

The Tabernacle

Introductory Thoughts On The Tabernacle

Introduction

Reading: Ex. 25:1-8

When at Mount Hermon Conference Grounds in October 1998, the resident musician kindly invited the people to come for a piano and organ recital. He was magnificent. I sat thrilled with the loveliness of the music and the brilliance of the musician. He played Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Bach, and it was glorious! He then told us he was going to play a piece we would all know, but he asked us not to sing it. Wondering what that piece of music would be, for not everyone likes high brow music, he answered my unspoken question by telling us that he was going to play, "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star". This is ridiculous! This gentleman was brilliant, all ten fingers going at once, etc., and now he was going to play an elementary piece of music. Having given us a moment to recover he informed us, when Amadeus Mozart wrote it, he did so with twelve variations. I listened, enthralled.

Then the Lord spoke to my heart. I was caused to wonder, is it possible that I come to the Word of God as I did with Twinkle Twinkle Little Star? Is it possible that I subconsciously have the attitude that I know the passage, with the mild condescending suggestion that there may be other points, but I know the passage. How utterly foolish! Then I asked Father, mentioning to Him that He, God, could take an unsaved man like Mozart, and cause Him to take a simple piece of music and make deep and beautiful melodies. I prayed, "Father, will you take the Tabernacle and develop it for me as you did with Mozart, and help me to see truths in this lovely object lesson." Graciously, by His Spirit, He has shown me multiple levels in which to consider the Tabernacle.

I have learnt that the Tabernacle is not one object lesson, it is a blending of multi object lessons into one vast object lesson. No matter what way one looks at this picture, it is utterly vast. The tabernacle is not a single object lesson, but a collection of at least 470 pieces and closer to perhaps 600 pieces, which either singly or unitedly form multiple object lessons, somewhat like a jigsaw puzzle, with a series of pictures but all together making one magnificent picture. Like the Psalmist, I confessedly say: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

In every case where we get four of anything in the scriptures, it is always divided into a three and a one, or a two and a two, therefore:

- a) Over the boards of the tabernacle there were four material covering. We know what three of them were: linen, ram skins, and goat's hair. However, despite many guesses, we do not know what the fourth one was, that is the badger skin. There are at least six different creatures put forward, and to add to the confusion, the colors range from light blue to black. The only thing we can know about this animal is it was a clean animal and not a badger, for that was an unclean animal.
- b) Looking at these materials we observe that three were animal, one was vegetable.
 - i) There were four items of the structure: three were metals, gold, silver and copper; and one was wood, the shittim wood.
 - ii) For the skeletal structure of the court and Tabernacle there were four sides: three were solid, and one had a door.
 - iii) Why God does this I have never heard, perhaps someday He will give us understanding.
- c) In this paper, instead of brass I will speak of copper. This was in the midst of the "bronze age" (3300-1200 B C) in which copper was the main feature. Furthermore, God never uses alloys or mixtures, but only the purest. He would not have used brass which is an alloy. Again, brass has a melting temperature of 1710 degrees F, whereas copper melts at 1983 degrees F. This being so, it is more suitable for the altar.
- d) One very basic truth is that God used earthly things, graciously enabling humanity to work with Him to build His dwelling place. It is a precious truth for He does the same today. He does not use wood, metals, and materials, but human beings, people who are saved and reconciled to Him now not only build

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His dwelling place, but ideally seek to bind it together and beautify it by their lives. Like the Tabernacle, God had materials of different character all blended together to make one harmonious place for His glory to be manifested. Such, ideally, is the local and ultimately the corporate church. We humans have a great variety of temperaments and backgrounds. Some may be almost unseen as were the pins; others seldom seen, as the candlestick; and others always seen, as the laver or curtain of the court. Ultimately, all joined together for the greater glory of God. How wonderful if saints were truly joined together in love, and not letting party spirits and personalities split them. The scriptures teach:

- i) "All that believed were together" (Acts 2:44)
- ii) "When he had considered the thing . . . where many were gathered together praying" (Acts 12:12)
- iii) "The apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter" (Acts 15:6)
- iv) "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7)
- v) "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak . . . that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10)
- vi) "For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together" (1 Cor. 12:24)
- vii) "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10)
- viii) "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another" (Rom. 13:8)
- ix) "Let us not therefore judge one another any more" (Rom. 14:13)
- x) "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7)
- xi) "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13)
- xii) "Bear ye one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2)
- xiii) "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16)
- xiv) "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18)
- xv) "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (1 Thess. 5:11)
- xvi) "Exhort one another daily, while it is called To day" (Heb. 3:13)
- xvii) "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:24)

What Was The Tabernacle?

What was the Tabernacle? There are some questions which have multiple answers depending on the avenue one is considering. If one were asked, "What is an elephant?" One person could reply that it is the largest land animal on earth, another could say that it is a herbivore, and yet another could say that normally it appears sluggish but when agitated it can run at a very fast rate. They would all be correct answers. Therefore, when we ask, "What is the Tabernacle?", it would depend on which aspect one is considering. It was:

- a) A place wherein God pledged to dwell when with Israel on their wilderness pilgrimage. (Ex. 29:44-45)
- b) It was an instrument through which lessons shadowing the work of the Lord now could be illustrated for us today. (Heb. 9:9)
- c) It was the entire structure, including all the pins, cords, cloths, boards, pillars, and furnishings connected with the worship of God. (Ex. 40:17-33)
- d) It was, strictly speaking, the innermost linen curtain which was only seen from inside the Tabernacle and which covered the boards. (Ex. 26:1)
- e) The place where God promises to meet with the people. (Ex. 29:42-43)
- f) The place where the esteem by which the people held God could be manifested. Their offerings were "heave offerings" (Ex. 25:2). They were seen as "heave offerings" by the word "terûmāh" which indicates that which is lifted up as a present, and therefore would have been befitting Him.
- g) The place where, because of implicit obedience to Him, His glory was able to fill the place. (Ex. 40:35)
- h) It was a shadow of the tabernacling of Christ among men. (Jn. 1:14)

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The Argument Of Some, That It Is Foolish To Study It

Despite the above biblical reasons, and many more, there are those who inform us that this was nothing other than an ancient material place of worship, void of any spiritual significance, and the offerings were just religious functions. Therefore, what are the evidences for seeking any spiritual lessons from it. The Tabernacle and all connected with it ought to be studied and meditated upon because:

- a) It is part of God's inspired Word and God informs us that: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim.3:16). That includes the Tabernacle. When speaking about heaven, of which the Tabernacle is a foreshadow, the Psalmist wrote: "In His temple doth everyone speak of His glory" (Psa. 29:9). Conversely, deprived of the teachings of the tabernacle, one is restricted in their spiritual maturing. "That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good work" (2 Tim. 3:17).

The Different Ways the Word "Tabernacle" Is Used

In the normal communications of life, a single word can have a variety of meanings, depending on the context. For instance, the word "suite" has a different connotation to a musician than that of a landlord or a geologist. God uses and permits the word "Tabernacle" to be used in a variety of contexts. He will speak of the "tabernacle of David" (Acts 15:16); "the tabernacle at Jerusalem" (Isa. 33:20); "the tabernacle of Moloch" (Amos 5:26); the "tabernacle of Joseph" (Psa. 78:67); and "the tabernacle of the heavens" it says "for the sun" (Psa. 19:4). These are not all the dwelling places.

The Names given to the Tabernacle:

- a) When God describes things or people, it is always to give further insight into character. In the creation God named five things: "God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night" (Gen. 1:5); "And God called the firmament Heaven" (Gen. 1:8); "God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas" (Gen.1:10). The Lord called Herod "fox" (Lk.13:32), and the devil is called "the old serpent" (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). Therefore, when God gives the Tabernacle distinct names there is a reason for it. While not dealing with why God calls it various names, the following is a list of the ones I know:
 - i) "The tabernacle / Tent of the congregation" (Ex. 27:21; 40:6)
 - ii) "The Tabernacle of Witness" (Num. 17:7)
 - iii) "The Tabernacle of Testimony" (Ex. 38:21)
(I see the names "Tabernacle of Witness and Testimony" indicative of different truths. As I see it, the Tabernacle of the Testimony signifies that which was it's most prized possession, the Ark of the testimony or covenant, whereas the Tabernacle of Witness reflected on their responsibility to keep the oaths they had made, and was a reminder of their shortcomings in the Law, Aaron's rod and manna.)
 - iv) "The Tabernacle of the Lord" (Lev. 17:4)
 - v) "A Sanctuary" (Ex. 25:8)
 - vi) "The Tabernacle" (Ex. 25:9)

The Tabernacle In Relation To The Books From John, Philippians, and The Revelation

It would be very strange if men like John and Paul, who were so saturated in the religious history of Israel, not to make comments about, or have "incidental" indicators to some truth or truths seen in the Tabernacle foreshadow.

1) The Tabernacle and the Gospel of John

- a) In considering the Gospel of John there is evidently an illusion to that which happened on the Brazen Altar and outside the camp on the day of Atonement when he speaks of the Lord bearing away "the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). The fact that he also speaks of the Lord as a Lamb would reflect the morning and evening sacrifices. When washing the disciples feet, it would bring the laver to remembrance when the priests were consecrated and washed before service (Jn. 13:4-10). When our

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Lord was set in contrast to the manna (Jn. 6:32-35), and it called such “the hidden manna (Rev. 2:17), there is clearly a reference to the food of the wilderness and the manna in the ark. One may see a shadow of the incense altar where prayers were made, and the intercessory prayer of the Lord (Jn. 17:1-26). Finally, it would be almost impossible to read of “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us” and not think of the Vail (Jn. 1:14).

2) The Tabernacle in the Revelation

- a) It would be very difficult to read the Revelation and fail to observe the usage of the Tabernacle for spiritual lessons. The book is emphatic on the exaltation and preeminence of the Lord, a fact that is shown by:
 - i) The titles and descriptive terms given to Him (Rev. 1:5)
 - ii) His official presentation and the declaration of His triumph (Rev. 1:13-19)
 - iii) The work He was given of correcting the candlesticks, etc. In musing on the candlestick, it is evident the central shaft is “the” candlestick, and the others are branches indicating the preeminence of the Lord.
 - iv) The priest was to trim the lamps, a work the Lord does in the correcting of the churches (Rev. 2-3)
 - v) In chapter four we are introduced to the Throne and the Throne Sitter, He who is the moral Governor of the nations (Rev. 4:2, 8; Psa. 22:28), an expanded truth from the Ark where He dwells between the two cherubim (Ex. 25:22) as the moral Governor of Israel.
 - vi) Before the throne there is a sea of glass, a sea mentioned twice (Rev. 4:6; 15:2), but with a difference. It surely is the great antitype of the laver.
 - vii) Then we read of those who will be pillars in the temple of God (Rev. 3:12), an obvious reflection on the internal boards of the Tabernacle.
 - viii) Mention is made of the altars (Rev. 8:3, 5)
 - ix) The Ark which is in His Temple, reflecting the ark in the Holiest (Rev. 11:19)

All truths which would be meaningless were it not for the Tabernacle.

3) The Tabernacle in Hebrews

- a) The reality is, we do not know who wrote Hebrews. As many as some seventeen names have been put forward and the very multiplicity of the names is a manifestation of our not knowing. It is one of God’s secrets, however, whoever it was or whoever they were, one thing is evident, they had a very deep knowledge of the functions of the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the offerings.
- b) The author of Hebrews is the only New Testament writer that informs us both positively and negatively what the Tabernacle was:
 - i) An “example” or “patterns” (Gk. hupodeigma; ch. 8:5; 9:23); “figure” or “pattern” (Gk. parabole; ch. 9:9); “figures” (Gk. antitipos, ch. 9:24); “pattern” (Gk. Tupos, ch. 8:5); “shadow” (Gk. Skia, ch. 8:5; 10:1); “not the very image” (Gk. Eikon ch. 10:1); “tabernacle” (Gk. Hagion, ch. 9:11); “building” (Gk. Ktisis, ch. 9:11); tabernacle (GK. Skene, ch. 8:5).

4) The Tabernacle in 1 Corinthians and Philippians

- a) Paul was a mighty theologian, and being a Pharisee, was brought up to have a deep knowledge of the ancient tabernacle. Therefore, it is not surprising to find in Philippians thoughts concerning it. Connected with the tabernacle there were “fillets” which were connecting rods between the pillars of the linen court. As such, they indicated the fellowship between the saints, a matter the Lord prayed for and without which there are dire consequences (Jn. 17:21, 23). This breakdown of fellowship had tragic results in Corinth where there were splits and errors on every hand (1 Cor. 1:11-12; 3:3; 6:7-9; 11:18; 21; 15:12; 35). Philippians will mention fellowship (Phil. 1:5; 2:1) in the local aspect, whereas Ephesians will deal with it on the universal level (Eph. 2:13-20). The linen curtain indicates a righteousness displayed to all, those inside the court and those outside. This is only possible as one

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has the righteousness of God by faith (Phil. 3:9; 1 Jn. 2:29). Paul will speak of the “death of the cross”, emphasizing the whole hearted devotion of the Lord to the purpose of God (Phil. 2:8), whereas Hebrews will speak of the Lord “endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2). Relevant reflections on the brazen altar. How beautifully the veil is contemplated in the words: “was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man” (Phil. 2:7-8). When Paul spoke of the saints as “lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15), surely he must have had the words of the Lord (Lk. 12:35). Albeit, since the candlestick was not in the world but in the Holy Place, it means it was for the priests to walk in the light of. It is on this level it illustrates Christ as the Light of the world, see the context of Jn. 8:12 where it indicates those who follow Him. When kept in context, it has nothing to do with the “gospel and the unsaved”. Such is an application, but not the interpretation.

A Number of Sweet “P’s”

- 1) The Period:
 - a) The tabernacle was a temporary dwelling place, a tent which was constantly being moved, as on a pilgrimage through the move in the wilderness. It points us to the Lord and His movements as He dwelt in this world.
- 2) The place where the tabernacle was set up was in the wilderness.
 - a) This world was a wilderness spiritually to the Lord Jesus. He was born in a manger, lived in the Carpenters home, worked as a carpenter, and said: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20).
- 3) The person and glory of God was seen in the holiest of all.
 - a) John was able to say concerning Christ: “And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father” (Jn. 1:14), and after the Lord performed the miracle of turning water into wine, we read this was his first miracle in Cana of Galilee” (Jn. 2:11).
- 4) The purpose of the tabernacle was to be a meeting place between God and man.
 - a) Christ is the “one mediator between God and men” (1 Tim. 2:5). He himself said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jn. 14:6).
- 5) The position of the tabernacle was in the centre of the camp of Israel.
 - a) The Israelites were encamped about it (Num. 1:50) and it was in the midst of the camp (Num. 2:17). It is a reminder of the Lord who said: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). Again in Revelation the Lord is seen in the midst of the candlesticks (Rev. 1:13).
- 6) The precepts of war were kept in the Tabernacle, in the Ark of the covenant (Deut. 10:2–5).
 - a) The Lord said: “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart” (Psa. 40:7-8). In him the law was kept in absolute perfection.
- 7) The priests in the old Testament were fed in the tabernacle.
 - a) They fed on the sacrifices and the show bread (Lev. 6:16–26). In the new Testament all believers are priests (1 Pet. 2:5) and able to feed on the altar (Heb. 13:10). Those who have no right to eat are those who serve the earthly tabernacle (Heb. 13:10). Christ is the bread of life in whom we find our satisfaction and follow (Jn. 6:35).
- 8) The Pathway to the tabernacle was through the tribe of Judah.
 - a) This tribe was encamped on the East side of the tabernacle (Num. 2:3). This is a side where the gate of the tabernacle was situated (Ex. 27:12–16). It was through the tribe of Judah the Lord came into this world (Gen. 49:10; Matt. 1:3, 16; Lk. 3:23, 33-34) which caused the writer to the Hebrews to

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write: “For as is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda” (Heb. 7:14).

- 9) The Preciousness of the tabernacle is seen in the weights of the gold, silver, and copper it took to construct.
- a) I am not aware that we can accurately evaluate the weight of gold, silver, and copper that was used. However, there are some weights which we are given. Under each Tabernacle board there were 2 sockets, each being 120 pounds weight giving a total of 240 pounds, and since silver today (Dec. 2013) is 19.67 dollars an ounce, the value is approximately 75,559 dollars. Regarding the gold, both the Mercy seat and the candlestick were made out of gold, each weighing 120 pounds which gave a total of 240 pounds for both, which at today’s price of 1239.00 dollars an ounce, gives a value of 4,757,760.00 dollars. How beautiful then the words of Peter when he wrote: “For ye are not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18).

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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