

[**NOTE:** *this series of lessons are not for the novice Christian. These are for the serious disciple who seeks to press on into all that God has and fulfill his calling. It is assumed that the reader has a basic foundation in the Scriptures and sees that God has an overriding purpose for the consummation of His plan.*]

# Overview of the Tabernacle

## Introduction

Since creation forward God has had a plan and purpose that has been unfolding in the earth according to His will. This unfolding in time has sometimes been confusing to us because we don't see into the eternal but only evaluate from the visible, natural viewpoint. Largely the people of God have been ignorant of His divine purpose even though He has designed the end from the beginning. However, as we begin to mature, our perspective begins to move from the visible, natural viewpoint to the invisible, eternal viewpoint of the Lord.

God has set a goal toward which all of creation is moving. He intends to sum up all things in Christ. All creation groans and waits for the revealing of the Sons of God and the consummation of God's plan. Committed Christians should know this and be moving forward, pressing onward toward the goal established by the Lord.

We are not doing this because we have been taught that all we have to do is believe in Jesus. That's all that is necessary—just receive Jesus into your heart and you have eternal security. But, this is not what the Bible says nor what Jesus said.

**"You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. (Matthew 10:22 NASB)**

**"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (Matthew 24:13 NASB)**

but Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house--whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. (Hebrews 3:6 NASB)

For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, (Hebrews 3:14 NASB)

**'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; (Revelation 2:26 NASB)**

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:1-2 NASB)

We see from this last verse that it is possible to believe and yet believe in vain; that is, our belief is empty, without result or fruit. Our easy believism has resulted in Christians who are shallow, lacking discernment, content with “going to heaven” but who do not press on toward the goal, the high calling of God.

We must understand that salvation is not a one time event but a process, a procedure. Being born again is the event that starts the process of salvation. We are to press on to be conformed to the image of Christ, to fulfill our purpose and calling in the Lord. This procedure continues from the time that we acknowledge that Jesus Christ is God's only answer to man's fall to the time that we finish this life and step into the next.

To help us understand this, God has given us patterns, types and shadows of spiritual truth presented to us in our visible, natural world. However, if we only analyze these with our natural, carnal mind we cannot comprehend their spiritual meaning for truth must be spiritually discerned.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (1 Corinthians 2:12-14 NASB)

The Holy Spirit has to enlighten our understanding. Revelation must come because human wisdom, the logical mind, the intellect cannot understand spiritual truth. It must be spiritually appraised.

In the Tabernacle of Moses God has given us a graphical picture of spiritual truth. It shows us the full provision of Jesus; how we appropriate His provision; how to come into the presence of the Lord; and how to be conformed to the image of Jesus. This is what we will be examining in the series of lessons on the patterns, types, and shadows.

## The Tabernacle

The instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle was given to Moses by God. We are told in Hebrews 8:5 that the earthly Tabernacle was a copy and a shadow of heavenly things. The earthly tabernacle was a shadow of the reality of the heavenly tabernacle, that is, the Tabernacle of God in Heaven. Because of this, the instructions to Moses were very explicit so that the shadow would properly reflected the reality.

We should also understand that the entire life of the Israelites centered around the tabernacle. It should be seen in its relationships to the sacrifices, the Sabbaths, the feasts, the law, the priesthood, the washings and other procedures. Our understanding should not be of the the Tabernacle as an isolated holy structure but as a graphical picture of part of the overall plan of God. A correct interpretation of things things will define for us the reality in the heavens.

The Tabernacle is “the symbol” of eternal things and therefore should be recognized beyond the

sacrifices. While all the sacrifices are looking forward to the True Lamb of God and the sacrifice that ended the sacrificial system, the Tabernacle is a symbol of many other things including the Kingdom of God, the Throne of God, the Eternal Government of God, the Eternal Purpose of God. Even the Bride of Christ cannot be properly understood without the revelation of the Tabernacle of God.

When we understand the shadow we will understand the reality. This table lists some of the contrasts between the shadow of the Tabernacle and the heavenly reality

| <u>SHADOW</u>                                  | <u>REALITY</u>                                |
|--|---|
| Earthly Tabernacle of Moses                    | Heavenly Tabernacle of God                    |
| Earthly priesthood                             | Heavenly priesthood                           |
| Law of carnal commands & physical requirements | Law written in our hearts & minds by the Lord |
| Old Covenant                                   | New Covenant                                  |
| Taught to know the Lord by earthly priesthood  | Taught to know the Lord by God Himself        |

As we get deeper into these studies we will see that all aspects of the tabernacle and not just the sacrifices are meant to speak of Jesus and of His Body. But first we need to look at the reason that God told Moses to build the tabernacle to begin with.

## Purpose of the Tabernacle

In Exodus 19 the Scriptures tell us of the interaction of Israel and God at Mount Sinai.

Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. ([Exodus 19:3-8 NASB](#))

Moses went up on the mountain and God told him what to tell the people of Israel. God's requirements were simple, "obey My voice and keep My covenant". The benefits were also simple and straightforward, "you shall be My own possession . . . you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." After Moses told them what God has said, they responded enthusiastically with "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!"

Moses told the Lord all that the people had said God told Moses what He was going to do and that the people were to prepare themselves because He was going to come down to them.

The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever." Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD. The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people." (Exodus 19:9-11 NASB)

It was God's intention that the people would see and hear what God said to Moses when He came down on the mountain.

So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai *was* all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. (Exodus 19:16-19 NASB)

All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood at a distance. Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die." Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin." So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God *was*. (Exodus 20:18-21 NASB)

It was God's intention that the people come close enough to hear Him speak; so, Moses brought them to the foot of the mountain. However, when God came down, the people were scared and, apparently, withdrew to a distance. Instead of drawing closer to God they backed away from God. They didn't even want God to speak to them directly, that is, face to face, at all, but, preferred that only Moses would speak with them.

Remember God's requirements were simple: Obey My voice and keep My covenant. However, they didn't even want to hear God's voice. How do you obey if you don't hear? They said let Moses hear for us and we will listen. There is a big difference in listening to a man and obeying the voice of God.

Later, when Moses went up the mountain to the Lord again, God gave him further instructions and, since the people didn't want to come to Him, He would go to them.

"Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them." According to all that I am going to show you, *as* the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct *it*. (Exodus 25:8-9 NASB)

So, the tabernacle is meant to be a dwelling place for God when He dwells among His people. This is where His presence was meant to be and why the tabernacle and later the Temple became the central focus for the Israelites. Their identity was connected to the presence of God in the Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle of Moses was not God's best plan but explains God's best plan. The priesthood after the order of Aaron was not God's best plan but explains God's best plan. The sacrifices and offerings were not God's best plan but explains God's best plan.

There are many lessons to be learned from the Mount Sinai experience and of the necessity of building a dwelling place for God so that His presence might be with them in the Tabernacle. We should take these lessons to heart.

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ([1 Corinthians 10:11 NASB](#))