

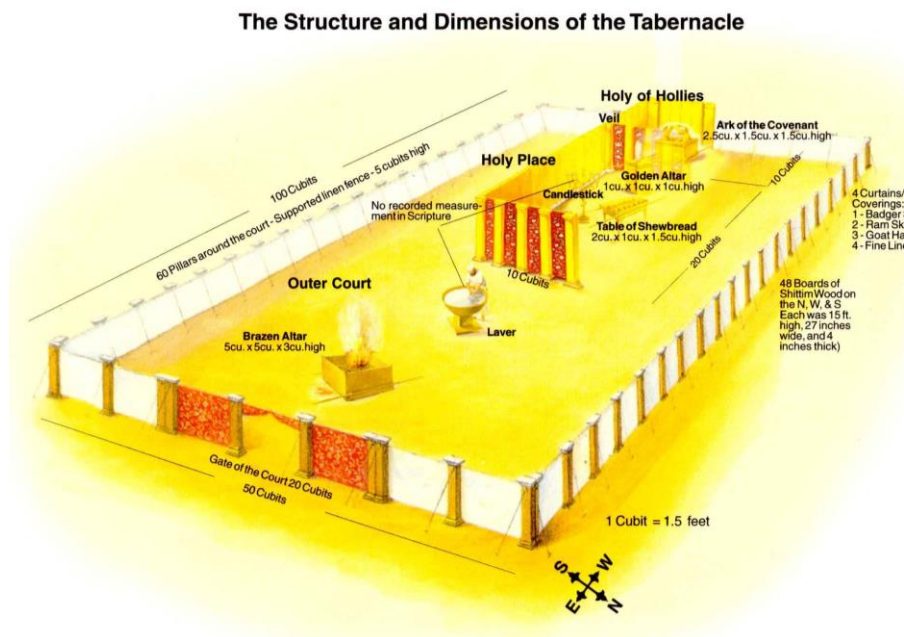
SPIRITUAL MEANING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TABERNACLE

Just as the Holy Days of the Old Testament have wonderful spiritual meaning—all of their ceremonies and accoutrements point forward to spiritual things—so the various aspects of the tabernacle all had a spiritual meaning.

Hebrews 8:5 “They 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.”

God very carefully guided and directed all of the details. He took 6 days to make heaven and earth, but 40 days instructing Moses about the making of the tabernacle!

All the details of the O.T. Tabernacle point forward to spiritual things, and they all centre on Jesus.



- ❖ **THE DOOR/GATE** pictures Jesus Christ: the only way through the barrier separating man from God, the barrier of sin. We also should be ‘doors’ opening up God’s Way to unbelievers, as we share the message with others of how they can be free from sin and part of God’s family.
- ❖ **THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING** pictures Jesus Christ sacrificed for us. It also pictures us, offering ourselves as living sacrifices.
- ❖ **THE LAVER** pictures Jesus Christ, the pure cleansing Word of God who cleans us from our sin. It also pictures us, our baptism, and when cleaned we have the water of the Holy Spirit flowing out of us (John 7:37—out from his belly shall flow rivers of living water.)

So we see all of these objects picture both Jesus Christ and us. The tabernacle is the place where God meets man, and we dwell together in unity.

We now enter—

- ❖ **THE HOLY PLACE**, which symbolises those who, having been through the laver of baptism, enter the Church of God.
- ❖ **THE SHOWBREAD** pictures Jesus Christ, the bread of life, and it pictures us (12 loaves, refined in fire, picturing the Church of God) and it pictures the fellowship between Jesus Christ and His people—it points to the bread of the Lord's Supper, and communion with Him.
- ❖ **THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND** or candlestick, pictures Jesus Christ the light of the world, and us, the Church of God, which is also a light; and the Bible, the lamp of truth, and the unity of Jesus and His Church (the vine and branches.)
- ❖ **THE ALTAR OF INCENSE**. This pointed to Jesus Christ, a sweet smelling savour before God and all people, and it pictures us, also as a sweet smelling savour which we are to our God, and it pictures our prayers going up to God as incense.

So entering God's tabernacle pictures our progress towards and through salvation, through the door of Jesus Christ, His sacrifice, baptism at the laver and as we come into the Holy Place, this pictures our entry into the Church.

- ❖ And then we come on through to the **HOLY OF HOLIES**, or the **Most Holy Place**, which was hidden behind a veil that was ripped when Jesus Christ died. What is the spiritual meaning of this?

Hebrews 10:19-20 ¹⁹ "Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the **curtain**, that is, His body."

So the curtain or veil represented Jesus Christ too, and we can enter through it into the Holy of Holies, thanks to Him.

What was in the Holy of Holies? Only one thing—a precious thing, the **ARK OF THE COVENANT**.

The Holy of Holies was a perfect cube—as long as it was high. It had walls of gold, and the presence of God and His Shekinah glory entered there, between the Cherubim on the Ark. The Holy of Holies represents heaven itself, where God dwells.

Hebrews 9:24 "For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence."

Christ entered into heaven itself. The new Jerusalem, the city where God dwells, is a perfect cube, and won't need a light because God's glory will dwell there.

When we pray, we enter into God's presence—we enter the Holy of Holies. As we look into the objects in the Holy of Holies, we will see this is referring to our entering into the Kingdom of God at the resurrection.

The Ark was the most glorious and mysterious vessel in the tabernacle. It was the first thing made (Exodus 25:10-11) and in fact the whole sanctuary was built to be a habitation for the Ark (Exodus 26:33).

The Ark was made out of wood and gold—picturing the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. Shittim wood didn't rot; it is referred to as "incorruptible wood" in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. The Ark pictured Jesus Christ, with treasures inside Him.

Colossians 2:3 "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

The lid of the Ark was called the Mercy Seat, which also pictures Jesus. It was made of pure gold, including the two cherubim—all "beaten out of one piece" of gold. It represented God's throne, it was the place where God talked to Moses. It is the place where the sacrificial blood was sprinkled.

Exodus 25:22 "There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites."

It was on top of the law, and the spiritual significance of this is explained in James 2:13.

"Because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

Mercy triumphs over judgment, as grace triumphs over the law. That doesn't mean the law is done away! It is still there inside the Ark—which shows us God's 10 commandments are valid forever—but they do have grace and mercy over the top of them—they're in a new covenant setting. It is the spirit of the law, the moral principles behind them, which endure forever.

What do the cherubim represent and mean spiritually? I'm not sure. There is some mystery there—reminds us the secret things belong to God. The Bible doesn't reveal what they represent.

Remember they were sent to guard the way to the Garden of Eden, the way to the Tree of Life. So they guard the way to the inside of the Ark. While the veil was not yet torn, they guarded the way to the Holy of Holies. But then Christ's blood on the Mercy Seat meant we can go in. So they may symbolise God's Holiness and Justice? If anyone knows the answer, please let me know!

Paul didn't. Hebrews 9:5 "Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now."

There were 3 things inside the Ark.

Hebrews 9:4 "which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant."

1. The 10 commandments, the tables of the law. Apparently 2 copies of the same thing, not half on each. A copy each for the 2 covenant partners, God and Man.

Exodus 34:1 "The LORD said to Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke."

Moses made the tablets out of stone, God wrote the law on them. God now writes the law on our hearts. We need that law guiding our hearts, our way of life, forever.

Psalms 40:7-8 ⁷ “Then I said, “Here I am, I have come—it is written about me in the scroll.” ⁸ I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.”

The Law is in Christ’s heart. The Ark represents Jesus Christ and the law is in His heart. The law itself also represents Jesus: He is the law.

2. The golden pot of manna (Hebrews 9:4) (kept as a souvenir of the way God miraculously sustained them in the wilderness.) This pictures Jesus too. He was the heavenly manna—“the bread that came down from heaven” (John 6:41).

Revelation 2:17 “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.”

This is a reward we will receive in the Kingdom. We will be able to feed on the Heavenly Manna for all eternity! Learning from Him, talking with Him, working with Him, sustained by Him, fresh every day, forever!

3. Aaron’s rod that budded.

Numbers 17:8 “The next day Moses entered the tent and saw that Aaron’s staff, which represented the tribe of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed and produced almonds.”

A dead stick came to life and produced buds, blossoms and almonds! What a picture of our Lord’s resurrection from the grave, and His risen fruitfulness and glory! So this pictures Jesus as well. And of course it applies to us as well, in that we also can be resurrected to eternal life!

Rev. 2:7 “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”

In Numbers 17 there were 12 rods, one for each tribe laid out overnight and only Aaron’s budded. It was at a time when Israel was rebelling, so God did that as a sign to show He was working through Aaron and Levi. The reason He asked for Aaron’s budded rod to be put in the Ark was to be a “sign to the rebels.”

Numbers 17:10-11 ¹⁰ “The LORD said to Moses, “Put back Aaron’s staff in front of the ark of the covenant law, to be kept as a sign to the rebellious. This will put an end to their grumbling against me, so that they will not die.” ¹¹ Moses did just as the LORD commanded him.”

And there is also significance here that in the Kingdom of God forever there will be no more rebels, no more pain, tears or suffering.

So the objects in the Holy of Holies show that we will live forever; with the law of God in our hearts forever, so there will be peace and happiness and no more sorrow; and with the manna forever—spiritually feeding on Jesus Christ, living in unity with Him forever.

The tabernacle was the place God dwelt with His people. It pointed forward to the spiritual relationship we have with God now, and to something in the future—

Revelation 21:3 “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.”

The Kingdom of God, when we will be spirit, living in the fantastic New Jerusalem, living in joy and glory and love in an intimate relationship with God for all eternity!

Those are just some of the spiritual lessons we can learn from God’s tabernacle!



(Illustrations from Google Images)