

Tabernacle Of Moses

Exodus 25:1 to 9: The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites, that they may take for Me an offering ... Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them and you shall make it according to all that I show you, the design of the Tabernacle and the design of all the furniture in it."

Note: Almost all of this Bible study will be taken from Exodus 25:1 through to Exodus 40:38, (too much to include in this Bible study) where the full details and design of Moses' Tabernacle, the specified furniture and everything else regarding it, right up to the time when Moses finished the work, can be studied at your leisure. The Tabernacle of Moses is a lesson about God's redemption we all need to understand. It is not merely an intriguing piece of Jewish history; it is a significant part of God's future plan for the redemption of mankind through the cross of Jesus.

Once the Tabernacle had been completed according to the detailed instructions God gave Moses, the glory of the Lord filled it, so no one, not even Moses could enter, then the Shekinah or Holy Spirit within the cloud covered the Tabernacle all day, and a pillar of fire was over it all night, in sight of all the children of Israel. The Tabernacle was to be a holy place and nothing could defile it or anything regarding it. At the time the Tabernacle was built, Moses and the Israelites could not have known the whole scenario surrounding it was prophetic and symbolically involved the cross of Jesus. It was a large, collapsible, portable structure. The outer court was approximately 50 metres by 25 metres. The fence around the Tabernacle was about 2 metres high and to see into it they had to come through the gate. The outer covering of the Tabernacle was badger skin – rather plain and unattractive – but once inside, the beauty was breathtaking; the embroidery, the colours, the gold and the fragrance of the incense was a masterpiece of artistic works, all dictated by God Himself. We can also note; there were no images of God anywhere in the Tabernacle. In the second commandment, the Lord strictly forbids anyone to make images of God (Exodus 20:4).

The word 'tabernacle' is an English word, first used circa, 1633 and means: tent; a temporary dwelling. The Hebrew word is 'mishkan' and has the same meaning. The Lord God Himself; Creator and King of the universe humbled Himself and came down from heaven to dwell amongst His chosen people. His Almighty presence was visible to the Israelites. God wanted to live amongst His people. The relationship between God and the Israelites was initially a fragile one. They relied very heavily on Moses, and that is revealed when Moses went up Mount Sinai to hear from God, and after a short time of not seeing Moses, the Israelites made the golden calf and reverted to idol worship, because they needed a god they could see. God knew they needed to have visual proof of His presence, hence the pillars of cloud and fire that never ever left them. The cloud protected the Israelites from the heat of the desert sun during the day, and the fire warmed them during the cool nights. The cloud stood between the Israelites and their enemies, protecting the Israelites from harm (Exodus 14:19 & 20). The building of the Tabernacle would have involved hundreds of workers, all willingly toiling under the watchful eye of Bezalel. The Tabernacle, although fully portable, contained tons of gold, silver, bronze and the incredibly heavy, thick woven veil. It was holy, sacred, the centre of worship, sacrifice and joy for all the children of Israel. When the cloud or the fire was taken up, day or night, the Israelites packed up and moved (Exodus 13:21; Numbers 9:17 to 23).

The inside of the Tabernacle was divided into thirds; the Outer Court, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The largest section, the Outer Court was what people saw first. It was lit by natural sunlight by day and the moon and stars by night. The Holy Place was lit up on the left-hand side by the Menorah (lampstand or candlestick) which burned pure olive oil. Inside was the third and final section; the Holy of Holies. That was where God revealed Himself to the priests directly; where they encountered His presence. No light could filter through the veil from outside of this tiny room and there was no provision of light at all. It was lit only by the Light of God Himself; a beautiful soft golden glow. There were no shadows just like there are no shadows in the New Jerusalem. We will not need any source of light there because God Himself will be the Light (Revelation 22:5).

If we carefully study the shape of the Tabernacle, we see that it is in the shape of a cross. The Ark of the Covenant was in the Holy of Holies at the 'head' of the cross. Beneath that was the Altar of Incense, then the Bronze Laver, then the Altar of Sacrifice. On the 'cross bar' was the Menorah at the left, the Altar of Incense in the middle and the Table of Showbread on the right. The positioning of these items of furniture had to be exact to make the 'cross' from the Ark, down to the sacrificial altar, then the Menorah, across to the table that held the showbread. The layout of the furniture would not have held any significance for the Israelites at that time. They placed the items of furniture in their appropriate place solely because it was where God told them to place the items, but they would not have had any idea a cross would be involved in the salvation message

hundreds of years in the future. But what does all this mean for Christians today? The whole concept of the Tabernacle was a current and a future situation. The ancient format ties in thoroughly with the church and beyond into eternity.

Believers have the same three phases; the Outer Court is where we are, when God calls us and if we choose to accept Jesus, we enter into a covenant with Him and are made spiritually alive. If we reject Jesus, we remain in the Outer Court. We enter the Holy Place when we accept the sacrifice of Jesus, are resurrected to new life in Jesus, are justified by faith and baptised in water. Then lastly we will enter the Holy of Holies when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, then we can draw close to the Father through the blood of Jesus; are glorified and spiritually enthroned in heaven. All of these phases are explained and intricately woven throughout the New Testament. Once we study the Tabernacle, it should bring us to a desire of holiness and holy living. The whole purpose of the salvation message is to bring people into the Holy of Holies and not leave them outside in the Outer Court. Jesus calls that place Outer Darkness; a place of deep distress and anguish where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

The structure of worship and activities surrounding the Tabernacle was the precursor to the cross of Jesus and the New Covenant sealed with His blood (Mark 14:24). The Ark of the Covenant was where the Holy Spirit dwelled; now He dwells in us. The Ten Commandments of the first covenant were placed in the ark along with a golden bowl containing an omer (3½ litres or 6 pints) of manna (spiritual food) (Exodus 16:33) and Aaron's almond rod that budded (Hebrews 9:4). The Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God (Deuteronomy 9:10). We now have the laws of God written on our hearts (Romans 2:15) by the Finger of God, which is the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:20; Matthew 12:28). The manna or spiritual food we 'eat' now is the Word of God. The rod of Aaron supernaturally budded, produced blossoms and ripe almonds (Numbers 17:8). As born-again, Holy Spirit filled believers, we are to grow in the Lord, blossom and produce ripe spiritual fruit. The Holy of Holies is where the high priest would go to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice. Now Jesus is our High Priest (Hebrews 5:10) and He was the ultimate Blood Sacrifice.

The Ark of the Covenant was made up of essentially two parts. The ark itself was made of acacia wood, completely covered in pure gold, inside and out. It was quite small – approximately a metre long, less than a metre wide and less than a metre high, and easily carried by the two wooden rods inserted through four gold rings, although the gold would have made it heavy. The lid or cover where the mercy seat was, held two cherubim. They faced each other and looked downwards as a sign of humility before the Lord. They had wings pointing forwards in an attitude of worship. The whole cover, the mercy seat and the cherubim were carefully hammered out of one nugget of pure gold. The mercy seat was the Lord's dwelling place (2 Samuel 6:2). It was where the Lord met with Moses to tell him about finer points of the Law. It was God's throne in the midst of the Israelites. The ark went wherever the Israelites went. It was His presence amongst the people. It brought blessing to the Israelites and when it fell into the hands of the enemies of God, they were cursed because of its presence (1 Samuel 5:1 to 12). The ark was holy and was to be carried by the poles and no other way. If anyone touched the ark, or even looked into it they died (1 Samuel 6:19; 2 Samuel 6:7). God performed miracles around the ark. The Jordan River was parted so the children of Israel could cross on dry land (Joshua 3:14 to 17). The walls of Jericho fell after they were circled by the ark (Joshua 6:6 & 11). When the Israelites disobeyed God and took the ark to war with them, the Philistines won (1 Samuel 4:19 to 22). Years later, after Solomon's Temple was completed, the Ark of the Covenant was permanently placed inside the Holy of Holies, but by that time Aaron's rod and the manna had been removed, and only the two stones containing the Ten Commandments were inside the ark (1 Kings 8:1 to 9). The last time the Ark of the Covenant was mentioned in the Old Testament was when Jeremiah prophesied, "It will be that when you have multiplied and increased in the land in those days", says the Lord, "They shall no more say, 'The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they miss it or visit it, nor shall it be repaired" (Jeremiah 3:16). The ark was so important, the next time its mentioned, it is in heaven (Revelation 11:19).

The Altar of Incense represents the worship and prayers of God's people. 'An angel holding a golden censor came and stood over the altar. Much incense was given to the angel so he could add it to the prayers of all of God's people on the golden altar, which was before the throne. The smoke of the incense with the prayers of God's people went up out of the angel's hand to God' (Revelation 8:3 & 4). The Altar of Incense held the central place within the 'cross', right where the heart of Jesus would have been when He hung on the cross. This altar was placed beside the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, and it was smaller than the Altar of Sacrifice. It had a horn protruding from each corner. The Incense was made of an exact recipe given to Moses by the Lord Himself, and it was not to be used anywhere else at any time, as it was to be kept holy for the Lord. The Lord said to Moses, "Take equal parts of aromatic plant spices –

balsam resin, onycha root, galbanum gum with pure frankincense'. The incense represents prayers, and the high priest who interceded for the people, had to keep the incense burning continually as a sweet fragrance to the Lord. The Lord Jesus, now our High Priest prays and intercedes continually for us (Romans 8:34). The Golden Altar of Incense was one of three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place. It stood in the middle, between the Menorah and the Table of Showbread.

The Bronze Laver was for the high priest to wash, symbolising the cleansing of our hearts from the old life by the washing of the Word. 'The Lord Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it so He might purify it having cleansed it by the washing of water with the Word of God' (Ephesians 5:25 & 26). Only after washing his hands and feet in the laver, could the priest enter the Holy Place. The laver was made of pure bronze.

The Bronze Altar of Sacrifice was a continuation of what the Israelites already did. 'This is what you shall offer on the altar: Two lambs, a year old, day by day, continually. You shall offer one lamb in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer in the evening' (Exodus 29:38 & 39). The Israelites ate lamb twice a day – a continual infilling of the purified lamb, symbolic of our constant infilling of the sacrificial Lamb. Jesus was our sacrificial Lamb of God (John 1:29; Revelation 5:6). The Altar of sacrifice was placed just inside the Tabernacle gate; the very first piece of furniture that one came to inside the Tabernacle. The altar was before the laver, which was before one entered the Holy Place. The root of the Hebrew word for altar means to slay, kill, sacrifice or slaughter. The altar had a horn protruding from each corner, and a grate to hold the sacrificial animal when it was burned. The Israelites had to learn the important message of what would one day become central to the Gospel – that the one and only way to approach God Who is holy, was for blood to be poured out and a life sacrificed for their atonement. Year after year, the Jewish people had to sacrifice an animal to cover their sins, as a constant reminder that it took blood to atone for sin. Every sacrificial animal had to be perfect and without blemish. Soon after the pure Lamb of God, a Lamb without sin or blemish (1 Peter 1:19) became the Ultimate and Final Sacrifice, the Lord Himself brought animal sacrifices to an end by allowing the temple to be destroyed and having the Jews scattered around the world. Those who accept the sacrifice of Jesus have been made holy, once and for all time, into eternity (Hebrews 10:10, 14 & 18). He Who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). Just as the lambs were sacrificed and eaten at Passover each year, so too Jesus was sacrificed and symbolically 'eaten' at Passover. He said, "Take, eat, this is My body" (Matthew 26:26). Jesus is the Son of God, the Lamb of God and the Passover Lamb for all who believe.

The Menorah, also called the Golden Lampstand or the Golden Candlestick, was symbolic of the Light Jesus brought into this spiritually dark world. The seven branches of the Menorah symbolises the seven churches started after Jesus died and rose again (Revelation 1:20) where Jesus revealed His will to the people. The Menorah could not stay lit without olive oil, and the oil was so pure it took eight days to prepare. The olive oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus speaks that of in the parable of the ten virgins, symbolising ten believers (Matthew 25:1 to 13). Jesus is the Light of this world (John 8:12). The Menorah stood on the left side of the Holy Place. The Bible does not record its exact measurements, but the fact it was carefully hammered out of one large nugget of pure gold by a master craftsman – it was not gold plated – it was made entirely of pure gold, probably limited its size, but it was still tall enough to shine its light over the Tables of Showbread and Incense, which were a little less than one metre high, so we can safely assume the Menorah was higher than one metre. There have been many people who have tried to guess its size, but there is no written proof of its precise measurements. The Menorah had seven branches; one central branch with three branches coming out of each side of the central branch. Each of the seven branches held pure olive oil and the wicks. Each branch was fashioned like an almond branch, complete with buds, blossoms and flowers. The light had to burn continually because it was the only source of light inside the Holy Place, and it was the job of the priests to tend to it. The Menorah was one of three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place. It stood opposite the Table of Showbread.

The Table of Showbread is symbolic of the body of Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 12:24). These verses are combined from the three Gospels; 'As Jesus and the disciples were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and praising God, gave thanks and asked God to bless it to their use, and when He had broken the bread He gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body; do this in remembrance of Me." Then He took a cup of grape juice, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to the disciples saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins"' (Matthew 26:26 to 28; Mark 14:22 to 24; Luke 22:19 & 20). 'The Bread of God is He Who comes from heaven ... I am the Bread of Life' (John 6:33 & 35). Jesus is the Word of God (Revelation 19:13), and He said man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word of God (Luke 4:4). The manna was bread out of heaven (John 6:31). It was angel's food (Psalm 78:25). Jesus said, "To him who overcomes, I

will give to eat the manna that is hidden” (Revelation 2:17). The Table of Showbread was one of three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place, and stood directly opposite the Menorah. The table held twelve loaves of bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. The priests baked the unleavened bread with pure flour, and it remained before the Lord for one whole week before being eaten only by the priests, in the Holy Place, then it was replaced by twelve fresh loaves. That is why the bread is also called the ‘Bread of His Presence’ – because it remained in His presence for seven days before being eaten by the priests. This act of eating the holy bread in the presence of the Lord was exactly what the disciples did when they ate bread while sitting in the presence of Jesus at His final Passover. Today, we celebrate the breaking of bread in the house of God (church) to remember Him as He instructed us to do (Luke 22:19).

We can see mankind has to go from the Tabernacle to the cross. In all his writings, the Apostle Paul constantly reminds us of the power of the cross of Jesus. Paul knew the things shown to Moses and the Israelites were a pattern for believers to follow after Jesus rose from the dead. It was all pointing to the first appearing of Jesus as our Messiah. The Jewish prophets recorded the birth, rejection, suffering and death of Jesus in incredible detail, hundreds of years before He was born on earth. ‘For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given’ (Isaiah 9:6); ‘He was despised, rejected and forsaken, a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, chastised for our peace, oppressed and afflicted, silent as a lamb, cut off from the land of the living, assigned a grave with the wicked, He poured out His life to death for the sin of many’ (Isaiah 53:3 to 12); ‘I gave my back to the smiters, My cheeks to those who plucked off My beard; I hid not My face from shame and spitting’ (Isaiah 50:6); ‘The prophets who prophesied of the grace intended for you, searched about this salvation. They sought to find out to whom and when this was to come, which the Spirit of the Messiah working within them was predicting of the sufferings of Jesus and the glory that would follow. It was disclosed to them that the prophecies were not meant for them but for you; the things made known to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Into these things the angels longed to look!’ (1 Peter 1:10 to 12). In the court of the Tabernacle the first object seen by the priest was the Sacrificial Altar, then the Bronze Laver, then between the Menorah and the Showbread was the Altar of Incense, then the massive veil that divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, then beyond the veil was the Ark of the Covenant – God’s salvation promise to mankind.

Three items were kept inside the ark; The Ten Commandments written on stone, a golden bowl containing an omer of manna and Aaron’s almond rod that budded. Why did the ark contain two pieces of stone, an old stick and a jar of stale bread? They were to remind the Israelites of their earlier wayward ways. They rebelled and made the golden calf the first time Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments from God. God chose the Hebrew race from Abraham and his descendants as His special people to carry the oracles of God to the world (Romans 3:2). For the Hebrews to qualify for that privilege they had to obey God, and they had initially promised to obey God when the agreement was made (Exodus 19:5 to 8). The Ten Commandments were just the start and they were a reminder of God’s high standard of living, and the times when the Israelites had rebelled and violated His Laws; the Laws that God Himself wrote on stone with His mighty finger.

The old stick was the small branch off an almond tree. When all the Israelites rebelled against Moses and Aaron’s leadership (Numbers 16:42), God commanded the people to take twelve small branches or rods, and write the tribal leader’s name (Reuben, Levi, Judah etc) on each branch and place them near the Ark of the Covenant overnight. The next morning, only Aaron’s rod had blossoms and ripe almonds on it, and that confirmed Moses and Aaron’s leadership, and that of the house of Levi as priests (Numbers 17:1 to 10). It was Aaron’s rod that was placed inside the Ark to remind the Israelites of their rebellion against the leadership that God Himself chose.

The jar of manna was kept to show the Israelites in the future what they Israelites in the wilderness ate. ‘Take an omer of manna and keep it for the generations to come, so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the desert when I brought you out of Egypt’ (Exodus 16:32). God provided that supernatural food from heaven, in a supernatural way, yet the Israelites complained about it. They did not appear to be thankful for the wafer-like bread, after eating the same food every day for forty years. They tired of it and grumbled about it (Numbers 11:4 to 9). The golden jar of manna was a reminder to the Israelites of their rebellion against God’s provision for them.

The Tabernacle of Moses lasted about 440 years before it was replaced by Solomon’s temple (1 Chronicles 6:32). Like the Tabernacle, the temple also had a massive, thick woven veil placed between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (2 Chronicles 3:14). Only the high priest was allowed beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies. That massive veil was torn in two from top to bottom when Jesus died (Matthew 27:51) – that was

when He opened the Tent of Meeting and the Holy of Holies to everyone who believes, into the intimate presence of God for all mankind. Our High Priest Jesus, did away with the need for a high priest to atone for sin, because Jesus was the atonement for us. The Ark of the Covenant had the mercy seat. It was God's throne between two cherubim, where He dwelt amongst men. Aaron the high priest could only enter the Holy of Holies once each year. Any more than that and he might die because God would appear in the cloud on the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:2). How wonderful it is, now that the veil has been torn in two, for us to be able to approach God without fear of death!

Amen and God bless you.

www.bibleabookoftruth.com