

# THE TABERNACLE

The children of Israel went out of Egypt, journeyed a long distance in the wilderness, and, by God's provisions in different ways, eventually arrived at the mount of God (Exo. 18:5). On this mountain God first decreed the law, which was instituted according to what He is, as His testimony. Then He charged the children of Israel to make a tabernacle for Him according to the pattern He showed them on the mount (Exo. 25:40). Through this tabernacle they could sacrifice to God; that is, they could worship and serve God.

In Exodus 25 God said to Moses, "And let them make a sanctuary for Me that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its utensils, even so you shall make it" (vv. 8-9). On Mount Sinai not only did God's people receive the law, which revealed what God is and exposed their true condition, but they also received the vision of God's dwelling place—the tabernacle. This tells us that the desire of God's heart is to have a dwelling place on earth with His redeemed. This is the goal of God in saving us.

## A. Typifying Christ

The tabernacle which God charged Moses to build is a type of the incarnated Christ. John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." The incarnated Word, Christ, is the tabernacle which God pitched on earth among men.

### *1. As God's Concrete Expression in Humanity*

Through His incarnation Christ put on human nature to be God's concrete expression in humanity. Colossians 2:9 says, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." From the time that Christ became incarnate, clothed with a human body, the fullness of the Godhead began to dwell in a concrete way in Him as the tabernacle. Furthermore, 1 Timothy 3:16 says, "Great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh." *In the flesh* means in the likeness, in the fashion, of man (Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:7-8). Christ appeared to people in the form of man (2 Cor. 5:16), yet He was God manifested in man—He was the embodiment of God in the flesh. He is a God-man, having two natures, the divine nature and the human nature, with the divine nature existing in the human nature and being expressed through the human nature.

### *2. As God's Dwelling Place in Humanity*

Through His incarnation Christ not only brought divinity into humanity but also became a tabernacle to God as God's habitation on earth among men. According to the Old Testament history, the tabernacle was God's dwelling on earth; Christ as the tabernacle is God's dwelling in humanity.

### *3. As the Means by Which Man Contacts God and Thereby Receives and Enjoys God*

Christ, the incarnate God, as the embodiment of God became the dwelling of God in humanity as the means by which man could contact and thereby receive and enjoy God. God, who originally was above the heavens, hidden and untouchable (John 1:18a; 1 Tim. 6:16a), became flesh through Christ and was embodied in Him as the tabernacle. Through this tabernacle man can contact God and enter into God to receive Him and enjoy Him as grace and reality in fullness (John 1:14c).

### *4. It Being Made of Wood Overlaid with Gold*

The tabernacle was made of standing boards of acacia wood overlaid with gold (Exo. 26:15, 29). Acacia wood signifies Christ's humanity, strong in character and high in standard. Christ's humanity is the basic element for Him to be God's expression and dwelling place. Gold signifies Christ's divinity, divine, pure, and eternally unchanging. The acacia wood was overlaid with gold inside and outside, signifying that the divine nature was mingled with the human nature and that the divine nature penetrates the human nature and is expressed through it. Hence, with Christ as the tabernacle, which is a mingling of divinity and humanity, God obtains a concrete expression and dwelling place in humanity.

### *5. It Being Divided into Two Sections—the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies*

The tabernacle was divided into two sections separated by a veil. The section outside the veil was called the Holy Place, and the section inside the veil was called the Holy of Holies (Exo. 26:33). Within the tabernacle there were a number of furnishings, signifying the different aspects of our experience of Christ after we have entered into God. In the Holy Place there were the table of the bread of the Presence, the lampstand, and the incense altar near the Holy of Holies. The table of the bread of the Presence signifies our experience of Christ as our life supply, the lampstand signifies our experience of Christ as the shining light, and the incense altar signifies our experience of Christ as the sweet incense to God for our acceptance by God.

In the Holy of Holies there was the ark, which signifies Christ as the place where God met with people. Within the ark there were the golden pot containing the hidden manna, Aaron's budding rod, and the two tables of the covenant (Heb. 9:4). The hidden manna in the golden pot signifies our experience of Christ as our life supply in the deepest way; the budding rod signifies our experience of Christ in His resurrection as our acceptance by God for authority in the God-given ministry; the two tables of the covenant, which are the tables of the Ten Commandments, signify our experience of Christ as the enlightening inner law, which regulates us according to God's divine nature.

### *6. Its Covering*

According to Exodus 26:1-14, the covering of the tabernacle was of four layers. The first layer, the innermost layer, was made of ten curtains, which were of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen. This typifies Christ's fine and perfect humanity. With Christ there is no defect or bias. Christ in His human living, in both nature and appearance, lived as a heavenly man; He is also kingly both in position and behavior. Such a full and complete One shed His blood for redemption for sinners.

The second layer was made of eleven curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle. This signifies that Christ was made sin for us to bear all the sins of us sinners. This redeeming Christ was judged by God and thereby became our covering and protection. The third layer was made of rams' skins dyed red as a covering for the tent. This signifies that Christ suffered death and shed His blood to become our covering. The fourth layer, the outermost layer, was a covering of porpoise skins as the top covering for the tent to stand against the wind, the rain, and the scorching of the sun. This signifies Christ as the One who is able to withstand any attack. As the rams' skins, Christ covers us from God's judgment and enables us to stand before God. As the porpoise skins, He withstands for us all the attacks in our environment and enables us to stand strongly.

This shows us clearly that the four layers of the tabernacle—the curtains of fine linen, the curtains of goats' hair, the covering of rams' skins, and the top covering of porpoise skins—all are types of Christ, showing that He, the fine and perfect One, as our Substitute accomplished redemption for us and became our covering before God and our protection against any kind of attack.

### *7. Its Two Veils*

The tabernacle had two veils, one being the outer veil, the screen at the entrance of the tabernacle, and the other being the inner veil, the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (Exo. 26:31-37). Both of these veils are related to our entering into the tabernacle, God's dwelling place, and they both typify Christ.

#### *a. The Outer Screen*

The outer screen was an embroidery work of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, with five pillars of wood overlaid with gold and five sockets of bronze. This screen typifies Christ as the fine, pure, heavenly, royal, divine, and glorious One who suffered God's righteous judgment for our sins and became the entrance to God's Holy Place that we, the redeemed sinners, might enter into it to enjoy Christ's life supply and enlightening and to be accepted by God.

### *b. The Inner Veil*

The inner veil was exactly the same as the screen in material and in workmanship. Unlike the screen, the inner veil was embroidered with cherubim and put on four pillars of wood overlaid with gold upon four sockets of silver. This veil typifies the flesh of Christ (Heb. 10:20b). When Christ's flesh was crucified, this veil was rent from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:51), thus opening a new and living way (Heb. 10:20a) for us who were alienated from God, who is signified by the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24), to enter into the Holy of Holies to contact God.

As the screen, Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3) so that our sins may be forgiven by God. This is the objective aspect of Christ's death. Through this we may enter into the Holy Place and be brought back into God. As the veil, Christ died for us so that we may be terminated. This is the subjective aspect of Christ's death. Through this we are brought to God in the Holy of Holies to live to God. Thus, we are fully reconciled to God and in harmony with God (2 Cor. 5:19-20).

### *8. Its Hangings*

Besides the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, the tabernacle has the court as its outermost sphere, which was one hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide. On the four sides there were hangings made of fine, white twined linen, pillars of bronze with their sockets, and the hooks of the pillars with their rods, of silver (Exo. 27:9-19). The hangings of the outer court signify Christ as God's righteousness to be the expression and boundary of God's building. This expression was bright, clean, and without mixture. Furthermore, within this sphere everything was righteous toward God and men. The pillars and sockets of bronze signify the Christ who was judged by God and became the supporting ground, the separating ground, and the solid base of God's building. The hooks and rods of silver signify Christ's redemption, issuing out of God's righteous judgment, as our holding power and joining strength.

The materials of the hangings of the outer court consisted of bronze, silver, and linen. This shows us that Christ suffered God's judgment (bronze) on our behalf to accomplish redemption (silver), and now He has become God's righteousness (linen), which we bear upon us, as God's expression and testimony.

## **B. Typifying the Church**

According to the revelation of the entire Bible, the tabernacle portrayed in Exodus 25 through 40 typifies not only the individual Christ but also the corporate Christ, the church. Christ was incarnated and became the real tabernacle of God on the earth, destroyed by men through His crucifixion but built up again in His resurrection (John 2:19-22). Thus, He as the tabernacle has been enlarged to be the church (1 Tim. 3:15-16) and eventually will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal dwelling place of God and man (Rev. 21:3).

### *1. With the Believers as the Standing Boards*

Under the covering of the tabernacle there were the walls composed of standing boards. According to the record of Exodus 26:15-25, there was a total of forty-eight standing boards in the tabernacle. The number forty-eight is formed by six times eight. The number six refers to the created man, and the number eight refers to resurrection. Therefore, the forty-eight standing boards signify the created, fallen, and redeemed believers as the materials for the building of God's dwelling place.

#### *a. Having Both Divinity and Humanity in Christ*

The standing boards of the tabernacle were made of acacia wood overlaid with gold (Exo. 26:29a). When we were saved and regenerated, not only were we delivered from God's condemnation and judgment, but we also had a change in life and nature. Within us we have the divine nature, signified by gold, and the uplifted humanity of Jesus, signified by acacia wood. We have become a people in Christ who have both divinity and humanity. Christ's divine nature is joined with our human nature as one and is expressed through our human nature.

### *b. Being Built Together by Being Joined in Divinity*

“You shall make bars of acacia wood...for the boards...and make their rings of gold as holders for the bars; and you shall overlay the bars with gold” (Exo. 26:26-29). This indicates that Christ’s divine nature (gold) unites the believers. By the uniting of His divinity we are built together.

### *2. Being Built Together as God’s Habitation*

When the believers are united in the divine nature and are built together in Christ, they become God’s dwelling place on earth. Ephesians 2:22 says, “In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.” By this we see that God’s dwelling place built up on earth is not only among us but also in our spirit to be indwelt by the Spirit of God.

## **C. It Being Also Called the Tent of Meeting**

After the tabernacle was built and erected, God came immediately to dwell in it. Exodus 40:34 says, “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.” At that time God was not only the God in the heavens but also the God who dwelled among men. The tabernacle and the tent of meeting here refer to the same structure. With respect to man, it is the tent of meeting. But with respect to God, it is the tabernacle. As a type of Christ being God’s dwelling place on earth, the tabernacle is called the tabernacle. As a type of Christ being the gathering center of God’s people, the tabernacle is called the tent of meeting (Lev. 1:1). Hence, on the one hand, the incarnated Christ is God’s dwelling place on earth, and on the other hand, He is the place where God’s people meet with God and where they gather among themselves. In its ultimate consummation this tabernacle will be manifested in the New Jerusalem as the eternal dwelling place of God and His redeemed. Here, God will dwell with us forever and overshadow us with Christ as the tabernacle (Rev. 7:15).

### **SUMMARY**

The tabernacle typifies the incarnated Christ as God’s concrete expression, God’s dwelling place in humanity, and the means by which man contacts God and thereby receives and enjoys God. The tabernacle was made of wood overlaid with gold, signifying that the divine nature was mingled with the human nature for God to obtain a concrete expression and dwelling place in humanity. The tabernacle was divided into two sections: the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The furnishings within the tabernacle signify the different aspects of the believers’ experience of Christ after they have entered into God. The four layers of coverings of the tabernacle—the curtains of fine linen, the curtains of goats’ hair, the covering of rams’ skins, and the top covering of porpoise skins—all are types of Christ, showing that He, the fine and perfect One, as our Substitute accomplished redemption for us and became our covering before God and our protection against any kind of attack. The two veils inside and outside the tabernacle are also types of Christ. As the outer screen, Christ died for our sins so that our sins may be forgiven by God and we may enter into the Holy Place and be brought back into God. As the inner veil, Christ died for us so that we may be terminated and brought to God in the Holy of Holies to be fully reconciled to God and in harmony with God.

The tabernacle typifies not only the individual Christ but also the corporate Christ, the church, constituted with the believers as the standing boards. The boards were made of acacia wood overlaid with gold and united together by the rings of gold and the bars of wood overlaid with gold. This signifies that the believers are a group of people with both divinity and humanity in Christ and who are united and built together in the divine nature of Christ into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

This tabernacle is also called the tent of meeting. With respect to man, it is the tent of meeting. But with respect to God, it is the tabernacle. As a type of Christ being God’s dwelling place on earth, the tabernacle is called the tabernacle. As a type of Christ being the gathering center of God’s people, the tabernacle is called the tent of meeting. In its ultimate consummation this tabernacle will be manifested in the New Jerusalem as the eternal dwelling place of God and His redeemed.

Reference: Living Stream Ministry Publications