Jesus in the Tabernacle pt.1

1. Introduction

a. At Mount Sinai, after Israel had been delivered from Egypt and was beginning its journey to the Promised Land, God instructed His people to build a tabernacle—a mobile tent of worship where they could meet with Him on their journey.

Exodus 25:1-9 *The Lord spoke to Moses, [2] "Tell the Israelites to take an offering for me; from every person motivated by a willing heart you are to receive my offering. [3] This is the offering you are to accept from them: gold, silver, bronze, [4] blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair, [5] ram skins dyed red, fine leather, acacia wood, [6] oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for fragrant incense, [7] onyx stones, and other gems to be set in the ephod and in the breastpiece. [8] Let them make for me a sanctuary, so that I may live among them. [9] According to all that I am showing you—the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings—you must make it exactly so.*

b. Exodus 22 makes it clear that it was God who decided that there should be a tabernacle and its construction had to be exact to the pattern that God would give to Moses. In many different passages (Exo 25:9, Exo 26:30, Exo 39:32, Exo 39:42-43, Act 7:44, Heb 8:5) God restated that the construction had to be precisely as He would declare.

c. These verses clearly establish the purpose of the tabernacle – it was to enable God's people to fellowship with Him. God's desire has always been to dwell with man – to live among us. The tabernacle provided a holy place within which God and man could dwell together.

John 1:14 *Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.*

d. Jesus became flesh and came to dwell among us— He "tabernacled" among us. He pitched His tent in the midst of human beings just as God did in the wilderness. As we look at the tabernacle we will see that each part of it shows us an aspect of Christ and God's divine purpose for His people. We will look at these as we journey through the tabernacle from the outer gate through to the Holy of Holies. *(illustration of the tabernacle attached)*

e. In Exodus 25 – 30 God gives Moses full instructions for the building and furnishing of the tabernacle. It is highly detailed and required considerable wealth. Present day scholars estimate that the cost of building the tabernacle today would have been in excess of 100 billion pounds. This was to be a place fit for a holy God!

f. All of this wealth was to be provided by the people with a willing heart. God's desire to dwell with man was never to be imposed – it is always an invitation to be responded to with a willing heart.

g. We also see that there are specific colours and materials that are to be used all of which have specific meaning (see chart attached)

2. The Gate (Ex.27:9-19)

a. The tabernacle was situated from East to West and was in the very centre of the camp with the 12 tribes camped around it. Every person's tent was pitched facing the tabernacle. They did not live with their backs to God, but with their faces toward Him. This highlighted the priority of God in the lives of the people. He was the focus of everything, having the centre and most important position.

b. All the tribes had equal access to Him. However, there was only one way for the people to go in, the East gate. This was 30 feet (10 meters) wide and made out of special linen. There are not many ways to God; there is only one way in provided by God. To come to Him, we must come His way. This entrance itself is a picture of the Lord Jesus. He is the door. He is the gate. He is the only entrance into salvation.

John 10:9 *I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will come in and go out, and find pasture.*

c. As you approached this gate you would have first noticed the colour on the curtain. Blue, purple and scarlet thread made up the fine linen curtain entrance. These colours would have reminded you that you were entering into something that was **heavenly** (blue) and involved **royalty** (purple). The scarlet would have reminded you that this was also a place of **sacrifice** and blood. As you thought about the fine linen you would have been reminded that this was a place of complete righteousness.

3. The Brazen Altar (Ex.27:1-8)

a. As you go through that gate, a solemn site would confront you for directly in your way would be the brazen altar with its sacrifices and perpetual fire.

Ex.27:1 *"You are to make the altar of acacia wood, 7½ feet long, and 7½ feet wide; the altar is to be square, and its height is to be 4½ feet*

b. The primary function of the altar was a place for burning animal sacrifices. For a sinful man to approach holy God, he had to be cleansed through the blood of an innocent animal sacrifice. A person who had committed sin, even unknowingly, would bring a sin offering, an animal such as a sheep or goat, one without blemish. God was also merciful. If a person was too poor to afford bringing a sheep they could bring a pair of birds, and if they were too poor for this they could bring flour.

Lev.1:4 *He must lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf.*

c. The act of laying hands on the animal would show the person was identifying with the sacrifice and symbolically the sins would then be passed to the animal. Blood atonement goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden, where God killed an animal in order to clothe them after they had sinned. Sacrifices were an ugly thing, highlighting the serious consequences of sin, and God's justice. The point is that someone has to be punished for sin, you or a substitute.

d. The sacrifices show us God's justice, but also God's mercy. He made a way for sinful man to come to Him. Although the blood of the sacrifices covered over the sins of the Israelites, they had to perform the sacrifices year after year, for they were not freed permanently of a guilty conscience.

e. However, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, came as the ultimate and last sacrifice for mankind when He offered up His life. As Isaiah prophesied, the Christ would be like a lamb that is led to slaughter and pierced for our transgressions. His blood was sprinkled and poured out at the cross for us. The altar was made out of wood, pointing us to Christ's final sacrifice on the cross.

1 Peter 1:18-19 *You know that from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors you were ransomed—not by perishable things like silver or gold,* ***19*** *but by precious blood like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb, namely Christ.*

Hebrews 9:13-14 *For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow sprinkled on those who are defiled consecrated them and provided ritual purity,* ***14*** *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.*

f. This fire on the altar was first started by God and then had to be kept burning continually. In the same way, the forgiveness of God is provided by Him and is always available to us through Jesus. He was the final sacrifice taking all the judgement of God. Any who are now 'in Christ' are forever safe.

4. The Bronze Laver (Ex.30:17-21)

a. On the altar, sacrifices were offered to cover over every person's sins. But the priests still had to ceremonially wash in the water in the bronze laver. They had to do this every single time they entered the tabernacle under the penalty of death if they failed.

b. Approaching God was no casual thing. It was serious and treated as such. Even though the sacrifices on the altar covered their sins, the basin reminded them that they still lived with the effects of sin. These needed to be regularly confessed before God and washed away.Ex.38:8 tells us that the laver was made from the bronze mirrors of the women so as the priests looked into the laver to wash they would be reminded of their fallen humanity in the reflection from the highly polished bronze.

c. Conversion happens once, but cleansing needs to happen again and again. When we place our faith in Jesus, we are justified. Our position before God changes. That is shown by the altar, which points to the cross.

d. And yet even after conversion, sin is not instantly eradicated from our lives. Our thoughts and actions are still tainted by sin. So we need to regularly come into God's presence and ask forgiveness. Confession and consecration should be a regular part of our lives and worship.

e. It is Christ who washes away our sin as we come to Him in confession and repentance.

1 John 1:9 *But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.*

a. In the outer court everything was made from bronze. The altar itself was made from acacia wood but was completely covered in bronze. All of the utensils were bronze, even the wooden poles used to carry the altar were covered in bronze.

b. Bronze is where God's judgement deals with sin – only then can a person enter the pure and holy presence of God. This entire scene spoke of judgement. The fire that never went out, the continual sacrifices and shedding of blood, the use of bronze on everything. It spoke volumes of God's hatred of sin. It spoke volumes of the continual judgement of God upon that sin.

c. Only the consecrated ones, the priests, could go beyond the outer court. Without the sacrifice being paid and sin being washed away there is no access into communion with God.

5. The Golden Lampstand (Ex.25:31-40)

a. As the priests entered the Holy Place the only light they had came from the golden lampstand. To undertake their priestly duties they needed the light from the lampstand to be able to do so.

b. The golden lamp stand was made out of pure gold. There was to be no acacia wood or any other material used here - just pure gold and intricate and beautiful design. Yet even the simplest and most practical of objects was to be ornately designed, beautiful, and make use of the very best materials that man possesses. This is a reminder that God deserves man's absolute best in everything, even in seemingly small details.

c. We are also told in Lev.24 that the lamp was to burn continually.

Lev.24:1-2 *The Lord spoke to Moses: [2] "Command the Israelites to bring to you pure oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually.*

d. If the lamp was only to serve as practical use, that command does not make sense. The priests would not be working in the middle of the night. The lampstand also speaks of God's light to His people. Because of His presence with them, they need not live in darkness. If they would obey and serve Him, He would dwell with them and His light would never cease to shine the way.

e. Jesus is the ultimate fulfilment of this. He is "God with us." Israel had been dwelling in darkness without God's presence, without God's prophets, and without the temple. And then Jesus came, bringing the light once again.

John 8:12 ***Then*** *Jesus spoke out again, "I am the light of the world! The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

f. Jesus is the light that will always be with us and will never go out. As that lamp lit the way to God's presence, Jesus lights the way to God.

6. The Table of Showbread (Ex.25:23-30; Lev.24:5-9)

a. Made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold, the table of showbread measured three feet long by one and a half feet wide and two and a quarter feet high. A decorative framework of gold crowned the rim, and each corner of the table was equipped with gold rings to hold the carrying poles. These, too, were overlaid with gold. Once again the acacia wood overlaid with gold represents the person of Christ - again emphasising His humanity and deity.

b. On top of the table of showbread, on pure gold plates, Aaron and his sons placed 12 loaves of bread made from fine flour. Also called "bread of the presence," the loaves were arranged in two rows or piles of six, with frankincense sprinkled on each row.

c. The loaves of bread were considered holy, an offering before the presence of God, and could be eaten only by the priests. Each week on the Sabbath, the priests consumed the old bread and replaced it with fresh loaves and frankincense supplied by the people.

d. The table of showbread was a constant reminder of God's everlasting covenant with his people and his provision for the 12 tribes of Israel, represented by the 12 loaves. In the same way, Jesus provides physical sustenance, but more importantly He satisfies our spiritual hunger. If we come to Him, He will fill us from the inside out. Jesus is the Bread of Life. He provides for us. He sustains us. He fills us. No other food, nothing of this world, can satisfy our spiritual hunger and need for God. Only Jesus.

***John 6:33-35**. [33] For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." [34] So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread all the time!"[35] Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. The one who comes to me will never go hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty.*

e. At that time the priests ate it on behalf of the people but from the time of Jesus everyone can come to Him and eat the bread He offers for themselves.

7. The Altar of Incense (Ex.30:1-12)

a. The altar of incense sat directly in front of the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This altar was smaller than the brazen altar. It was a square with each side measuring 1.5 feet (1/2 meter and was 3 feet (1 meter) high. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. Four horns protruded from the four corners of the altar.

b. God commanded the priests to burn incense on the golden altar every morning and evening, the same time that the daily burnt offerings were made. The incense was to be left burning continually throughout the day and night as a pleasing aroma to the Lord. It was made of an equal part of four precious spices (stacte, onycha, galbanum and frankincense) and was considered holy. God commanded the Israelites not to use the same formula outside the tabernacle to make perfume for their own consumption (Exodus 30:34-38).

c. As Aaron offered up the incense (a type of prayer and intercession) each day, so this pictures the present day work of Jesus, our great High Priest, on our behalf.

***Heb.7:24-25** … but he holds his priesthood permanently since he lives forever. [25] So he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

d. So the brazen altar that stood in the outer court speaks of the sacrifice of Jesus made 2000 years ago to provide salvation for all who would believe. The golden altar in the Holy Place however speaks of the present work of the living resurrected Christ who intercedes and prays on behalf of His people!

e. No strange incense was to be offered on the altar. God prescribed the exact ingredients which were to be used. As God is the Designer of this world, He is also the Designer of true worship. From the beginning of the world, man has tried to worship God in his own way. Man-made religion was started by Cain, who offered his own things to God, but things which God rejected.

f. The incense God accepts is His Son.

***Eph.5:2** … just as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.*

g. That is the incense that God accepts. He accepts His Son and all those who through faith are 'in Christ'. Hence God didn't want anyone else trying to duplicate this fragrance because no one can replace or duplicate Christ! He is unique! For someone to take and use this particular fragrance upon himself would be to say that they are acceptable to God in and of themselves. We cannot take the glory for that which we have been given! He is the fragrant aroma to God and our boasting should only be in the Lord.

h. The incense is also a symbol of the prayers and intercession of the people going up to God as a sweet fragrance. God wanted His dwelling to be a place where people could approach Him

and pray to Him. The picture of prayers wafting up to heaven like incense is captured in David's psalm and also in John's vision in Revelations:

Psalm 141:2 *May you accept my prayer like incense, my uplifted hands like the evening offering*

Revelations 8:3-4 *Another angel holding a golden censer came and was stationed at the altar. A large amount of incense was given to him to offer up, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar that is before the throne. [4] The smoke coming from the incense, along with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand*

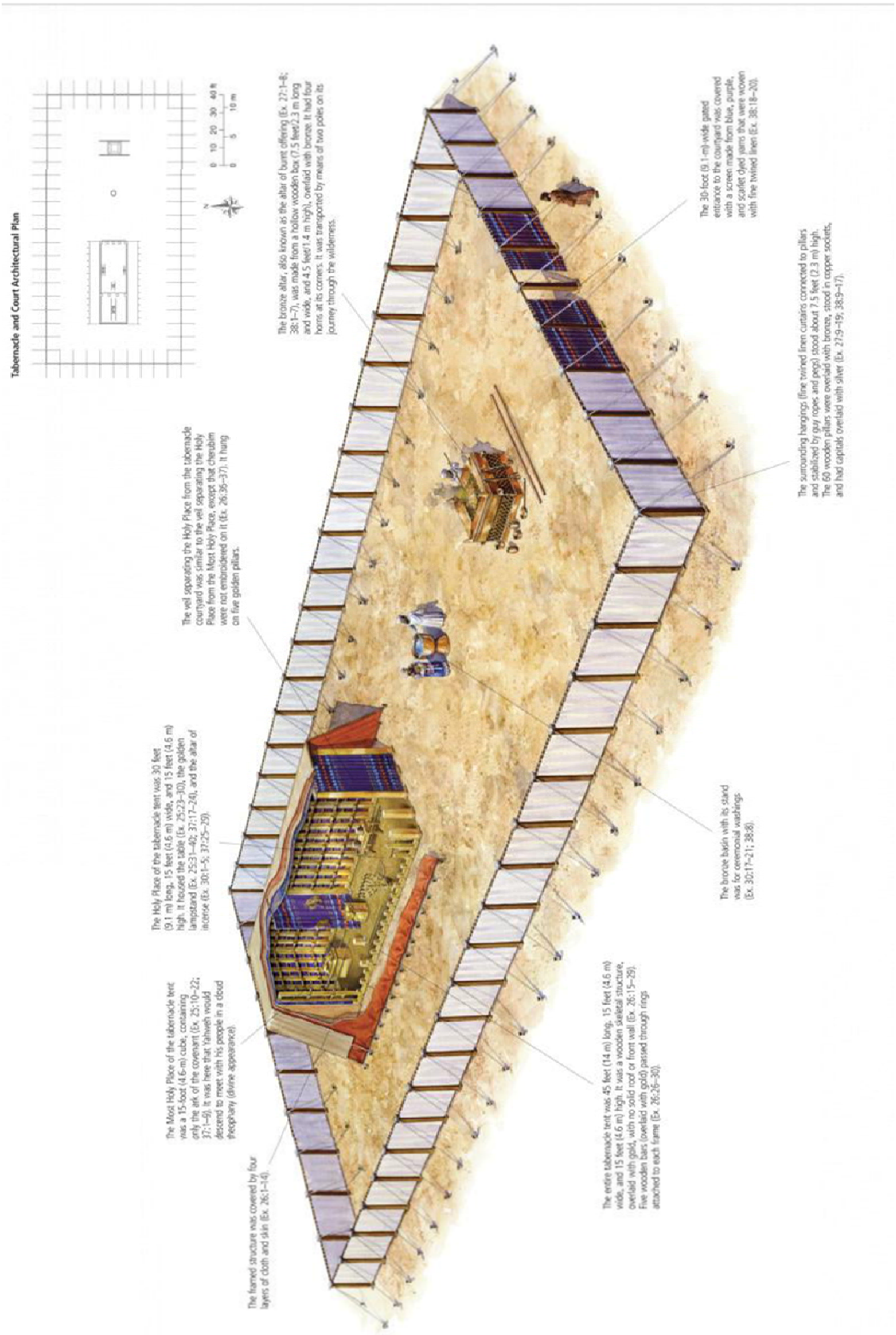
i. The golden altar also points us to Christ. He is our intercessor before God the Father. During His days on earth, Jesus prayed for the believers. He was like the high priest of the tabernacle, who bore the names of each of the Israelite tribes on his breastplate before God.

j. Just before He was betrayed and sentenced to death, Jesus interceded for His disciples and all believers, asking God to guard them from evil and sanctify them by His Word, and that they may see God's glory and be a witness to the world (John 17:1-26). Today, Jesus still is our high priest at the Father's side, interceding for God's people. As our prayers mingle with His they become sweet smelling incense before the throne of God.

Romans 8:34 *Christ is the one who died (and more than that, he was raised), who is at the right hand of God, and who also is interceding for us.*

k. Just as the outer court spoke of salvation, so we have seen that each of the items in the Holy Place speak to us concerning our fellowship and life in Christ. Jesus is the showbread that we feed upon. He is our High Priest who intercedes for us (the altar of incense) and He is the light that gives us life! The Holy Place also speaks to us of our need to feed upon Christ, to pray and intercede, and to receive revelation of God's ways through the light of His word. But there was still a holier place - the Holy of Holies.

Item	Symbolic Meaning	References
Gold	Deity	1 Cor 3:12, Rev 21:18-21
Silver	Redemption	Ex 36:24, 30:15
Brass/Bronze	Judgement	Ex 27:2, Num 21:9, Rev 1:15
Blue	Heavens/Heavenly nature	Ex 25:4, 26:31, 28:31
Purple	Kingly/Royalty	John 19:2, Rev 17:4
Scarlet	Blood Sacrifice	Lev 14:4, Josh 2:18, Isa 1:18
Fine Linen	Righteousness	Lev 6:10, Rev 19:8
Goats/Rams Hair	Atonement	Gen 15:9, Ex 12:5
Acacia Wood	Jesus' Humanity	Ex 26:15, Isa 53:2
Oil	Holy Spirit	Lev 14:16, Psa 47:7


Tabernacle and Court Architectural Plan
The bronze altar, also known as the altar of burnt offering (Ex. 27:1–8; 38:1–7), was made from a hollow wooden box (7.5 feet/2.3 m long and wide, and 4.5 feet/1.4 m high), overlaid with bronze. It had four horns at its corners. It was transported by means of two poles on its journey through the wilderness.
The 30-foot (9.1-m)-wide gated entrance to the courtyard was covered with a screen made from blue, purple, and scarlet dyed yarns that were woven with fine twined linen (Ex. 38:18–20).
The surrounding hangings (fine twined linen curtains connected to pillars and stabilized by guy ropes and pegs) stood about 7.5 feet (2.3 m) high. The 60 wooden pillars were overlaid with bronze, stood in copper sockets, and had capitals overlaid with silver (Ex. 27:9–19; 38:9–17).
The veil separating the Holy Place from the tabernacle courtyard was similar to the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, except that cherubim were not embroidered on it (Ex. 26:36–37). It hung on five golden pillars.
The Holy Place of the tabernacle tent was 30 feet (9.1 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high. It housed the table (Ex. 25:23–30), the golden lampstand (Ex. 25:31–40; 37:17–24), and the altar of incense (Ex. 30:1–5; 37:25–29).
The bronze basin with its stand was for ceremonial washings (Ex. 30:17–21; 38:8).
The Most Holy Place of the tabernacle tent was a 15-foot (4.6-m) cube, containing only the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10–22; 37:1–9). It was here that Yahweh would descend to meet with his people in a cloud theophany (divine appearance).
The entire tabernacle tent was 45 feet (14 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide, and 15 feet (4.6 m) high. It was a wooden skeletal structure, overlaid with gold, with no solid roof or front wall (Ex. 26:15–29). Five wooden bars (overlaid with gold) passed through rings attached to each frame (Ex. 26:26–30).
The framed structure was covered by four layers of cloth and skin (Ex. 26:1–14).