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What You Need to Know About The Tabernacle

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE TABERNACLE

Some years ago I came up with this idea to help illustrate both the items and importance of the Old Testament Tabernacle. I hope it will aid you (as it has to others) in explaining God's overall plan of salvation. Please feel free to use any or all of it. I have titled this "GOING TO CHURCH" in 1490 B.C.

Introduction: In Exodus 14 Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt and across the mighty Red Sea. On June 15, 1491, Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai and made camp, probably at the southern peak of the mountain called Jebel Musa which towered some 7400 feet straight up from the desert floor. The nation was to remain here for eleven months and five days. Three major events took place during this time. These were:

- A. The Commandment of the Law was given—the requirement for fellowship. (Exod. 19:3-24:18; 32:1-34:35)
- B. The Corruption of the Golden Calf—the renunciation of that fellowship. (Exod. 32:1-35)
- C. The Construction of the tabernacle—the restoration to fellowship. (Exod. 25:31; 35-40; Leviticus)

After the Golden Calf fiasco it was a touch-and-go situation for a period of some 6 months between God's holy judgment and Israel's sinful ways. (See Exod. 32:7-10) Finally, perhaps during the spring of 1490 B.C., the newly erected tabernacle was ready for services. At this point, let us briefly describe the tabernacle:

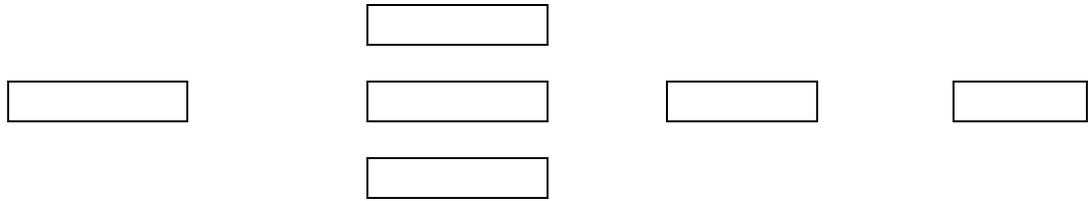
The three (3) sections—the Outer Court, the Inner Court, and the Holy of Holies.

The Outer Court, a glorified picket fence construction, measured 150 feet in length, 75 feet wide, and 7½ feet high. In the center of this "picket fence" was a tent, 45 feet long, 15 feet wide and 15 feet high. There were two rooms in this tent, separated by a thick veil. The eastern room section of this tent (the entire tabernacle faced east) was the holy place, and the western section was the Holy of Holies. The tent was made of 48 upright boards and was covered by four (4) kinds of cloth. Three of these were animal skins, and the fourth was a fine linen. The colors involved were white, blue, purple, and scarlet.

Note: There were six (6) pieces of furniture within this "picket fence." Two stood in the Outer Court, three were within the first Inner Court room, and one was placed in the Holy of Holies room. To really worship God back then (and also today) the spiritual significance of each piece of furniture must clearly be understood. To help us, the following platform aids are suggested:

1. Six folding chairs should be arranged in the general form of a cross, with each chair to be occupied by an individual.

2. The chair arrangement should look like this:



3. A young boy, dressed as a shepherd now appears on stage, accompanied by his father.

The Father: "Well, son, today for the first time we are allowed to enter that new building God told Moses to put up for us called the Tabernacle."

(Both father and son start for the first chair. But when they get within a few feet of it, they are stopped by a "priest" who asks:

Priest: "Just a minute please. Where are you going?"

Father: "My name is Simeon and this is my son Benjamin. We're going to worship our God Jehovah here in this place today."

Priest: "That's fine, but have you brought the right offering with you?"

Father: "Oh yes, we both have a nice gift of money for God."

Priest: "I'm sorry, but money will not do. You must bring a lamb with you, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins!"

4. (At this point the father leaves and returns carrying a picture, or stuffed toy, of a lamb. The priest takes the lamb and hands it to the person sitting on the first chair.)

Priest: "This little lamb must die, and as it does, you will place your right hand upon its forehead to identify yourselves with it."

5. (The priest then invites them in and conducts them through a tour of the tabernacle. We will now view the furniture of the tabernacle through the eyes of this 12-year-old boy as he might have described it, using those terms a boy or girl living today could understand.)

The Boy: "I think this first piece of furniture is sorta like what we cook food on outside, so I'll call it the BARBEQUE GRILL."

(This was the Brazen Altar as mentioned in Exod. 27:1-8; 38:1-7.) It was a box-like structure made of acacia wood and was overlaid with brass. It was approximately 7½ feet wide and 3 feet high. There was a grate midway between the top and the bottom. A horn was located on each corner of the altar to help hold the animal sacrifices which were offered at

this altar. This speaks of Calvary. The New Testament verse which fulfills the brazen altar is John 1:29:

"Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

The Boy: "This next piece of furniture is rather funny looking. In fact, it reminds me of something we once had in our back year, so I'll name this the BIRD BATH!"

(This was the Brazen Laver as mentioned in Exod. 30:18; 38.) It was a brass basin which was filled with water, resting on a pedestal, covered by mirrors. It was used by the priests for actual and ceremonial cleansing of both hands and feet. This speaks of a believer being cleansed after he has confessed his sins. The New Testament verse which speaks of the Laver is 1 John 1:9:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The Boy: "We're in the first room of the tent now. The BARBEQUE GRILL and the BIRD BATH were both outside, but the next three pieces of furniture are in this tent. Boy! I get hungry just looking at this piece of furniture. It's really a table covered with some loaves of bread. I think I'll call it the PIZZA HUT!

(This was the Table of Shewbread, as mentioned in Exod. 25:23-30; 37:10-16.) It was a table made of acacia wood and covered with gold. On this table was placed twelve cakes of bread, renewed each week, one for each tribe in Israel. This table was approximately 1½ feet wide by 2½ feet high. It rested on the right (northern) side of the room. The Table of Shewbread speaks of that soul satisfaction that only Christ can give, as He Himself once told a crowd of people:

"I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst"(John 6:35).

The Boy: "Now let's see—this thing right across from the PIZZA HUT sorta reminds me of my favorite season of the whole year! I think I'll call this piece of furniture the CHRISTMAS TREE!

(This was the Lampstand, as mentioned in Exod. 25:31-40; 37:17-24). It was one of the most ornate objects in the tabernacle. It was made of pure gold and consisted of an upright shaft from each side of which three branches extended upward in pairs. The lamps were trimmed every morning and evening and were never to be extinguished all at one time. It had to be regularly supplied with pure olive oil. The entire lamp required 107 pounds of gold and today would cost approximately \$700,000. Jewish tradition says the Lampstand was 5 feet high and 3½ feet wide. It rested on the left (south) side of the room. The Lampstand speaks of divine illumination, as referred to by the Savior in John 9:5:

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

The Boy: "Say Dad, where is that nice smelling smoke coming from? Oh yes, now I see. It's coming from on top that pretty golden table. I think I'll call it the PERFUME COUNTER."

(This was the Altar of Incense, as mentioned in Exod. 30:1-10; 37:25-28.) It was a 1½ foot square by 3 feet high acacia wood table overlaid with gold. Sweet spices were burned on this table each morning and evening. The Altar of Incense is symbolic of prayer, as brought out in Rev. 8:3-4:

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

The Boy: "Excuse me Mr. Priest, but what's behind this big thick purple curtain?"

Priest: "No one is permitted to go behind this Veil, son, except the Great High Priest Aaron himself, and he is only allowed to do this once each year during the Great Day of Atonement in October. But I'll tell you what, even though you can't go back there I'll at least show you what's behind there by letting you see the blueprint Moses drew at God's command."

(The priest hands the boy a sheet of paper. The boy studies it and says):

The Boy: "It looks sorta like something Mom keeps her blankets and other things in. I'll call it the CEDAR CHEST."

(This was the Ark of the Covenant as referred to in Exod. 25:10-22; 37:1-9.) It was the most important object in all the tabernacle and was also made of acacia wood covered with gold. It was a hollow box affair, 4 feet long and 2 feet high and contained several objects, the most important being the two stones upon which was written the Ten Commandments. The lid of this box was made of solid gold and called the Mercy Seat. On top of the box stood two golden angelic cherubims. Once each year during the Great Day of Atonement in October, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies (which was separated from the holy place by a thick veil) and sprinkle blood upon the Mercy Seat for the sins of Israel. Above the entire ark dwelled the Shekinah Glory Cloud of God. Perhaps the most thrilling truth of the tabernacle is seen here and that is this—THE ONE THING THAT STOOD BETWEEN THE BROKEN LAW THAT MAN COULD NOT KEEP AND THE HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS WRATH OF GOD WAS THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB!

--Prepared by Dr. H. L. Willmington, Dean
Willmington School of the Bible
Liberty University

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