BIBLE TOPICS · OLD TESTAMENT

The Tabernacle

God Dwelling with His People · Exodus 25:8

Set Up at Sinai
c. 1445 B.C.

Court 100 × 50 cubits
About 150 × 75 ft

Seven holy pieces
Altar to mercy seat

Fulfilled in Christ
He dwelt among us

EXODUS 25 · 35–40

How the Tabernacle Was Made

God gave the plan, the people gave the materials, and Spirit-filled workers built it.

THE PLAN

God's Own Pattern

Every detail came from God on the mount.

"And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount."

EXODUS 25:40

THE GIFTS

Willing Offerings

The people gave freely from the heart.

"The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work"

EXODUS 36:5

THE BUILDERS

Bezaleel and Aholiab

Craftsmen filled with God's Spirit.

"And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding"

EXODUS 31:3

THE GOLD

About 29 Talents of Gold

Plus about 100 talents of silver and 70 of brass.

"twenty and nine talents, and seven hundred and thirty shekels"

EXODUS 38:24

THE DAY

Reared Up

The first day of the second year, c. 1445 B.C.

"on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up."

EXODUS 40:17

THE GLORY

The Cloud Came Down

God showed He had come to dwell there.

"and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."

EXODUS 40:34

KEY VERSE

"And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it."

Exodus 25:8–9 (KJV)

The Tabernacle Diagram

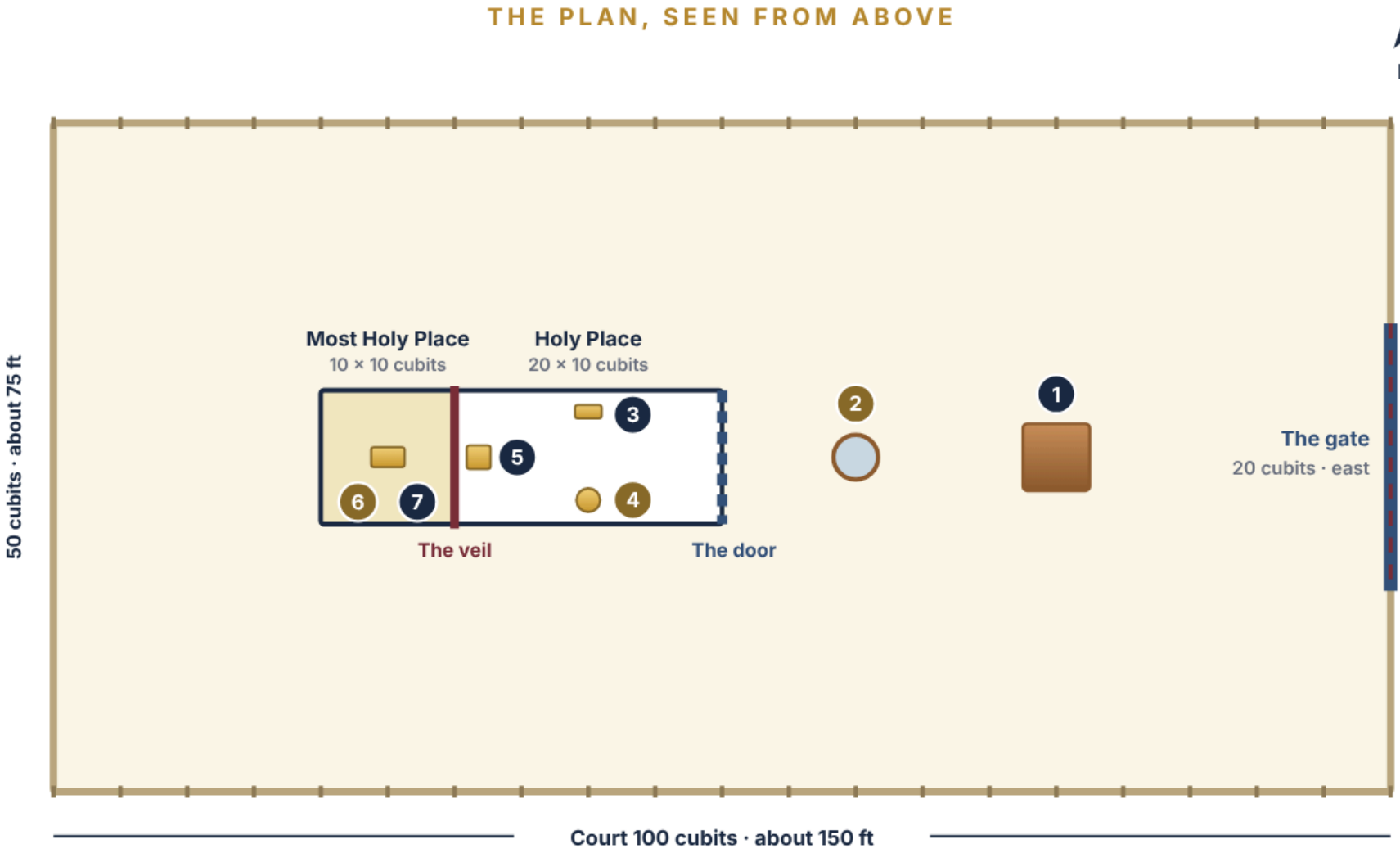
EXODUS 25–40 · HEBREWS 9:1–12

The Tabernacle

God's dwelling in the middle of Israel's camp

Set up at Mount Sinai · c. 1445 B.C. · Exodus 40:17

THE PLAN, SEEN FROM ABOVE



Linen hangings 5 cubits high (about 7½ ft) on pillars of brass all around · Exodus 27:9–18

THE SEVEN HOLY PIECES

In the order a priest met them, from the gate toward the presence of God

1 The Brazen Altar
Sacrifices for sin
EXODUS 27:1–8

2 The Laver
The priests wash
EXODUS 30:17–21

3 The Table of Shewbread
Twelve loaves · north side
EXODUS 25:23–30

4 The Golden Candlestick
Seven lamps · south side
EXODUS 25:31–40

5 The Altar of Incense
Before the veil
EXODUS 30:1–10

6 The Ark of the Covenant
The tables of the law
EXODUS 25:10–16

7 The Mercy Seat
Where God met Israel
EXODUS 25:17–22

THE FOUR COVERINGS OF THE TENT

From the inside out · Exodus 26:1–14

1 Fine twined linen with cherubim — Blue, purple and scarlet · EXODUS 26:1

2 Curtains of goats' hair — Eleven curtains · EXODUS 26:7

3 Rams' skins dyed red — EXODUS 26:14

4 Badgers' skins — The outer covering · EXODUS 26:14

Under them stood 48 boards of shittim wood overlaid with gold, in 96 sockets of silver (Exodus 26:15–25).

KEY VERSE

"And let them make Me a sanctuary;
that I may dwell among them."

EXODUS 25:8 (KJV)

Drawing for study, to the measurements in Exodus 26–27. A cubit is taken as about 18 inches.

The Seven Holy Pieces of Furniture

EXODUS 25–30

The Seven Holy Pieces of Furniture

Coming in through the gate, a priest met each piece in this order, moving from the court toward the presence of God.

1 THE COURT

The Brazen Altar

Shittim wood overlaid with brass, 5 cubits square. Sacrifices for sin.

"And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad"

EXODUS 27:1

2 THE COURT

The Laver

A basin of brass for the priests to wash.

"Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal"

EXODUS 30:18

3 THE HOLY PLACE

The Table of Shewbread

Twelve loaves, one for each tribe, on the north side.

"And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before Me alway."

EXODUS 25:30

4 THE HOLY PLACE

The Golden Candlestick

Seven lamps of pure gold on the south side.

"And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold"

EXODUS 25:31

5 THE HOLY PLACE

The Altar of Incense

Sweet incense burned morning and evening before the veil.

"And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony"

EXODUS 30:6

6 THE MOST HOLY PLACE

The Ark of the Covenant

A gold-covered chest holding the tables of the law.

"And they shall make an ark of shittim wood"

EXODUS 25:10

7 THE MOST HOLY PLACE

The Mercy Seat

The lid of pure gold with two cherubim, where God met Israel.

"And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold"

EXODUS 25:17

For a full study of the Ark and the mercy seat, with a labelled drawing and a map of the Ark's journey, see The Ark of the Covenant.

Coverings, Walls and the Camp

EXODUS 26 · 27

The Coverings, Walls and Court

From the outside the tabernacle looked plain. Its beauty was all on the inside.

COVERING 1 · INSIDE

Fine Linen with Cherubim

Ten curtains of blue, purple and scarlet.

"with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them."

EXODUS 26:1

COVERING 2

Goats' Hair

Eleven curtains laid over the linen.

"And thou shalt make curtains of goats' hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle"

EXODUS 26:7

COVERINGS 3 AND 4

Rams' Skins and Badgers' Skins

Red rams' skins, then a tough outer layer.

"a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins."

EXODUS 26:14

THE WALLS

48 Gold-Covered Boards

Each 10 cubits tall, in two sockets of silver.

"And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood standing up."

EXODUS 26:15

THE VEIL

Between Holy and Most Holy

Blue, purple and scarlet, with cherubim.

"and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy."

EXODUS 26:33

THE COURT

Linen Hangings and One Gate

100 × 50 cubits; a 20-cubit gate on the east.

"The length of the court shall be an hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where"

EXODUS 27:18

NUMBERS 2 · 3

How Israel Camped Around the Tabernacle

God placed His dwelling in the middle of the camp. Three tribes camped on each side, and the Levites camped closest of all.

EAST · TOWARD THE SUNRISING

Judah, Issachar, Zebulun

Judah led the march. Moses, Aaron and the priests camped before the gate.

NUMBERS 2:3–9 · 3:38

SOUTH

Reuben, Simeon, Gad

The Levite family of Kohath, who carried the holy furniture, camped on this side.

NUMBERS 2:10–16 · 3:29

WEST

Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin

The Levite family of Gershon, who carried the curtains, camped on this side.

NUMBERS 2:18–24 · 3:23

NORTH

Dan, Asher, Naphtali

The Levite family of Merari, who carried the boards, camped on this side.

NUMBERS 2:25–31 · 3:35

> *"Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch."*
>
> Numbers 2:2 (KJV)

The Tabernacle Points to Jesus

THE NEW TESTAMENT

How the Tabernacle Points to Jesus

Hebrews calls the tabernacle “a figure for the time then present” (Hebrews 9:9). Each part finds its meaning in Christ.

The Tabernacle	Fulfilled in Christ
One gate into the court EXODUS 27:16	“I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved” JOHN 10:9
The brazen altar of sacrifice EXODUS 27:1	“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” JOHN 1:29
The laver for washing EXODUS 30:19	“by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” TITUS 3:5
The bread on the table LEVITICUS 24:5	“I am the bread of life” JOHN 6:35
The golden candlestick EXODUS 25:37	“I am the light of the world” JOHN 8:12
The incense rising before God EXODUS 30:8	“He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” HEBREWS 7:25
The veil before the Most Holy Place EXODUS 26:31	“through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” HEBREWS 10:20
The mercy seat and the blood LEVITICUS 16:14	“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood” ROMANS 3:25

> *“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.”*
>
> Hebrews 9:11 (KJV)

FOR TODAY

What the Tabernacle Teaches Us Today

The tent is gone, but the God who dwelt in it now lives in His people.

1

There Is One Way to God

One gate, one door, one Saviour.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.”

JOHN 14:6

2

Come Boldly Through Jesus

The veil is open to every believer.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus”

HEBREWS 10:19

3

You Are God’s Temple

The Spirit now dwells in His people.

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

4

Give Willingly

Israel gave so freely they had to be stopped.

“for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

2 CORINTHIANS 9:7

5

Follow His Leading

Move when God moves; rest when He rests.

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

PROVERBS 3:6

6

Look Forward to Heaven

God will dwell with His people for ever.

“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them”

REVELATION 21:3

Key Themes

KEY THEMES

Six Truths the Tabernacle Teaches

The tabernacle teaches six truths about God and the way to Him that run through the whole Bible.

1

God Wants to Dwell with Us

He chose to live in the middle of His people.

"And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God."

EXODUS 29:45

2

God Is Holy

Walls, a veil and priests guarded His presence.

"that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail"

LEVITICUS 16:2

3

Worship God's Way

Every detail followed His pattern.

"Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he."

EXODUS 40:16

4

Sin Requires Blood

The way in began at the altar.

"and without shedding of blood is no remission."

HEBREWS 9:22

5

God Leads His People

The cloud on the tabernacle guided every move.

"For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night"

EXODUS 40:38

6

Fulfilled in Christ

Jesus is God dwelling with us.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"

JOHN 1:14