

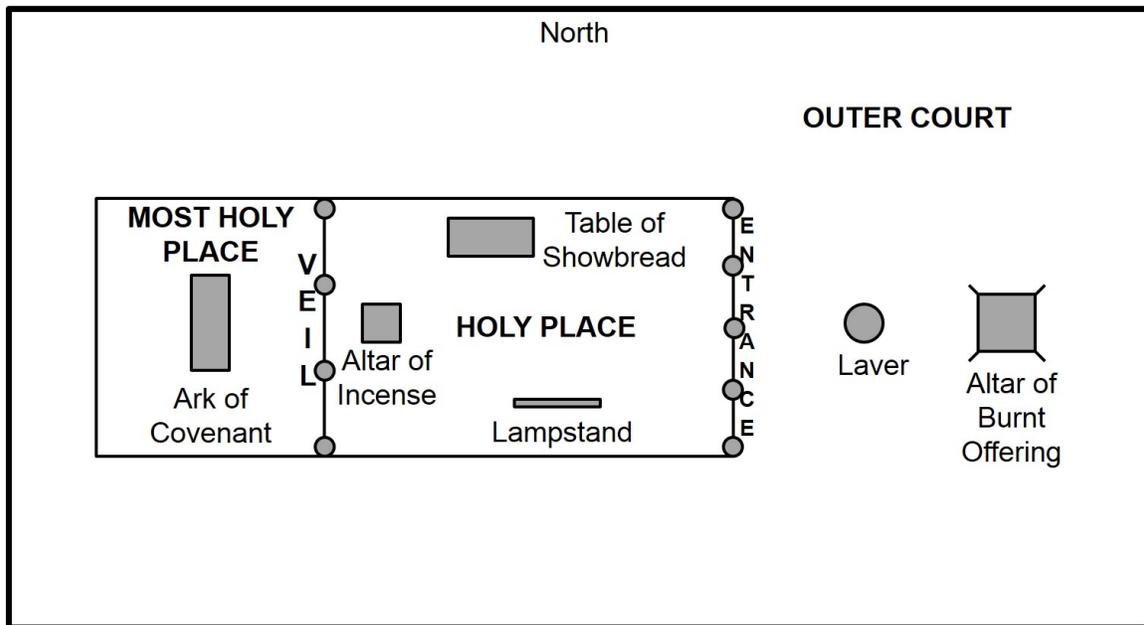
# The Testimony of the Tabernacle

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The tabernacle of Moses' day is one of the most intriguing subjects which can be studied. Some have noted that 50 chapters of the Bible deal with the tabernacle (certain chapters in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Hebrews). The sheer amount of inspired Scriptures devoted to the tabernacle indicates that this is something God considers important, and something He wants men to understand.

For the construction of the tabernacle, the Israelites willingly brought forth costly materials, much of which they had brought out of Egypt (Ex. 12:35-36; 25:1-9; 35:20-29; 36:2-7). God filled certain men and women with wisdom to be especially qualified to make the tabernacle and its beautiful furnishings (Ex. 28:3; 31:1-6; 35:25-35; 36:1, 8).

Instructions for the tabernacle's construction were given to Moses by God Himself (Ex. 25:1ff). This "*sanctuary*" was to be built so that God could dwell among the Israelites (Ex. 25:8). Compare this with God the Son later dwelling in the "tabernacle" of His fleshly body among men (Jn. 1:14; 2 Cor. 5:1ff; 1 Tim. 3:16). Repeatedly God told Moses to make the tabernacle "*according to the pattern*" God showed Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 25:8-9, 40; 26:30; 27:8). Surely one reason God insisted on a strict adherence to the God-given pattern was because the tabernacle and its furnishings were "*patterns of things in the heavens*"—being symbolic of spiritual things which would take place in the future (Heb. 9:23; cf. 8:1-5; 9:1-12, 24). To deviate from the pattern would destroy the prophecies contained therein. Although the tabernacle was constructed at least 1400 years before the time of Christ, the prophetic symbolism found therein is so profound that anyone studying this will marvel. It is truly amazing how God was revealing within the tabernacle what He was going to do for the salvation of man during the time of Christ. The tabernacle itself is what this writer would call a "three-dimensional prophecy," and below is an overhead diagram of its main features:



Let us briefly notice some of the prophetic symbolism found within the tabernacle:

- **The Outer Court** (Ex. 38:9-20) – 150 feet long by 75 feet wide, the outer portion of the tabernacle represented the world (all those outside the holy place). During the Old Testament, animals were sacrificed in the outer court. Jesus, the Lamb of God would later come into the world to be sacrificed (John 3:17; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb. 10:5).
- **The Altar of Burnt Offering** (Ex. 38:1-7; Lev. 9:7-24) – An innumerable number of sacrifices were made on this altar during the Old Testament period, including at least two lambs per day (Ex. 29:38; Num. 28:1-4). These animal sacrifices in the outer court represented the Lamb of God’s coming into the world and offering Himself as a sacrifice for the salvation of man (John 1:29, 36; 6:51; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb. 10:1ff; 1 Pet. 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8). Though Christ was never burned, the rising of the smoke from the sacrifice may represent the rising of Christ from the dead and up to Heaven (Mt. 28:1; Acts 1:9-11).
- **The Laver** (Ex. 29:4, 21; 30:17-21; 40:12) – Priests would wash the blood from their hands here before they could enter the holy place. This represented people in the world under the New Testament having the stains of sin, needing to wash away their sins through baptism before entering the one church, the one body of the saved (Eph. 4:4; 5:23, 25-26). Compare Exodus 29:4, 21 with Hebrews 10:22 (cf. Acts 2:36-47; 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; 12:13; Eph. 5:25-26; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21). Amazingly, in 1400 B.C. God was already revealing that water baptism was going to be necessary for salvation under the New Covenant!
- **The Holy Place** (Ex. 26:33; 29:30; 31:10) – Represented the church, where the holy,

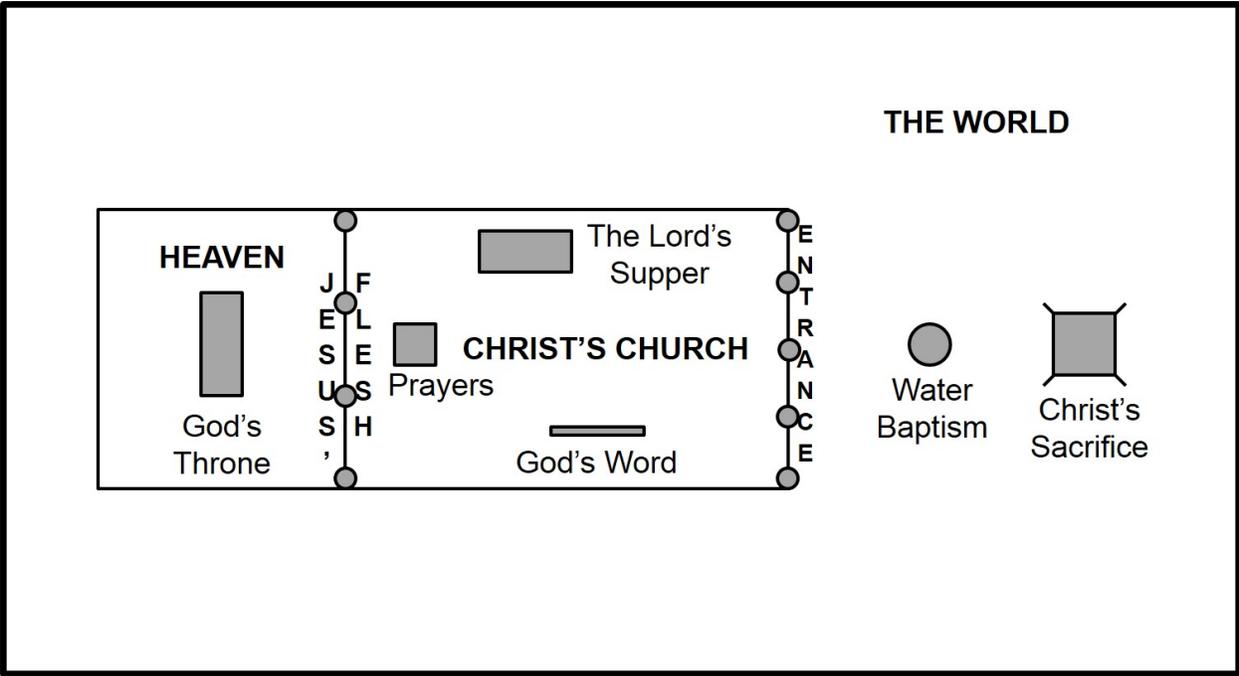
washed, sanctified people of God are (1 Pet. 1:15-16; 2:5, 9; 3:21). God commanded that a covering over the holy place was to be red (Ex. 25:5; 26:14; 39:34), which may have symbolized the blood of Christ covering His church as Christians walk in the light (Ex. 12:12-13, 23; Matt. 26:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 5:9; 1 Jn. 1:7). The priests worked in the holy place and had to wear “holy garments” after being washed (Ex. 29:4ff; 40:12ff). Christians are working servants in the church who are commanded to “cast off the works of darkness, and...put on the armor of light...put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 13:12, 14; cf. 2 Cor. 6:7; 1 Thess. 5:8; Eph. 6:11ff; Rev. 7:14). Christians are the children of God by faith in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (altar), and have put on Christ in baptism (laver--Gal. 3:26, 27). The furnishings of the holy place represented things related to the church. Notice there was only one “holy place,” and under the New Testament there is only one true church (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 20; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16; 4:4; Col. 3:15).

- **The Golden Lampstand** (Ex. 25:31-40; 26:35; 27:20; 40:4; Lev. 24:1-4)—Having seven lamps, it represented the perfect Word of God (Psa. 19:7). Also called the golden candlestick; Today, God’s faithful priests in the church walk in the light of God’s perfect Word (Psa. 43:3; 119:105, 130; Prov. 6:23; 2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Pet. 1:19; 1 John 1:5-7; cf. Rev. 4:5).
- **The Table of Showbread** (Ex. 25:23-30; 26:35; 40:22-23; Lev. 24:5-9)—The priests would partake of the showbread once per week in the holy place, and God called it a “memorial” (Lev. 24:5-9). Priests in the church today (Christians, 1 Pet. 2:9) “break bread” in memory of the Lord’s death (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 10:16; 1 Cor. 11:24-25). This is often called “The Lord’s Supper” which, like the showbread, is partaken weekly (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20; cf. 1 Cor. 16:2).
- **The Altar of Incense** (Ex. 30:1-9; 31:11; 40:5, 26-27; Lev. 16:12-13; Rev. 5:8)—The altar of incense was next to the veil and the most holy place. The incense offered by the priests during the Old Testament was symbolic of the prayers of Christians ascending to God the Father (Rev. 8:3-4), who is in the Most Holy Place (Heaven).
- **The Veil** (Ex. 26:31-33)—A beautiful tapestry of blue, purple, and scarlet, with images of cherubim. It hung between the holy place and the most holy place. Symbolic of the flesh of Christ (Heb. 10:19-20). The veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom when Christ died (Matt. 27:51), symbolizing the fact that because of Christ’s sacrifice, the way to the Father in Heaven was now open (John 14:6; Rom. 5:10; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 9:8, 15; 10:19-22).
- **The Most Holy Place** (Ex. 25:22; 26:33-34)—Symbolic of Heaven, where the

presence of God is (Psa. 80:1; 99:1; Heb. 9:3). The high priest of the Old Testament would enter the most holy place once per year for sins remembered from year to year (Ex. 30:10; Lev. 16:29-34; 23:27); Christ, our High Priest, offered His own blood once for the remission of our sins and entered Heaven to be Intercessor and only Mediator (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 8:34; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 4:14-16; 6:19-20; 7:25; 8:1-5; 9:3ff; 10:5ff; 1 Jn. 2:1-2, etc.). Just as the high priest would enter the most holy place and be hidden from the people until his return, Christ is now hidden in the Most Holy Place of Heaven until His return (Heb. 9:24-28).

- **The Ark of the Covenant** (Ex. 25:10-22; 26:34; 37:5; 40:20-21; Num. 4:5, 15, 20) – Represented the throne of God, surrounded by cherubim who worship and serve Him. The writer of Hebrews described the ark as “...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; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly” (Heb. 9:4-5). The manna seemed to represent God’s providence for His people (Ex. 16:4), Aaron’s rod seemed to represent the sanctification of God’s elect and God’s unquestionable authority (Numbers 17), and the tables of the covenant represented God’s Law given to man (Ex. 24:12; 31:18).
- **The Pillar of Cloud and Fire** (Ex. 13:21-22; 14:19, 24; Num. 12:5; 14:14; Deut. 31:15; Neh. 9:19). God’s presence was in a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day to guide the Israelites, assure them, and protect them. This seems to represent the work of the Holy Spirit that He performed miraculously in the first century A.D. and performs today through the written Word (Psa. 119:105; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18; Eph. 6:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The following diagram shows what each part of the tabernacle represented:



So much more could be written on this subject, but hopefully this information will whet the reader's appetite for a more in-depth study of how God revealed shadows of future events in the tabernacle of Moses' day. Any honest, reasonable person cannot come away from such a study without concluding that there is a God in Heaven, the Bible is His Word, and Jesus is Who He claimed to be! The pattern also verifies that what the church of Christ teaches about these New Testament doctrinal matters is correct.

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