

IV. Sacred Spaces: The Heavenly Pattern

June 25, 2017

Chapters 3 & 4

Purpose: To recognize that every aspect of the tabernacle—its design, its materials, its services—point us to our need for the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Key Verses: ³⁴Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and **the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.** ³⁵And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and **the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle** (Exodus 40:34-35).

A. Introduction

Last week, we looked at Longman chapters 3 & 4 on the tabernacle and the temple. Today, I want to talk further about the symbolism of the tabernacle (and by extension, the temple). This lesson is one that I have used several times before at Covenant, first in 2001 and most recently in 2013. However, I think it is a good way for us to think about the typological meaning of the tabernacle. Longman points out that “the symbolism of the entire structure revolved around ... one central idea: the Holy God was present in the midst of the camp” (p. 32). I want to develop that idea further, by looking at how the tabernacle teaches us what the presence of God means in our lives today.

How many of you have ever gone camping? I mean real camping. I once worked for a business manager who had a really spoiled wife. For her “camping out” meant staying at a Holiday Inn instead of a Hilton. I mean real camping, not going to summer camp and staying in cabins, but real roughing it camping. Now, what supplies do we need for real camping? We need sleeping bags, cooking supplies, firewood and matches, and of course, a tent. What is the purpose of the tent? A tent provides shelter or a place to call home. It has to be portable/movable, because it’s temporary, not permanent. However, in a way it’s a picture of our permanent house.

Likewise, the tabernacle is God’s tent, it’s God’s home, it’s where His special presence resides (Ex. 40:34-35). The tabernacle is often called the “tabernacle (or tent) of meeting”, because that is where God comes to meet or talk with man (cp. Num. 12:4-5). But the tabernacle is still just a tent. It’s moveable, it’s portable. It’s temporary, it’s not God’s permanent dwelling place.

Where is God’s permanent dwelling place? In heaven, of course. Even though it is just a “tent,” everything about the tabernacle is designed to picture for us a greater reality, sort of like that shadow in Plato’s Cave. Remember Hebrews 8:1-5:

¹The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ²and who serves in **the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord**, not by man. ³Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. ⁴If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. ⁵They serve at **a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.** This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you **make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain**” (Hebrews 8:1-5).

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The tabernacle is built according to a heavenly pattern. Likewise, the temple was also designed by God, revealed to David, and built according to His specifications (cp. 1 Chr. 28:11-19). That means the tabernacle of God is a picture, a picture for us, a symbol of heavenly realities, not just earthly shadows. Let's take a brief look at this pattern. Last week, I described the tabernacle and the temple. Think back to that description. Think about the layout. Think about the materials of construction. Think about the dimensions. Think about the layers. Think about the order. Think about the purpose and meaning of each part of the tabernacle complex. What are some things that we can learn from just looking at the tabernacle and its pattern?

DeHaan: The only building ever constructed upon this earth which was perfect from its very beginning and outset in every detail, and never again needed attention, addition, or alteration, was the tabernacle in the wilderness. The blueprint, the pattern and the plan, the design, and all of its specifications, were minutely made in heaven, committed unto Moses for the children of Israel, while he was in the mountain, shortly after their deliverance from Egypt. Every single detail was designed by Almighty God, every part had a prophetic, redemptive, and typical significance. There is no portion of Scripture richer in meaning, more perfect in its teaching of the plan of redemption, than this divinely designed building. God Himself was the architect, and every detail points to some aspect of the character and work of the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and, in its complete form, it is probably the most comprehensive, detailed revelation of Jesus the Son of God, and the plan of salvation in the entire Old Testament (p. 13).

What kinds of things does the tent of the tabernacle itself (apart from its furniture) teach us? Well, I can think of at least five, and we will try today just to cover those five things, although there are many, many more lessons that could be derived.

B. Lesson

¹Moreover, you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen and blue and purple and scarlet yarns; you shall make them with cherubim skillfully worked into them. ²The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits; all the curtains shall be the same size. ³Five curtains shall be coupled to one another, and the other five curtains shall be coupled to one another. ⁴And you shall make loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain in the first set. Likewise you shall make loops on the edge of the outermost curtain in the second set. ⁵Fifty loops you shall make on the one curtain, and fifty loops you shall make on the edge of the curtain that is in the second set; the loops shall be opposite one another. ⁶And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains one to the other with the clasps, so that the tabernacle may be a single whole.

⁷You shall also make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle; eleven curtains shall you make. ⁸The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits. The eleven curtains shall be the same size. ⁹You shall couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and the sixth curtain you shall double over at the front of the tent. ¹⁰You shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in one set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the second set.

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¹¹You shall make fifty clasps of bronze, and put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together that it may be a single whole. ¹²And the part that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. ¹³And the extra that remains in the length of the curtains, the cubit on the one side, and the cubit on the other side, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on this side and that side, to cover it. ¹⁴And you shall make for the tent a covering of tanned rams' skins and a covering of goatskins on top.

¹⁵You shall make upright frames for the tabernacle of acacia wood. ¹⁶Ten cubits shall be the length of a frame, and a cubit and a half the breadth of each frame. ¹⁷There shall be two tenons in each frame, for fitting together. So shall you do for all the frames of the tabernacle. ¹⁸You shall make the frames for the tabernacle: twenty frames for the south side; ¹⁹and forty bases of silver you shall make under the twenty frames, two bases under one frame for its two tenons, and two bases under the next frame for its two tenons; ²⁰and for the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side twenty frames, ²¹and their forty bases of silver, two bases under one frame, and two bases under the next frame. ²²And for the rear of the tabernacle westward you shall make six frames. ²³And you shall make two frames for corners of the tabernacle in the rear; ²⁴they shall be separate beneath, but joined at the top, at the first ring. Thus shall it be with both of them; they shall form the two corners. ²⁵And there shall be eight frames, with their bases of silver, sixteen bases; two bases under one frame, and two bases under another frame.

²⁶You shall make bars of acacia wood, five for the frames of the one side of the tabernacle, ²⁷and five bars for the frames of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the frames of the side of the tabernacle at the rear westward. ²⁸The middle bar, halfway up the frames, shall run from end to end. ²⁹You shall overlay the frames with gold and shall make their rings of gold for holders for the bars, and you shall overlay the bars with gold. ³⁰Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to the plan for it that you were shown on the mountain.

³¹And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. It shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it. ³²And you shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with hooks of gold, on four bases of silver. ³³And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you the Holy Place from the Most Holy. ³⁴You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the Most Holy Place. ³⁵And you shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle opposite the table, and you shall put the table on the north side.

³⁶You shall make a screen for the entrance of the tent, of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, embroidered with needlework. ³⁷And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold. Their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five bases of bronze for them (Exodus 26:1-37).

1. The Glory of Heaven

First, the tabernacle points to the glory of heaven. How does it do that? Remember that the tabernacle is a “copy and shadow of what is in heaven.” Therefore, whatever we are to understand about the tabernacle, we must realize that it is a picture of heaven. In what way?

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Look at the materials. Gold, silver, fine linen, acacia wood which does not rot or decay. The materials speak to the glory and majesty of heaven. The Most Holy Place is covered with a covering with woven cherubim, the angels of heaven, flying around God's throne – the Ark of the Covenant. You see, the Most Holy Place is God's throne room, and He is surrounded by His heavenly host – the cherubim or angels of heaven.

In the same way, the interior of Solomon's temple has carvings of cherubim all throughout it on the cedar walls (cp. 1 Kgs. 6:29). In addition, two large cherubim made out of olivewood and overlaid with gold were set up inside the Holy of Holies (1 Kgs. 6:23-28). These golden cherubim were huge: each was 15 feet tall (10 cubits), and each had a 15-foot wingspan! They were situated side-by-side, such that the wingspan of the two cherubim touched both outside walls and they touched in the middle. These cherubim were set up to watch (guard) the Holy of Holies.

The cherubim remind us of the glory of Heaven, as describe by Isaiah:

¹In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." ⁴At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke (Isaiah 6:1-4).

Even more impressive is the vision of the glory of heaven that Ezekiel sees in Ezekiel chapter 1, with the four living creatures and the whirlwind, and the brightness and glory all around. We know from Ezekiel 10:1-2 that these living creatures are cherubim. And this reminds us of John's vision of heaven in Revelation 4, where the four living creatures as described in Ezekiel 1 are singing the song of Isaiah 6: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" So, the tabernacle is covered with images of these awesome angelic beings, because they exist in heaven in the presence of God and His throne.

Poythress: The temple had the same basic arrangements as the tabernacle, two rooms and an outside yard, but each of the horizontal dimensions was doubled. ... Solomon himself recognized that the true dwelling of God is in heaven. As he dedicated the temple he spoke of the earthly temple as a place where God had put His name (1 Kgs. 8:29). Heaven is the true dwelling place of God (1 Kgs. 8:30, 43) and the place from which God hears. Thus Solomon recognized what we have learned from Hebrews, that the tabernacle and the temple were shadows of heavenly things. God dwells in a special sense in heaven. Of course, in the broadest sense, as Solomon reminds us, "The heavens, even the highest heaven cannot contain you" (1 Kgs. 8:27). Yet in a particular way the visible sky represents God's own majesty and inaccessibility (pp. 13-14).

When we look at the tabernacle again, we see unmistakable signs of symbolism of heaven. The two cherubim by the ark are replicas of angelic heavenly beings guarding the throne of God (cp. Ez. 1; Gen. 3:24). More figures of cherubim are woven into the veil that guards the way into the Most Holy Place (Ex. 26:31). Still more cherubim are woven into the ten curtains that constitute the main material of the tent, enclosing the two rooms (Ex. 26:1). The curtains are woven with blue, symbolizing the royal blue of heaven. The Ten Commandments are the very words of God, heavenly words in the fullest sense. They are written on tablets that Moses received from the mount, that is,

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from a symbolic replica of heaven. They are placed in the ark of the testimony (Ex. 25:21), the most holy object in the entire tent. The ark itself is a box with the approximate shape of an ancient king's footstool. Thus, the ark represents part of God's throne room in heaven. ... Thus the tabernacle as a whole is a replica of heaven. When God comes to dwell with the Israelites, He brings down to them in His wonderful condescension a little replica of heaven (pp. 14-15).

Heaven is a glorious place, and those in Scripture who come into the presence of heaven are struck down. Isaiah says, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in a land of unclean lips!" (Is. 6:5). Ezekiel falls on his face in fear when he sees his vision (Ez. 1:28). When John saw the image of the glorified Christ before his vision of Heaven, he fell down as dead (Rev. 1:17). Heaven is a glorious place, and the tabernacle gives us just a hint of how awesome it truly is.

2. The Holiness of God

Second, the tabernacle points to the holiness of God. This idea follows from the previous one. First of all, what does "holy" or "holiness" mean? It means "to be set apart," or "to be sacred." It is the opposite of "common" or "profane" (not in the blasphemous sense). It's kind of like your best china, crystal, and silver. Normally, when you eat dinner, you use your everyday plates/dishes, you use your everyday flatware, you drink out of your everyday glasses, and you eat at your ordinary kitchen table. But for special occasions, like holidays (Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving), or when a special visitor comes to eat with you, you set out the special china that has to be hand washed, you get out the expensive silver forks and knives that need to be polished, you drink from crystal goblets, and you eat at the fancy table. That's the difference between holy and common, sacred and profane. The holy things are set apart and are not used for common, everyday purposes. In the same way, God is holy – He is set apart from the rest of creation – us common people. And yet, we are commanded to be holy like Him: "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:1).

How does the tabernacle point to God's holiness? Look again at the center of the tabernacle complex – the Holy of Holies. This is God's throne room. This is where His special presence resides (Ex. 40:34-35). This room in all its aspects is the most perfect. As we move outward, the aspects of the Tabernacle become less perfect.

For example, look at the dimensions: 10x10x10 – A perfect cube with a perfect number (10, like 7, being a number of perfection or completion). The dimensions of the Holy of Holies in the Temple were exactly twice in each dimension (20x20x20) – again, a perfect cube. As we move outward, the Holy Place is 20x10x10, double the size of the Most Holy Place, but no longer a perfect cube. The courtyard is 50x100x5 cubits. (You didn't know you would get a little Math Class today!)

Look at the progression in the materials of construction: The tabernacle itself is composed of acacia wood boards covered in gold and connected through gilded acacia rods through golden rings, supported by silver supports. The courtyard has bronze sockets instead of silver ones; it has silver hooks and bands instead of gold. As we proceed outward, the metals go from gold to silver to bronze.

As we go from inside of the Tabernacle to the outside, the fabrics go from higher quality to lesser quality: from fine linen with cherubim woven in, to goat's hair, to ram's skin, to badger or

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porpoise skins. The beauty of the interior of the Tabernacle where God's presence is located is beautiful; the exterior is more non-descript (yet functional – waterproof).

The most holy piece of furniture – the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat – is God's throne and located in His throne room. The pieces of furniture are lesser as we move out from the ark.

Poythress: All these aspects [materials, dimensions, furniture location] of the tabernacle may be expected to say something to Israel about the meaning of communion with God and dwelling with God. They picture the nature of God's dwelling and the manner in which He is approached. ... The inner and outer rooms are both covered with blue curtains and interwoven cherubim, signifying heaven. All the furnishings in the rooms are covered with gold, signifying the royal splendor of heaven. Outside in the courtyard, the altar is made of bronze, a less expensive metal, and common Israelite worshipers may enter. The courtyard is much more earthy in character. The relations between the two would doubtless suggest to Israelites their own earthiness in contrast with God's heavenly character. Israelites are on earth and God is in heaven. ... Why are there two rooms rather than one? ... The use of two rooms ... emphasizes the remoteness of God's presence, since there is more than one layer separating the Israelites from the inner room. The imagery of heaven suggests something more, namely, that the outer room corresponds more directly to the visible heavens, with sun moon, stars, and clouds, while the inner room corresponds more directly to the very throne room of God Himself, which is distinct from the visible sky (p. 16).

All of these details point out to us the separateness of God and His holiness.

3. The Sinfulness of Man

The entire service of the tabernacle points to the sinfulness of man. The primary purpose of this Sanctuary was the sacrifice for sin and the application of blood atonement. Of interest is the order in which Law and tabernacle are revealed in the book of Exodus.

In Exodus 19-24, Moses is up on the Mountain to receive the Law, including the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 24, Moses ratifies the Covenant of the Lord with the people of Israel (Ex. 24:1-8). The people say that they will be obedient, and do all the words of the Law (24:7). But you know, and I know, and God knows, that they are unable to obey completely. They are sinners, fallen from God, and condemned by their actions, even as we are. Notice that the Lord doesn't say, "All right, you can keep this law, and so you can save yourselves, and therefore, you need no Redeemer, no atonement." No! Instead we read in Ex. 24:8 that "Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.'" See, what Israel needed was grace and mercy, not their own righteousness and achievement. They were sinners, and they needed atonement, they needed blood sacrifice, they needed a substitute to die in their place.

Then Moses goes up on the mountain again for forty days, and this time, God reveals to him the pattern for the tabernacle (Ex. 25-31, cp. especially Ex. 25:8-9). This tabernacle was far better than law; it is a picture of grace, a picture of Jesus Christ and the glorious type of our substitute and redeemer.

Moses goes up on the mountain to receive two things from God: the Law and the tabernacle. The first is to show the awfulness of sin and man's desperate failure; the second to show God's way of redemption for the guilty ones who had broken His law.

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This same order of law and grace, of commandments and tabernacle is repeated again in the rest of the book of Exodus. Exodus 32-34 shows the failure of the people to keep the law (golden calf incident), and the breaking of the tablets and the giving of the second tablets of the Law. Then in chapters 35-40, the tabernacle is built, again a reminder to us of the need for grace.

So remember, in the second half of the book of Exodus, we see the twin themes of law and grace twice. God gave Israel two things at Mt. Sinai: the law – to condemn, to convict of sin, and to convince man of his own helplessness; and secondly, the pattern of the tabernacle – to show God’s remedy for sin, that they might turn from the law to grace, from Sinai to Calvary, from their own righteousness to God’s righteousness.

4. The Separation Between God and Man

The entire layout of the tabernacle and its services point out the gulf of separation between a holy God and sinful men. There are progressively greater and greater restrictions to enter and come close to the spiritual center of the tabernacle complex, the Holy of Holies.

The interfaces between the various spaces of the tabernacle are carefully designed to separate the places, to isolate them so that the unholiness of Israel cannot come in contact with the holiness of God. One curtain or “veil” separates the inner room, the Most Holy Place, from the outer room, the Holy Place. ... It signifies the inaccessibility of God generally, but more particularly, the fact that the highest heaven, the immediate throne room of God, is distinct from the visible sky and cannot be seen. A second curtain separates the Holy Place from the courtyard. From an Israelite point of view it signifies the inaccessibility even of the visible heaven. Human beings cannot climb to heaven. But the curtains are both separations and doorways, inasmuch as the high priest can pass through even the first curtain once a year. ... Remember now that the courtyard represents the earth. The tabernacle, i.e., the two rooms taken together, is filled with the gold of heavenly royalty, while the courtyard has only bronze furnishings. But does not the tabernacle touch the courtyard by resting on the earth of the courtyard? It does not. Sockets or bases made of silver hold up the entire tabernacle so that no part of its sides touches the courtyard. The silver sockets or bases function like a solid form of curtain to separate heaven from earth, or to separate God from human beings (p. 26).

On the outside of the courtyard is a fence made of curtains. The curtains separate the common people of Israel from the courtyard. As such, they are a less exalted replica of the curtains from the tabernacle. Bases of bronze, corresponding to the bronze of the altar and washing basin, separate them from direct contact with the earth. The posts have silver bands and hooks, corresponding to the silver bases of the tabernacle. The symbolism seems to picture a situation in which the bottom tip of the tabernacle, i.e., the silver bases, fit into the top tip of the courtyard, i.e., the silver bands and hooks. The tabernacle is a kind of upper story to the courtyard. Such is a fitting symbolism for a replica of heaven placed in the middle of the courtyard, which is a replica of earth (pp. 26-27).

Anyone can be outside the courtyard walls – the Israelite, the stranger that is within your gates, the pagan, anyone and everyone. This is a picture of the world. The world is outside of God’s presence. There is a wall of separation between men and God. Men are outside of God’s presence because they are sinful – they can’t approach a holy God on their own merit.

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So how did they approach God? Through the tabernacle. The tabernacle itself is the tent of meeting – it is where you go to meet with God. And to meet with God on His terms, you had to bring blood, you had to have a substitutionary sacrifice atone for your sins and make you holy; because where God is, there is holy ground.

Any Jew could go into the courtyard and offer a sacrifice at the burnt altar. Israelites had access to the courtyard. Gentiles and pagans did not. So already we see a narrowing.

The temple of New Testament had four courtyards surrounding it rather than the single courtyard of the tabernacle. The outermost courtyard was the Court of the Gentiles. Any Gentile (e.g., Roman or Greek) could enter this colonnaded area, but could not proceed into any of the inner courts, upon pain of death. The Roman government respected the Jewish holy spaces and actually allowed the Jews to execute even Roman citizens who violated this policy. It is for this alleged crime (allowing a Gentile past the court of Gentiles) that Paul is attacked and nearly beaten to death by the temple mob (cp. Acts 21:27-32). Beyond the Court of the Gentiles, Herod's Temple had three further courtyards: the Court of the Women; the Court of Israel; and the Court of the Priests. As with the tabernacle, we have a picture of increasingly restricted access as one proceeds from the outer to inner courts of the temple precincts.

We often say that there is ordinarily no salvation outside the church. Why is that? Because the church has been entrusted with the gospel, the message of salvation. If you want to hear and receive the gospel of salvation, you will go to the church, you will be in the church. Yes, there is salvation outside the church, but ordinarily people are saved within the jurisdiction of the church. But just because salvation is ordinarily found inside the church, it doesn't follow that all those who are inside the church are automatically guaranteed salvation. The history of Israel and the symbolism of the tabernacle/temple access teach us that.

The courtyard access represents the church. Not everyone in the visible church is saved, even as not every Israelite was saved. But they were in covenant relationship with him, and so had closer access to God than those outside the covenant. But, just because you are here today, just because you attend church here at Covenant, does not mean you are saved, does not guarantee that you are right with God. Israelites could go into that courtyard, but could still be a million miles away from God spiritually, if their hearts weren't right. And the same applies to you. Don't make the mistake of being comfortable in the church. It won't save you. Only faith in Christ alone will save you.

The next level of separation occurs when we try to enter into the Holy Place, or the outer room of the tabernacle itself. Only priests and Levites could enter the Holy Place. Not just any Israelite, but only those consecrated to special service and approved by God.

Poythress: The tabernacle expresses another side to the character of God, namely, that He is holy and inaccessible. The altar, several coverings, and two sets of curtains bar the way into His presence. No one can enter into the inner room (the Most Holy Place) except the high priest, and even then he does so only once a year in a special ceremony, during which he is protected from his sin and from the accusation of the law by the blood that he sprinkles on the mercy seat (Lev. 16). Death is threatened to transgressors of God's holiness (Ex. 19:12-13, 21-25). Even the priests may suffer death if they do not honor God (Num. 10:1-2; Lev. 22:9; 16:2; Ex. 30:21). They are especially in danger of death as they approach the inner rooms of the tabernacle (p. 12).

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Finally, the most severe restriction is in regard to entrance to the Most Holy Place. Only one man could pass through the veil of separation between the two rooms of the Tabernacle and enter into the Holy of Holies – the high priest – and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement, and then only with blood as an offering. This was so serious and potentially deadly, that Jewish traditions teach that the priests would tie a rope around the high priest's leg. The high priest's garment had little bells sewn on its bottom fringe. As long as he was alive and moving around inside the Holy of Holies, the other priests could hear the bells. But if the high priest did anything to displease God and was struck down dead, the bells would stop and the priests would drag out the body of the high priest with the rope rather than risk entering the Holy of Holies themselves. Talk about restricted access!

5. The Way of Salvation

You see, these levels of separation teach us about the awful gulf that separates a sinful people from a holy God. In the Old Testament, that separation was physical, visible, palpable, and real. Man once had unrestricted, free access to God in the Garden of Eden. But ever since the Fall, ever since the cherubim with swords of fire barred the way to the sanctuary of God and His holy presence, sinful man has been separated from God. There is no way back to Eden. But God has provided a way back to His presence, and that is also pictured for us in the Tabernacle.

Fifth and finally, the tabernacle teaches us about the way of salvation. Today, although that separation pictured in the tabernacle arrangement is still real, Christ bridges the gap for us. In Christ, the veil between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place has been torn in two (Luke 23:45). You see, the separation between God and Man was bridged with Christ. Because of Christ's atoning sacrifice, we have direct access to God. We can approach God directly, boldly, without the need for an intercessory priesthood (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-25).

By these means the Lord shows the preciousness of the love between the Father and the Son. The tabernacle symbolism points to Christ. Defilement of this symbolism constitutes an attack on Christ, and so rouses God's indignation in intense form. The same truths also embody a lesson concerning Christ's sacrificial death. God's holiness is so great that faults against Him deserve death. Christ Himself was perfectly holy. But when He bore our sins and "became sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21), the Father had to put Him to death. ... Christ had to die. There was no other way by which we might enter into the true tabernacle in heaven and enjoy the blessing of God's presence forever. ... For those outside of Christ, the death penalty for violations of God's holiness says something else. When Christ returns to judge the world, God's holiness will appear in intense form. Just as at Mount Sinai the mount was covered with the glory of God's holiness, so at the Second Coming the world as a whole will be covered with His glory (2 Th. 1:7-10). The wicked must experience eternal death, because they are violators of the holiness of Christ (pp. 12-13).

There is only one door – only one way in to the Tabernacle Complex. That door faces east, toward the rising sun, toward Jesus, "the Sun of righteousness, risen with healing in His wings (Mal. 4:2). Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6), and "I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9). And again, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby you must be saved (Acts 4:12).

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C. Conclusion

The tabernacle is the tent of meeting with God. We can meet with God and have fellowship with Him, but only on His terms. We have to have a blood sacrifice for the remission of our sins. We need to be made holy, as God is holy, in order to approach Him. We can approach God boldly because we have been redeemed, and our righteousness is the righteousness and holiness of Christ.

How does He do that? Christ is not only our high priest and perfect mediator, but He is also our perfect sacrifice (Heb. 9:11-14, 23-28).

¹¹When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. ¹²He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (Hebrews 9:11-14).

²³It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. ²⁵Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him (Hebrews 9:23-28).

Christ is the Way of Salvation; He is the only Way. He tears down the veil of separation between a holy God and sinful man and provides us with direct access to God. He reconciles lost sinners with a holy God, enabling His people to enter into the glory of heaven. All this is pictured in the tabernacle, which is a pattern of God's dwelling place in heaven. And if we are Christians, trusting in Christ for salvation, one day we will get to see the reality of Heaven and the glory of God, not just the shadow here on earth.

So, the tabernacle teaches us about the Glory of Heaven, the Holiness of God, the Sinfulness of Man, the Separation between God and Man, and finally the Way of Salvation. In all these things, the tabernacle points us to Christ.

Next Week: Read Longman chapters 5