle is called

“the tabernacle of the congregation” (Ex. 27:21) (133 times)

“the tabernacle of testimony” (Ex. 38:21) (4 times)

“the tabernacle of witness” (Nu. 17:7) (5 times)

“the tabernacle of the LORD” (Nu. 17:13) (10 times)

“the tabernacle of the house of God” (1 Ch. 6:48) (1 time)

A brief description of the tabernacle can be found in Exodus 40:1-8 and Hebrews 9:1-5. A full description is in Exodus 25:10 - 27:19.

Exodus 40:1-8 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. 3 And thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony, and cover the ark with the vail. 4 And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps

thereof. 5 And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the tabernacle. 6 And thou shalt set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation. 7 And thou shalt set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and shalt put water therein. 8 And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the hanging at the court gate.

Hebrews 9:1-5 Then verily the first *covenant* had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. 2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein *was* the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. 3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; 4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

The tabernacle was composed of a court area within which was the rectangular tent of the tabernacle itself.

It was made according to a pattern that was shown to Moses (Exodus 25:40; 26:30; Acts 7:44).

The description of the tabernacle in Exodus 25-27 begins with the ark of the covenant in the most holy place (Ex. 25:8-10) and ends with the gate entrance into the court (Ex. 27:16-17).

Thus the description begins with God. It is described from God's perspective rather than from man's. This is always the correct perspective. God is the heart and soul of creation and of life, so to speak, and when we put God first, everything else falls into its rightful place. The first law is to have no other gods before God. To put God anywhere but absolute first place is to commit idolatry. Jesus taught us to seek *first*



### *The Tabernacle Coverings*

Exodus 26:1-14 Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle *with* ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: *with* cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them. 2 The length of one curtain *shall be* eight and twenty cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains shall have one measure. 3 The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and *other* five curtains *shall be* coupled one to another. 4 And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in the uttermost edge of *another* curtain, in the coupling of the second. 5 Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt thou make in the edge of the curtain that *is* in the coupling of the second; that the loops may take hold one of another. 6 And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains together with the taches: and it shall be one tabernacle. 7 And thou shalt make curtains of goats' *hair* to be a covering upon the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make. 8 The length of one curtain *shall be* thirty cubits, and

# Interpretation of the Tabernacle

Following are some principles for the right interpretation of Old Testament types:

## 1. Always see Christ.

As we have seen, the Old Testament is filled with types of Christ.

Jesus said that the entire Old Testament points to Him.

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24:44 And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me.

Though the law of Moses does not provide the perfect righteousness that God demands, it points to the source of this righteousness, which is Christ.

Romans 3:20-22 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, BEING WITNESSED BY THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS; 22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

The law witnesses to salvation by pointing to Christ through its types.

“As an old writer has well said, contrasting the dispensations, God in the Types of the last dispensation was teaching His children their letters. In this dispensation He is teaching them to put these letters together, and they find that the letters, arrange them as we will, spell CHRIST,

# The Court of the Tabernacle

Exodus 27:9-18 And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward *there shall be* hangings for the court *of* fine twined linen of an hundred cubits long for one side: 10 And the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets *shall be of* brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets *shall be of* silver. 11 And likewise for the north side in length *there shall be* hangings of an hundred *cubits* long, and his twenty pillars and their twenty sockets *of* brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets *of* silver. 12 And *for* the breadth of the court on the west side *shall be* hangings of fifty cubits: their pillars ten, and their sockets ten. 13 And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward *shall be* fifty cubits. 14 The hangings of one side *of the gate shall be* fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three. 15 And on the other side *shall be* hangings fifteen *cubits*: their pillars three, and their sockets three. 16 And for the gate of the court *shall be* an hanging of twenty cubits, *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework: *and* their pillars *shall be* four, and their sockets four. 17 All the pillars round about the court *shall be* filleted with silver; their hooks *shall be of* silver, and their sockets *of* brass. 18 The length of the court *shall be* an hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits *of* fine twined linen, and their sockets *of* brass.

## The description of the court

The court area which was surrounded by curtain walls (Ex. 27:8-18). It was 100 cubits (150 feet) long by 50 cubits (75 feet) wide (Ex. 27:11-13).

The curtain walls of the court were five cubits (7.5 feet) high (Ex. 27:18). They were made of fine linen (Ex. 27:9).

The curtains hung on pillars. There were 60 pillars altogether: 20 on the south side (Ex. 27:9-10), 20 on the north

side (Ex. 27:11), 10 on the west side (Ex. 27:12), 10 on the east side (three on either side of the gate and four for the gate) (Ex. 27:14-16).

Since there is no mention of the use of gold, silver, or brass covering the pillars (Exodus 38:24-31), we assume they were made of unadorned shittim wood.

The pillars were crowned with silver chapters (or capitals) (Ex. 38:17) and stood on sockets of brass (Ex. 27:11).

The curtains were held together with silver hooks (Ex. 27:10-11).

The tent walls of the court were fastened to the ground by pins and cords (Ex. 35:18).

### **Spiritual lessons about the court**

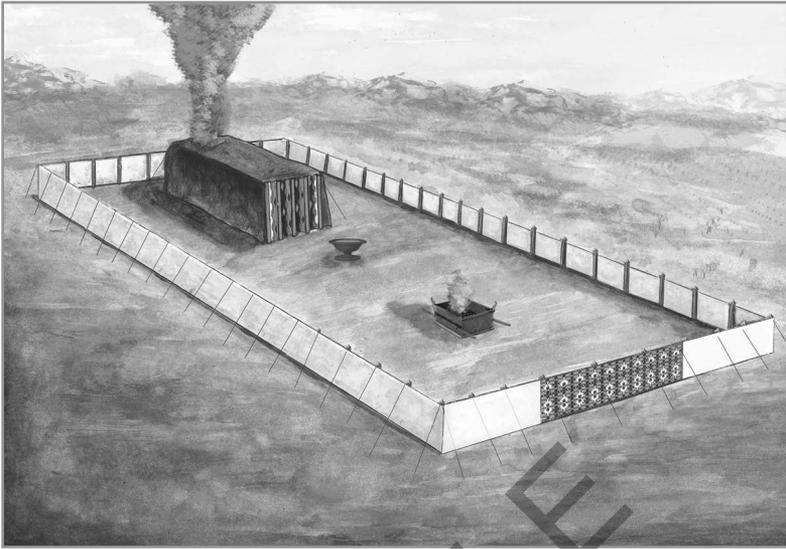
1. The walls of the court signify fallen man separated from the holy God because of sin.

The white linen symbolizes righteousness (Rev. 19:8). God is perfectly righteous and holy (Psa. 145:7), and He requires perfect righteousness, but man has fallen from the righteous glory he had in the beginning (Rom. 3:23). Fallen man is unclean before God. He is so holy that even man's supposed righteousness appears as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). Since all men are unrighteous sinners (Rom. 3:10), they cannot approach God without a Saviour.

The height of the walls (7.5 feet high) signifies man's inability to come to God except through salvation. The walls signify man's inability to rise up to God's holy standard.

2. The pillars of shittim wood signify Christ's incarnation and His perfect humanity, as we will see in the study on the boards of the tabernacle.

3. The view from outside the court depicts the perspective of the unsaved sinner.



*The Tabernacle and the Court*

From outside the tabernacle, the only things visible were the white curtains, parts of the wooden pillars, and the dark covering of the tabernacle rising above the height of the walls. (The tabernacle was 15 feet high and therefore could be seen above the 7.5 feet walls.) The sight wasn't particularly inviting.

Likewise the unbeliever sees nothing especially attractive about Christ (Isa. 53:2-3). He is not an exciting sports star or a cool entertainment personality. He is not acclaimed by the world after the fashion of a political hero such as Nelson Mandela or a philosopher-scientist such as Charles Darwin.

Jesus and His cross are not impressive to the "wise" of this world (1 Cor. 1:19-20). In the eyes of unbelievers, Jesus is just a controversial religious man, a noted moral teacher and a man who lived an exemplary life, perhaps, a man from ancient times who died at a young age at the center of a religious controversy.

Perhaps the two staves remind us that it is necessary to preach both the death and the resurrection of Christ. This is the true gospel (1 Cor. 15:3-4). If Christ had died and not risen from the dead, there would be no gospel.

“Each of the staves was necessary to the brazen altar. The two staves balanced it. Say all you can say, say all the Scriptures say, about His death; but if He did not rise from the dead, His death was of no more importance than the death of any other man who failed and felt himself forsaken of God. To set aside the death of Christ and speak only of His resurrection, makes His resurrection life of no avail; for if He did not die for our sins, then we are still under the judgment of God and His resurrection is the proof of an infinite and eternal separation between us. Both sides of the Gospel must be preached” (I.M. Haldeman).

8. Two lambs were burned on the altar every day, morning and evening.

Exodus 29:38-42 Now this *is that* which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. 39 The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: 40 And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine *for* a drink offering. 41 And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the LORD. 42 *This shall be* a continual burnt offering throughout your generations *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.

The offering of the lamb signifies Christ's death on the cross (John 1:29). He died in the sinner's place. He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21).



*The Altar of Sacrifice* - © GoodSalt

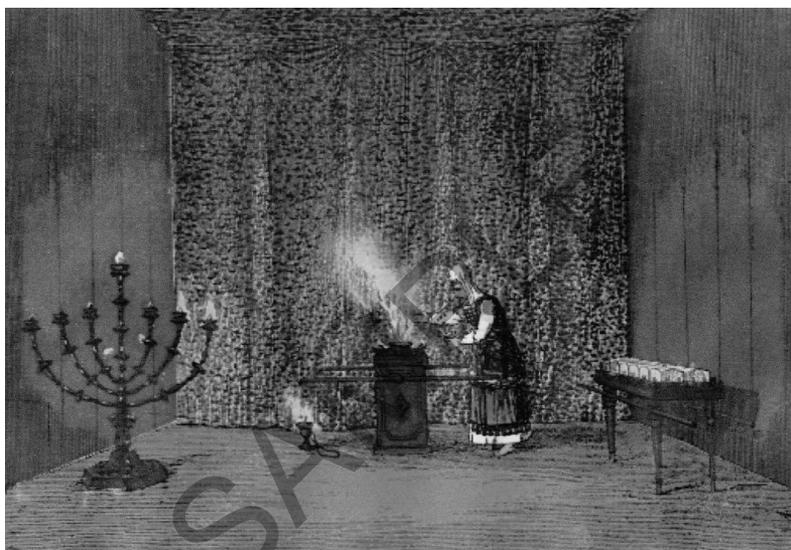
The offering of a lamb both morning and evening signifies the completeness and fulness of Christ's atonement. He paid the full price for man's sin. He is the perfect Saviour who offers perfect salvation. By His one offering we are perfected forever (Heb. 10:14).

The morning and evening sacrifices point to the time of Christ's suffering. He was crucified at the third hour or 9 a.m. (Mark 15:25), which was the time of the morning sacrifice, and he died at the ninth hour or 3 p.m. (Mark 15:34), which was the time of the evening sacrifice.

The sacrificed lamb also depicts the believer's death in Christ. The fallen man cannot be renewed; he is under God's condemnation and must die. This is what baptism pictures (Rom. 6:3-4). The believer has died with Christ and risen with Christ. This is true spiritually and positionally in this

## The Holy Place

The first compartment in the tabernacle, the holy place depicts the believer fellowshiping with God in Christ. He has entered the door of the tabernacle and put his faith in Christ's sacrifice as depicted by the brazen altar. He has been bathed in the laver and is now entered into the service of God.



*The candlestick, incense altar, and table of shewbread*

The three articles in the room--the candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the incense altar--signify Christ as Light, Bread, and Intercessor. Jesus Christ is everything to the believer.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

Colossians 2:9-10 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. 10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

The essence of the Christian life is to walk with and serve and learn of Christ.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

The Israelites were exhorted not only to obey and serve God but also to *cleave unto* Him (De. 13:4).

We can walk with God like Enoch. We can seek God passionately like David. We can sit at His feet and learn of Him like Mary.

Genesis 5:24 And Enoch walked with God: and he *was* not; for God took him.

Psalms 27:8 *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

Psalms 42:1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

Psalms 63:1 O God, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

Psalms 84:2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

Luke 10:39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.



*The High Priest and the Incense Altar - © GoodSalt*

Leviticus 16:12 And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring *it* within the vail.