

III. Sacred Spaces: Tabernacle & Temple

June 18, 2017 Chapters 3 & 4

Purpose: To understand the typology of sacred spaces in the Tabernacle and Temple.

Key Verse: ⁵They serve **a copy and shadow of the heavenly things**. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything **according to the pattern** that was shown you on the mountain (Hebrews 8:5).

A. The Tabernacle

1. The Tabernacle Supplants Altars

Longman: In essence, Mount Sinai was the moment when the family of God became the nation of God.... As a nation, Israel needed a place to come into the presence of God to offer sacrifice and to worship. No longer would small, simple altars be enough; something larger and grander was needed. And for that reason, God told Moses on Sinai, “I want the people of Israel to build me a sacred residence where I can live among them” (Ex. 25:8). With these words, God initiated the building of the tabernacle. The tabernacle replaced the altar as the primary location where God revealed His intimate presence to His people. More correctly, the tabernacle incorporated the altar.... We move from “the occasional presence of God” to God’s “ongoing presence” with the community (pp. 25, 26).

2. God Plans the Building of His Dwelling Place

a) God Commands the Building of the Tabernacle

Longman: It is important to dwell on the significance of the fact that it was God, not Moses, who initiated the building of His sanctuary. God not only told Moses to build it: He gave Him specific instructions that He was to follow in every detail (Ex. 25:9). God does not leave it to human beings to define the type of worship they will offer Him. God knows what is best and He told Moses in detail (pp. 26-27).

b) God Enables the Construction of the Tabernacle

- (1) God gives detailed instructions on the tabernacle plans (Ex. 25:10-30:38)
- (2) God specially gifts Bezalel and Oholiab for the construction (Ex. 31:1-11)
- (3) God ensures the instructions are faithfully followed (Ex. 36:8-40:33)

c) God Provides the Materials for the Tabernacle

- (1) Materials include: gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple, scarlet yarn; fine linen; skins and leather; acacia wood, olive oil and spices; onyx and other precious stones
- (2) Many of these precious materials came from the plundering of Egypt (Ex. 12:36)

Longman: The people did not earn these materials by their hard labor or through military means. God moved the hearts of the Egyptians—whether out of respect or fear—to simply hand over the

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goods. God not only gave the plans for the tabernacle; in a very real sense He also provided the materials to build it (p. 28).

3. What Did the Tabernacle Look Like? (cp. Ex. 26, 38)

(1) It was a tent (Tent of Meeting)

- (a) 15 feet wide, 45 feet long, 15 feet tall (10 cubit x 30 cubits x 10 cubits)
- (b) Divided into two rooms by an interior curtain
- (c) Inner room is the Most Holy place (10 cubits x 10 cubits x 10 cubits)
- (d) Outer room is the Holy Place (10 cubits x 200 cubits x 10 cubits)
- (e) Entrance faced east

(2) Four layers of sheets

- (a) Innermost layer was the most ornate, fine linen decorated with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; embroidered with cherubim; visible from the inside only (but dimly)

Longman: It is hard to miss the idea that the impression was to be a heavenly one. As one walked into the tabernacle, he would be symbolically transferred from an earthly location to a (symbolically at least) heavenly one (p. 29).

- (b) The other three layers were weather resistant and protected the inner layer (goat hair, ram skin, goat skin)

(3) Sheets supported by boards of acacia wood

- (a) 15 feet tall
- (b) Silver bases
- (c) Joined by acacia poles covered in gold

(4) Courtyard

- (a) 150 feet long and 75 feet wide
- (b) Curtains of fine linen
- (c) Bronze covered boards with bronze bases
- (d) Entrance faced east with a special embroidered curtain (blue, purple, scarlet yarn)

Longman: Like the tabernacle itself, the entrance to the courtyard faced east and was marked by a special curtain made from fine linen and decorated with ‘beautiful embroidery in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn’ (Ex. 27:16). Such an entrance would draw attention to itself and offer a foretaste of the heavenly realities inside (p. 30).

4. The Symbolism of the Tent

a) Purpose – To Reflect Heaven (Hebrews 8:5)

Longman: The reason why such care had to be taken with the construction of the tabernacle is that its very structure and the material out of which it was built reflected heavenly realities. This passage (Heb. 8:5) becomes our motivation for asking about the symbolic value of the tabernacle (p. 31).

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- b) Interpretation – many interpreters find imaginative meanings in every detail of the tabernacle construction

Longman: The connections [are often] arbitrary. They are allegorical in the negative sense, in that they impose a meaning not implied by the text itself. There are allegories that are not speculative but intended by an author, as is obvious from the context [e.g., *The Pilgrim's Progress*]. Unfortunately, many people find mysterious interpretations too enticing to pass up, and they accept fanciful views on the author's word. But there is a better way, with far richer results (p. 33).

5. The Tabernacle as the Presence of God on Earth

Longman: We have already described the idea of God's special presence. God is everywhere, to be sure, but He is present in a special way in particular locations. During the Old Testament time period the faithful would go to certain locations in order to meet God in worship. The tabernacle was such a place, and the symbolism of the entire structure revolved around that one central idea: the Holy God was present in the midst of the camp (p. 32).

a) Its Structure

Longman: The tabernacle complex itself had three parts, dividing the large wandering camp of Israelites into four parts.... We can complete our picture of the world by mentioning a fifth realm, the area "outside the camp" (pp. 32, 33).

- (1) The Holy of Holies – the presence of God is symbolized by the ark of the covenant; it is divided from the rest of the tabernacle, and indeed the rest of the world
- (2) The Holy Place; the first two parts comprise the tabernacle itself
- (3) The Courtyard; the first three parts comprise the tabernacle complex
- (4) The Camp of Israel; the first four parts were the world of Israel
- (5) Outside the Camp – The rest of the world

b) Its Location

- (1) In the center of the camp
- (2) God's throne is surrounded by His people
- (3) Israel's King, Yahweh, is in the midst of His people and leading His army

c) Its Materials

- (1) Precious materials used: gold, silver, bronze, fine linen, etc.
- (2) Transition from less precious to more precious

Longman: Close reading will show that there was a transition from less precious to more precious as one moved from the outside parameter to the Holy of Holies. Bronze was used for the posts of the outermost curtain, but bronze gave way to silver, then to gold, and ultimately to fine gold, used predominately for the furniture in the Holy of Holies. White linen was used on the outer curtain, but eventually this gives way to the fine cloth that was the innermost curtain of the tabernacle.... We can imagine the presence of God in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle as a red-hot flame. The closer one gets to the center, the hotter it is. Higher degrees of value marked the precious materials used in the tabernacle (p. 34).

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6. Levels of Accessibility of the Tabernacle

Longman: We have described the world as understood by the Pentateuch to be divided into five realms (p. 34).

- a) *Outside the camp* – the realm of the Gentiles; ritually unclean; in short, anyone could be outside the camp
- b) *Inside the camp* – only Israelites who were ritually clean could enter the Israelite camp
- c) *Inside the courtyard* – although lay people could enter with sacrifices, this area was dominated by the work of the priests and Levites
- d) *Inside the tabernacle* – only priests and Levites could enter
- e) *Inside the Holy of Holies* – the most restricted area of all; only the high priest could enter this realm, and he could enter it only once a year, during the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16)

7. The Tabernacle and Creation

Longman: So the tabernacle was heaven on earth. As such it reminds us of the original creation when God's presence was pervasive throughout all of human habitation (Eden)... [There are] connections between the construction of the tabernacle and the creation ... for instance, the foundational role of the Holy Spirit in both narratives. The Spirit hovers over the creation according to Genesis 1:2, while Bezalel and the other workers on the tabernacle are given the Spirit to complete their task (Ex. 31:2)... God's command to build the tabernacle in Exodus 25-31 may be divided into seven speeches... Finally, much as God looks at His creation and pronounces it good, Moses, God's servant, blesses the completed tabernacle structure (Ex. 39:43) (pp. 36-37).

DSB: We can see in Longman's 5-fold division of the world a nested three-tier set of environments. The first three divisions (the two rooms of the tabernacle and the courtyard) are the tabernacle complex, the sanctuary of God, the place where God meets with man. As a whole, the tabernacle complex corresponds to the Garden-sanctuary of Eden in creation. Outside the tabernacle complex is the camp of Israel. Later, the temple complex would be in the midst of the land or nation of Israel. Both the camp and the nation represent the homeland, the place where God's people live. Outside the camp, beyond the borders of the nation of Israel, lay the rest of the world – the Gentile nations. As we move from world to homeland to sanctuary, we come closer and closer to the glory and holiness of God.

DSB: But this three-fold pattern of world-land-sanctuary is again repeated within the tabernacle complex itself. The outer part of the complex is the courtyard. Sinful Israelites are allowed to enter this courtyard, but they can go no further. The next level of holiness is the outer room of the tabernacle. Into this space only the priests and Levites could enter. And finally, the most restricted space of all was the Most Holy Place, where only the high priest could enter, and then only once per year. This space represented the very throne room and presence of God Most High. The progression from courtyard to outer room to inner room to courtyard mirrors the sequence in increased holiness moving from the world to the land to the sanctuary. This three-tiered set of environments within the tabernacle complex, built according to the heavenly model (cp. Heb. 8:5), thus replicates the three-fold structure of the world in creation.

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8. The Tabernacle and Christ

Longman: The tabernacle was God's home on earth. It symbolically represented heaven on earth. The total effect of the structure, materials, and location of the tabernacle emphasized that God was present in the midst of the camp. When we view the tabernacle in terms of God's presence, it becomes obvious how Jesus, our Immanuel ("God with us"), fulfills the role of the tabernacle between Moses and Solomon.... John 1:14: "The Word ... tabernacle among us." Jesus is our tabernacle!

B. The Temple

1. David, The Warrior, Rejected as Temple Builder

a) David's desire to build God a house is rejected by God (2 Sam. 7:5-7)

Longman: At first, it is not clear what motivated God's rejection of David's plan, but closer reflection leads to two insights into the situation. First, we should remember the tabernacle and why it was built. It was built because God told Moses to build it and gave him exact instructions for its construction. God initiates His own worship. Here David did the initiating, and God did not accept that (pp. 40-41).

b) God chooses Solomon to build Him a house (1 Chron. 22:8)

Longman: But why didn't God instruct David to build the temple? The answer to this question gives us our first insight into the symbolism of the temple.... David's son Solomon would be commissioned with the task of building the temple. David himself would spend his life preparing for its construction, but he was not allowed to take part in its actual construction. [The prohibition is given in 1 Chron. 22:8].... The principle behind the prohibition was not ethical but redemptive-historical. The temple represented the cessation of the battles of conquest; it symbolized the establishment in the land. David was the conquest completer. He defeated the last of the inhabitants of the land, most notably the Philistines. As the completer of the conquest, though, he was not going to build the temple. That was left to his son, Solomon, who inherited the land from his father. Note the significance of Solomon's name [it is a form of *shalom*]... Solomon would be "Peace." He would represent the period after the conquest. He would be the one whom God chose to build the temple (pp. 40-41).

2. God Chooses the Site for the Temple

a) The tabernacle was a mobile sanctuary

b) The altar law of Exodus 20:22-26 was in operation; i.e., there were still the possibility of other altars in addition to the primary one at the tabernacle

c) The law anticipates when God would choose one place for His worship (Dt. 12:4-7)

(1) The timing would be not happen until after "you drive out the nations that live there" (Dt. 12:2)

(2) The appropriate time was during the reign of Solomon, as all the enemies of Israel had been defeated

d) The location is in Jerusalem

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- (1) The threshing floor of Araunah, where David built an altar after the three-day plague (cp. 1 Chr. 21)
- (2) This same site is chosen for the temple location (2 Chr. 3:1-2)
- (3) The location is Mount Moriah (cp. Gen. 22), where Abraham sacrificed Isaac

Longman: This connection shows us that God had long intended that the temple would eventually be placed in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Interestingly, the city was only taken by David in the previous generation. Here, though, we can see the wisdom of God in sparing the people an occasion of jealousy. After all, tensions were always present between the northern and southern tribes. If the temple had been placed in one of the tribal allotments, then the fortunate tribe would have had reason to feel superior to the others. But Jerusalem was taken long after the tribal settlement and was “David’s city,” independent of the tribes in a way that Washington, D.C. today is independent of the states (p. 45).

3. What Does the Temple Look Like? (cp. 1 Kgs. 6)
 - a) God chose the site, and He also gave the plans (1 Chr. 28:19)
 - b) Dimensions – 30 feet wide, 90 feet long, 45 feet high (20 cubits x 60 cubits x 30 cubits) per 1 Kings 6:2
 - c) Finest workmanship and materials, including stone and cedar (no cloth)
 - d) The Holy of Holies was a perfect 30-foot cube, made of precious cedar wood covered with pure gold
 - e) The Holy Place was 30 x 60 feet, with cedar paneling and a cypress floor covered with gold; the walls were carved with cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers
 - f) In front of the temple were two free standing pillars
 - (1) Each was 27 feet tall and 18 feet in circumference, made of bronze
 - (2) Each had bronze capitals 7.5 feet tall with floral motifs, 200 pomegranates, and shaped like a lily
 - (3) The names were Jakin and Boaz
 - g) In the courtyard was a huge basin of water, the Bronze Sea; it was 15 feet across, 7.5 feet deep; it rested on 12 bronze oxen
 - h) On three sides of the temple were a complex of rooms, for administration and storage (1 Kgs. 6:5-6)

4. The Significance of Temple Symbolism

- a) Symbolism comparable to the tabernacle

Longman: Like the tabernacle, the temple symbolized God’s presence with His people. Accordingly, we again find heavenly imagery, such as the cherubim in the Holy of Holies, and garden imagery, connoting Eden, inside and out. We can also observe an intensification of precious materials, such as pure gold, as we move toward the specific place where God was thought to have His throne (p. 47).

- b) Symbolism shows innovations over the tabernacle

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Longman: In addition, however, we find innovations as we compare the temple and tabernacle. Interestingly, the innovations all point in the same direction. They point to the transition of a new era in the relationship between God and His people—that is, their establishment in the land.... In the first place, the temple, quite simply, was a permanent house, whereas the tabernacle was a portable tent. This important yet simple architectural feature indicates the transition from a wandering people to an established kingdom. The pillars enhanced this understanding of the symbolism of the temple. Pillars not only made a structure grander; they also imparted the impression of permanence. The names Jakin and Boaz (“He has established” and “By His strength”) encouraged this understanding (pp. 47-48).

Longman: Finally, the name of the basin of water, the Sea, has obvious significance. Throughout the Bible, the personified sea is often perceived as God’s rival, representing the anti-creation forces of chaos.... Here the Sea is bounded, controlled right outside the temple, which represents God’s throne. This seems to represent the fact that God has defeated His adversaries, the former inhabitants of the land, and has firmly established His people there (p. 48).

C. Selected Questions for Further Reflection

1. Describe how an altar and a tabernacle relate to one another.
2. We saw how important it was that God initiated and set the pattern for the tabernacle structure. Are there any parallels to today’s worship?
3. God supplied the material needs to build the tabernacle, but today we bring tithes to support the building and maintenance of church buildings and programs. Is this a change?
4. Does the Old Testament, particularly the section about the construction of the tabernacle, have implications for how we build church buildings today?
5. Should our church architecture express our understanding of who God is and our relationship with Him? If so, what form should our church architecture take?

Next Week: Still on Longman chapters 3 & 4