

SESSION 4

THE RETURN OF GOD'S PRESENCE CH.25-40

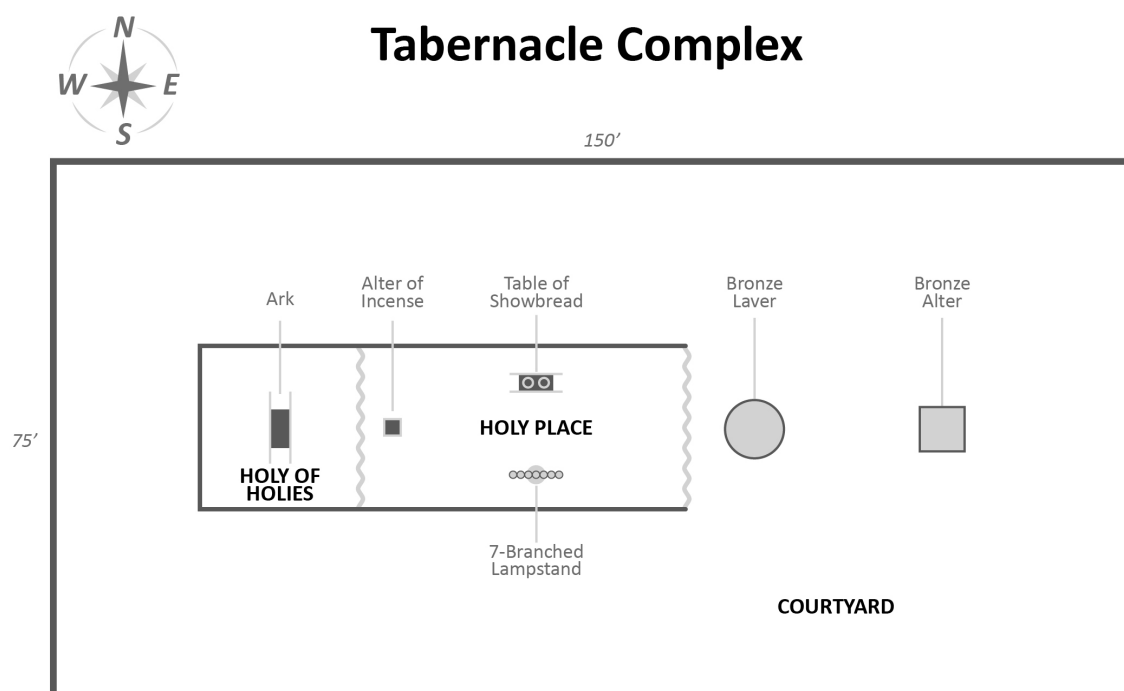
A. TABERNACLE INSTRUCTIONS AND ARCHITECTURE CH.25-31

The Tabernacle Story

We come to the final major aspect of the book of Exodus. God wants to dwell in the midst of his people and he will do so through the tabernacle sanctuary (25:8). Adam and Eve, through their sin in the Garden lost God's presence, but now through God's family Israel, God's presence is being restored through the covenant relationship established at Sinai. A relationship first given to Israel and then to all nations.

The Significance of the Tabernacle's Architecture

Biblical scholars have identified clear parallels between the Tabernacle and the creation narratives of the ANE (see Ps. 78:69). It looks like this:



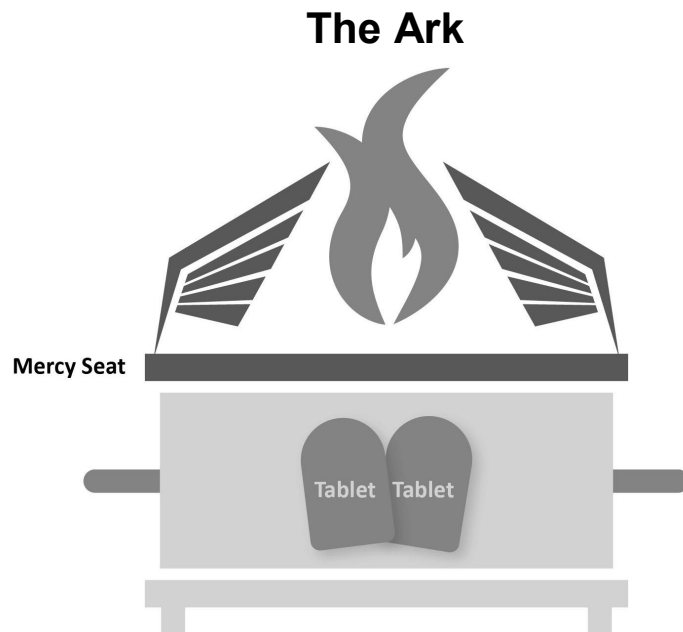
The three parts of the Tabernacle represent the three parts of the Cosmos:

1. *The Outer Court* (27:9-19) symbolised the visible earth (land, sea, the place where humans lived)
2. *The Holy Place* (26:1-30) represented the visible heavens.
3. *The Holy of Holies* (26:31-37) stood for the invisible heavenly dimension (where God dwelt).

The Tabernacle therefore speaks of the entire cosmos. God dwells and reigns in a cosmic temple. He is not just dwelling in the camp of Israel.

The Focal Point of the Tabernacle

This was the Ark of the Covenant (25:10-22) in the Holy of Holies. It was regarded as the throne of God (see 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2)



B. THE PRESENCE AND HOLINESS OF GOD CH.32-34

The arrangement of the material (Ch.25-40) helps us understand the magnitude of the threat (losing God's presence) and the importance of learning to live in God's presence and holiness.

Learning To Live in God's Presence:

1. Deal quickly and deeply with sin and failing 32:17-29

2. Turn around and go to God 32:30-35

3. Fight for God's presence 33:1-11

4. Trust God's Name and character 33:12-17

5. Press in for God's glory 33:18-22

EXERCISE

1. What constitutes God's goodness that will pass in front of Moses? (see 34:1-4, cf 33:22)
2. What do you notice about God proclaiming his name? (see 34:5-7)
3. How is God's mercy demonstrated? (see 34:8-28)

Discerning the Holiness of God's Presence

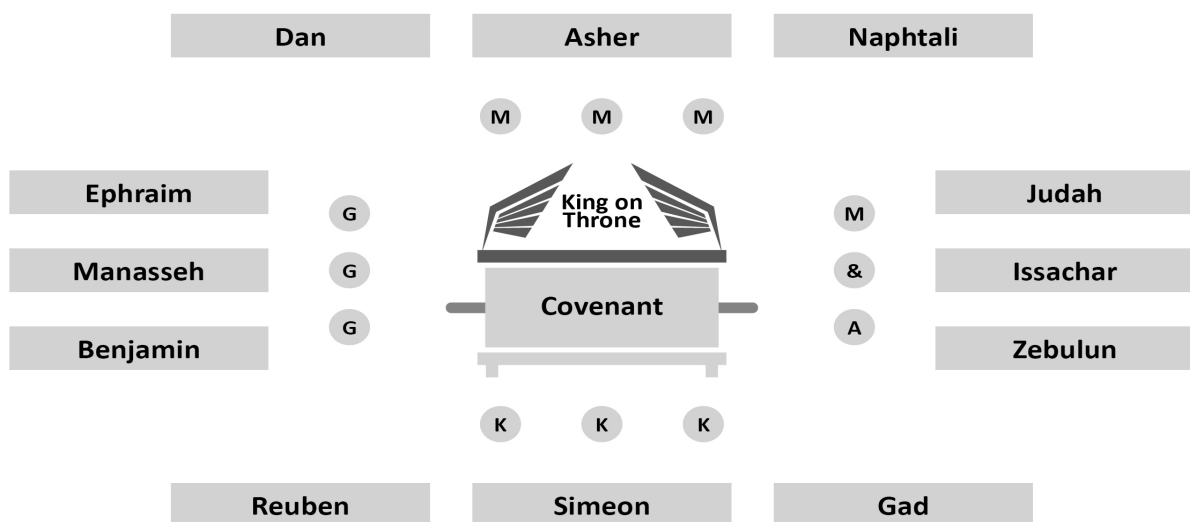
Note that there is a holiness and a bright luminosity to God's glory:

- a. Protection in the cleft (33:21-22)
- b. Cloud descending (34:5)
- c. Radiance on Moses face (34:29-35)

The concept of holiness is exceptionally important within the biblical story.

- a. The design of the tabernacle.
- b. The layout of the Israelite camp.

The Israelite Camp



Holiness also has a human side. Those made holy by God are called to walk in his moral commands and to live a life which is marked by love and righteousness. Holiness is also linked to wholeness and our final restoration.

The Sabbath, like bookends, top and tail the account of the golden calf (31:12-18 and 35:1-3). The seventh day of creation - when God rested, blessed and made that day holy - is the climax. (Gen.2:2-3) When we put the priority of worship at the centre of life (first 4 commands) we are on track to live God's life well (commands 5-10).

C. THE WEIGHT OF GLORY CH.35-40

In the final chapters, the artisans (Bezalel, Oholiab - creative gifting) set about constructing the Dwelling exactly as they have been instructed. God's glorious

presence descends with such magnitude and “weight” that Moses is unable to enter the Tabernacle (40:34-35).

The Weight of Glory (C S Lewis sermon)

“When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Col. 3:14 The cross comes before the crown. We love our brothers and sisters with a costly love because we see them in holy glory.

The Dwelling Place of God’s Glory as Revealed Through Scripture

1. The opening chapters of Genesis assume that the earth will be God's dwelling place. This, however, is swiftly shattered with the Fall. While people continue to live on the earth, God's presence is associated with heaven. But God is in the process of recovering the earth as his dwelling place.
2. The covenant calling of a people leads to the construction of the Tabernacle and later the Temple. God now resides permanently with one nation.
3. God “tabernacles” among human beings in the coming of Jesus the Messiah, Jn.1:14. Jesus speaks of his own body as the Temple, Jn.2:19.
4. The coming of God's Holy Spirit at Pentecost is now linked to the newly created Church, made up of all nations, which becomes the new Temple of God, Eph.2:19-22. As the church missionally goes into all the earth, so God’s dwelling place is also extended.
5. A time will come when all evil will finally be removed from the earth. At that stage, when God makes all things new, his presence and glory will fill a rejuvenated earth. Rev.21-22

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Book of Exodus recounts what God did for Israel and is now doing for the world. The greatest problem of humankind has been resolved through a new Exodus:

1. My sin has been *pardoned* in the past by a Crucified Saviour [New Passover]
2. The *power* of my sin in the present has been broken by a Living Saviour [New Covenant]
3. The *presence* of sin will be removed in the future by a Coming Saviour [New Earth]

What is our response?

“Out of ourselves, into Christ, we must go. Keep back nothing! Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead.” C S Lewis, *Mere Christianity*