

# Jesus in the Tabernacle Bible Study

## An introduction and overview of the Tabernacle

By I Gordon

### Introduction

At a point in Israel's history, at the time when the law was given, God instructed Moses to build something known as the 'tabernacle'. I've recently been studying this God given amazing design as part of my Bible home group and have decided to write up some short notes as a guideline for others to use and (hopefully) benefit from. These brief studies will be added to a vast amount of written material on this subject that has kept Bible students amazed for centuries. I have entitled it 'Jesus in the Tabernacle' because basically every aspect of this incredible design points to Christ in one form or another. He is central. Hence why we should like and study it! This study will be a general introduction loosely based around the following questions:

- Who was the originator of the tabernacle plan?
- What were the reasons for its construction and what did God desire to teach us?
- What materials was it constructed from and what do they symbolically represent?
- What did the three areas of the tabernacle represent concerning Jesus, salvation and the different dispensations?

Simple questions I'm sure for a Bible scholar like yourself! But they do form the basis of a good place to start so let's begin with the first passage in the Bible where the tabernacle is introduced.

### The Tabernacles <sup>[1]</sup> first mention

*Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution. "This is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goat hair, rams' skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece. "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. "According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it. (Exo 25:1-9)*

So hopefully this passage makes the first question pretty much redundant. But here it is anyway - Who came up with the idea of having a tabernacle? Well, it is obviously 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 God restated that the construction had to be precisely as He would declare. There was certainly no room for thinking outside the square and coming up with your own personalised touches on this one! If God said an item was 100 cubits long, then 100 cubits it was! So the next question is why? Why did God want a tabernacle constructed and why did it have to be so exact to His specifications? And what was God teaching Israel then and what is He trying to teach you and I now? <sup>[2]</sup>

### What the Tabernacle teaches

There are some key 'truths' contained within the tabernacle. These truths are interwoven into its size, its materials and the objects it contains... It is a divine mystery if you like with clues scattered liberally throughout its construction. As we go through this study I will point these out (well, those that I have seen anyway!), but for now, you'll have to be content with a quick summary. Some of the fundamental core teaching of the tabernacle involves:

- **Jesus Christ** – And fair enough too! First and foremost the tabernacle is a picture and type of that which takes the place of pre-eminence in the Bible – and that is the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the true fulfilment of this structure. As the amplified Bible brings out; *“And the Word (Christ) became flesh (human, incarnate) and tabernacled (fixed His tent of flesh, lived awhile) among us; and we [actually] saw His glory (His honor, His majesty), such glory as an only begotten son receives from*

*his father, full of grace (favor, loving-kindness) and truth.”*

- **The presence and holiness of God** – we read above that God said that the tabernacle was constructed so that ‘I may dwell among them’. God wanted to be in the midst of His people... but His people were sinful and at times that is being kind!. How could He dwell with them? The tabernacle taught God’s desire for fellowship along with His pure holiness (while thankfully also showing us the way into His presence).
- **The plan of salvation** – The earthly tabernacle pictures salvation. This is true of what it cost Jesus to provide the means of salvation and also of the steps necessary for those who want to be saved. Concerning the former, Jesus had to fulfil His role as the High Priest of the New Covenant, entering into the Heavenly tabernacle as the book of Hebrews teaches: [Hebrews 9:11-12, 24](#) “*When 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. He 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... For 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.*”
- **The dispensations and ages in the plan of God** – The tabernacle teaches about God’s plan concerning the different ages or dispensations in His dealings with man. Each of the three distinct areas (the outer court, the Holy place, the Holy of Holies) represents a different dispensation and the objects found within each area are true to that age. I know... this is a tad cryptic but I will write more about this below.

### Clues in the colours and materials...

Having seen the core truths that the tabernacle teaches, let’s have a look at the materials that God specifically said had to be used to in its construction. From our passage in Exodus 25 above we read:

*"This is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goat hair, rams' skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece."*

Everything, whether it was the curtains, the gate, the altar, the lampstand or the Ark of the Covenant itself were constructed from the materials mentioned above. Therefore, it is worth examining the meaning of these for we shall see them again and again throughout these studies.

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

### Clues in the three-fold nature of the tabernacle

Finally, as part of this overview, it is worth looking a bit closer at the three different areas within the tabernacle. These areas and the objects within each will be the focus of the coming studies but for now I want to draw your attention to what these areas represent.

The three areas and meanings of the tabernacle are as follows:

Area	Dispensation or Age	Area/Volume	Jesus As	Aspect of Salvation
The Outer Court	Mosaic Law	1500 cubits (years)	Way	Justification
The Holy Place	Grace (Church age)	2000 cubits (years)	Truth	Sanctification
The Holy of Holies	Messianic Kingdom	1000 cubits (years)	Life	Glorification

Each of these areas represents an 'age' or 'dispensation' of God's dealings with mankind. This is evident in the objects constructed and the materials used.

- The Outer Court** contained the brazen altar and the laver. The focus was on sacrifice, judgment and cleansing and represents the age of the Law. The area of the fence surrounding the outer court was 1500 cubits squared <sup>[3]</sup> just as the period of time that the Mosaic law was in force for was approx. 1500 years! Everything in the outer court was constructed in bronze symbolising judgement. This is what the law did! It pronounced you guilty and that judgement and a blood sacrifice was required. But it also pointed, as the law does, to Jesus as the Way of salvation and the need for 'justification'.
- The Holy Place** - The second area of the Holy place was different for it represents the church age. Its area confirms this as it was a room of 20 X 10 X 10 cubits (representing the 2000 years of the church age). Only the Priests could come within this area and not without cleansing at the laver. But this area contained no items made of bronze (judgement) like the outer court did. It contained the Showbread (Christ the bread of Life), the Lampstand (Christ the light of the world) and the Altar of Incense (Christ our intercessor). It was made from gold, silver and wood representing the deity, redemption and the humanity of Christ. It pictures Jesus as the 'truth' and in terms of salvation it represents our need of sanctification as we walk in this life with Christ as our life and bread.
- Finally, the Holy of Holies** - This contained the Ark of the Covenant. Only the High Priest could enter here and only on one day of the year! Only on the Day of Atonement could the High Priest enter the Holy of Holies and be in the very presence of God Himself. This area represents the coming Kingdom age where God shall dwell among His people once again in visible form. In terms of the aspect of a believer's salvation it represents our 'glorification' – when we are with Christ and are like Christ! As a picture of Jesus, it shows Him not just as the way or even the truth, but as 'the life'. This special area of the tabernacle contained the very real presence and power of God and if we are to know Jesus today as 'the life' (and not just 'the way') then we too, as priests of the new covenant, need to come into His very presence in the new way opened to us.

Well, that is enough as an introduction. But be assured that God has hidden amazing pictures of our salvation in Christ within this divinely inspired structure! We will search and examine these pictures in the next few studies always realising that:

*"It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings."*(Prov 25:2)

## Bible Studies in the Tabernacle Series

[Jesus in the Tabernacle - An Introduction and Overview](#)

[Jesus in the Tabernacle - The Outer Court](#)

[Jesus in the Tabernacle - The Holy Place](#)

[Jesus in the Tabernacle - The Holy of Holies](#)

[1]

The Tabernacle had a few different variations on its name. Here are a few:  
Tabernacle of the Lord Jos 22:19, [1Ki 2:28](#), [1Ch 16:39](#); Tabernacle of testimony or witness

Exo 38:21, [Num 1:50](#), [Num 17:7](#), [Num 17:8](#), [2Ch 24:6](#), [Act 7:44](#); Tabernacle of the congregation  
Exo 27:21, Exo 33:7, Exo 40:26; Tabernacle of Shiloh Psa 78:60; Tabernacle of Joseph Psa 78:67;  
Temple of the Lord [1Sa 1:9](#), [1Sa 3:3](#); House of the Lord Jos 6:24, [1Sa 1:7](#), [1Sa 1:24](#);

[2]

See: Exo 25:9, Exo 26:30, Exo 39:32, Exo 39:42-43, [Act 7:44](#), [Heb 8:5](#)

In fact, God even poured His spirit upon those that constructed the tabernacle so that they had the ability to complete what He required. For example: "Then the LORD said to Moses, See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, **and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts--** to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. **Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you.**" ([Exodus 31:1-6](#))

[3]

See [Exodus 27:18](#) "The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits, the width fifty throughout, and the height five cubits, made of fine woven linen."

Thus, the entire **area of the fence** that enclosed the outer court had two sides that were 100 x 5 and two sides that were 50 x 5. The total area being  $500 + 500 + 250 + 250 = 1500$  square cubits. We know from history that the total period of the law went for approximately 1500 years! What is really cool is that the Holy place was an area of 20 cubits x 10 cubits x 10 cubits (or as a volume, 2000 cubic cubits - if that is what they are called!). This we believe is the God ordained time for the church age... the age of grace. And I'm sure you can guess the area of the Most Holy... Representing the Messianic Kingdom age it measure 10 x 10 x 10 cubits (1000 cubic cubits). We know from passages in Revelation 20 that Jesus' kingdom on earth will last 1000 years before the eternal order is inaugurated. Pretty amazing plan and design of God wouldn't you say?