



# THE TABERNACLE IN THE WILDERNESS: GOD DWELLS WITH HIS PEOPLE | PART 1

## INTO THE WORD

### *LESSON 14*

- WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS LESSON:
  -
- BIBLICAL THEMES:
  -
- SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES:
  -
- FOR FURTHER STUDY:

# INTO THE WORD

## LESSON 14

### THE TABERNACLE IN THE WILDERNESS: GOD DWELLS WITH HIS PEOPLE | PART 1

#### Introduction:

During the forty days and nights Moses spent with the Lord on Mount Sinai, he received God's law in the form of two stone tables, coupled with the explication and application of that law. Knowing Israel would soon face the idolatry of Canaanite religion, God prepared them with laws covering every phase of life—moral, civil, political and social. The laws God gave Israel contained safeguards against the corrupting influence of pagan practices, but He also desired to  **dwell** among them. While on the Mount, Moses also received the blueprints for the Tabernacle of God (Exodus 25:8-9).

This visible Tabernacle (tent, dwelling place) was Israel's constant reminder that only the one true God must be worshiped. Like the law, the Tabernacle was a protection against idolatry. The Tabernacle was a special mark of Israel's separation. At this Tabernacle, people would learn the means of approaching God and the manner in which He would manifest Himself to them.

God's desire was to be near His covenant people. However, because they were spiritually dead, He could not yet dwell in their hearts. Therefore, His presence was manifested to their physical senses. Their worship was also on this same level. They must learn the proper way to approach Him. Moses meticulously executed the blueprints. Everything was according to the pattern. In order to construct the place of God's dwelling, God requested freewill offerings. Parting with valued possessions would prove whether the people really desired His presence.

From the day Adam had suffered spiritual death, God had been arranging mankind's redemption. The tabernacle in the wilderness is the first time we see God designing a specific, permanent (yet portable) place for His presence to dwell among His people. The Tabernacle provides a striking visible illustration of God's plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. To some, the Tabernacle remains merely a Jewish ritual without significance today. An in-depth study, however, reveals it to be the foreshadowing of God's plan of redemption through Jesus Christ.

## Into the Word:

### 1. The Prophetic Significance of the Tabernacle

In Genesis Chapter 2, we read that God planted a garden. Mankind is given a perfect environment, a paradise in which to live, dress and keep. Mankind is given dominion over this beautiful place.

The Tabernacle is one of the greatest prophetic types in God's redemptive plan. In the New Testament, Stephen refers to the people of Israel as "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). Paul also agrees that all Israel's experiences are intended as types and examples (I Corinthians 10:11). So we understand that the Tabernacle is a model for us today.

God's Spirit abode in this material structure. Fifteen hundred years later, He dwelled among men in a house of flesh and bones—the body of Jesus Christ: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Just as the Tabernacle in the wilderness outlines a very specific pattern for Israel's approach to God, so the man Jesus Christ provides us with our approach to God today: "I am the way the truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6, NLT). Significantly, the Greek word for "tabernacle" (tent) and "dwelling" are the same: σκηνή skéné (skay-nay: meaning a tent, booth, tabernacle, abode, dwelling, mansion, habitation). It is accurate to claim then that Christ was tabernacled among His creation when He walked the earth. Jesus Christ, therefore, is the personification of God's Tabernacle in the wilderness. Hebrews 9 :11 states that, "Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world" (NLT). Jesus Christ not only becomes the atoning sacrifice for all our sins and opens up the plan of salvation to all, His life's mission (death, burial and resurrection) is directly symbolized in the pattern of the Tabernacle.

- Hebrews 9:8-10 (NLT)  
By these regulations the Holy Spirit revealed that the entrance to the Most Holy Place was not freely open as long as the Tabernacle and the system it represented were still in use. This is an illustration pointing to the present time (*The Contemporary English version translates this verse, "This also has meaning for us today..."*) for the gifts and sacrifices that the priests offer are not able to cleanse the conscience of the people who bring them. For that old system deals only with food and drink and various cleansing ceremonies - physical regulations that were in effect only until a better system could be established.

With this in mind, we will study the Tabernacle at three levels:

1. The physical Tabernacle in the wilderness and its purpose: The layout and furnishings of the tabernacle, and the sacrifices and priestly duties mandated by God through the Mosaic Law. (*Exodus 25:8-9*)
2. Jesus as the perfect tabernacle. The character and life of Jesus Christ in relation to the Tabernacle: how the Tabernacle symbolizes Christ's mission of death, burial and resurrection. (*John 1:14, 1 Timothy 3:16*)
3. Our approach to God today in relation to the pattern: our obedience to Christ and the "Tabernacle plan of salvation for the New Testament". (*Hebrews 9:8-9; 10:1,16-20, 1 Corinthians 10:11, Colossians 2:16-17*).



### Scripture Reading Response and Analysis

- Why do you think the instructions God gave Moses were so specific?
- Do you think the precise nature of the instructions for the Tabernacle might have anything to do with the Biblical relationship between the pattern of the Tabernacle and the life and character of Jesus Christ? How?
- What would have happened if the instructions were not followed exactly? (*Exodus 28:35, 42; 30:20-21; 1 Corinthians 3:16*)
- Read the following scriptures: *1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Ezekiel 36:26-28* and *Revelation 21:1-4*. What implications do these scriptures have for us today? In the context of these scripture, why is it important that we study the Tabernacle in the wilderness?

### Conclusion:

Upon its construction, the Tabernacle was to be placed in the very center of the Israelite camp. The Levites (*the priestly tribe*) would be situated between the people and the Tabernacle. Every tent door was to face the Tabernacle. When the tent flap was lifted every morning, they would see the pillar of cloud hovering over the Tabernacle. God's presence was to be their first sight in the morning and the last at night. Such an arrangement contradicted human military strategy, yet with this design, the Israelites were constantly reminded of God's nearness and the need to place Him at the center of their lives.

The tabernacle, then, set a pattern for the temple that would be built at Jerusalem, for Christ, for the Church, and for Heaven itself. God's initial purpose for creating mankind was to enjoy a loving relationship with His children. Sin broke that relationship. God used the tabernacle as a way to restore that relationship and bridge the gap between Himself and mankind.