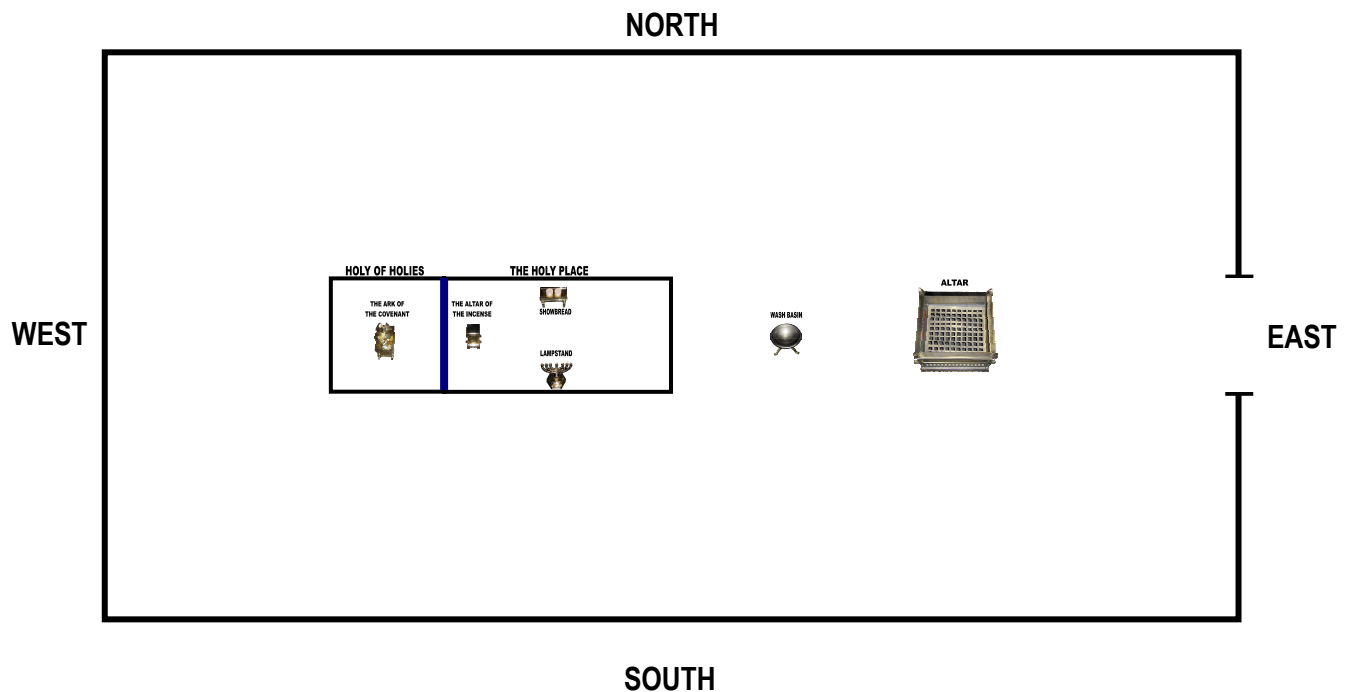


### The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was a portable temple, or dwelling place of God, that represented the presence of God among the Israelites as they wandered through the wilderness after leaving Egypt, settled in Canaan, and until they built a permanent temple under the reign of Solomon.

It consisted of a curtained courtyard with a tent inside that contained two rooms. Everything about the tabernacle and all its furniture depicted their relationship with God. All aspects represented both a barrier that existed between them and God due to sin, but also the hope of restored relationship, ultimately fulfilled by Jesus Christ. This session will only attempt to scratch the surface of this understanding, but the topic really deserves much deeper study.



## HOPE of RELATIONSHIP with GOD and the BARRIERS

THE TABERNACLE: Exodus 25-30

**BARRIER:** We cannot see or walk with God.

**HOPE:** God has made a way to dwell among us despite our sin.

Jesus is the True Tabernacle

**John 1:14**

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling [tabernacle] among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The actual Greek word is not “dwelling” but “tabernacle”. The tabernacle was a portable/mobile dwelling place for the glory of God as the Israelites wandered through the wilderness. Jesus is the new revelation of the glory of God. He is Emmanuel: God with us.

The idea is also that Jesus is leading us into a new exodus experience, but instead of appearing as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, he appears as a man who reveals the glory of God in a personal way.

The Israelites set up their camp surrounding the tabernacle so that it was always at the centre. In the same way, if we are to follow Jesus, he must be at the centre of our lives.

**THE COURTYARD WALL & GATE** (150' x 75' x 7')

**BARRIER:** You cannot approach God any way you desire.

In our culture there is a belief that there are many ways to God. The tabernacle speaks strongly against this idea. The Israelites could not approach God however they wished; they could **ONLY** come the way he prescribed, from the very direction he described. Otherwise, there would have been gates all around the tabernacle, one for each tribe's specific location.

There was only one entrance, only one way to the presence of God.

**HOPE:** God has made a way into his presence.

Jesus is the Gate

**John 10:9 (NIV)**

*I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.*

**John 14:6 (NIV)**

*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

**THE ALTAR (9' x 9' x 6')**

**BARRIER:** The death consequence for our sin.

The very first thing people would see once coming into the tabernacle is the altar – DEATH. Imagine what it must have been like. How many sacrifices would have been acted out there? Imagine the blood stained ground. Imagine the smell. The picture of Death was not only a concept but a symbol you could see, smell and participate in by bringing an animal for slaughter. All of this was because our sin deserves the death penalty.

**HOPE:** God has provided a means to offer a substitute sacrifice.

Instead of us paying the penalty of death, God permitted an animal to be brought in our place. For many, the idea of sacrifice carries with it a sense of loss, but this would not have been the case for the understanding Israelite. The fact that an animal could be offered for death, instead of one's self, would have been a huge blessing, a gift of grace, a joyful surrendering. It was only when one forgot the severity of their sin that the sacrifice became an onerous thing.

Jesus is our Substitute Sacrifice

**John 1:29 (NIV)**

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

**1 Peter 3:18 (NIV)**

*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.*

**THE WASH BASIN**

**BARRIER:** We are unclean before God.

We are spiritually and morally unclean before God and as a result we cannot enter into his presence.

**HOPE:** God has provided a means to purify us.

Priests had to wash both hands and feet before entering the Holy Place, otherwise they might die before the Lord (Exodus 30:17-21). By symbolically washing their hands and feet, God was saying he would provide a way for them to be spiritually cleansed.

Jesus Cleanses Us

**Hebrews 10:22 (NIV)**

*let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

**Ephesians 5:25-27 (NIV)**

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

**THE LAMP STAND**

**BARRIER:** We are walking in darkness.

When one walks in darkness they are not able to find their way to God. They are hopelessly lost. They can not discern truth or which way to head in life.

**HOPE:** God has provided a light to show us the way.

One branch in the middle with 3 branches off it to each side.  
It gave light to the Priests in a dark place to enable them to:

- a) have fellowship with God and
- b) intercede on behalf of the people for their sin.

Jesus is the Light

**John 8:12 (NIV)**

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

**THE SHOWBREAD (3' x 1.5' x 2'3")**

**BARRIER:** We cannot have fellowship with God.

Our sin creates a barrier in our relationship with God. We have actually declared ourselves to be his enemies in our minds and behaviour.

**HOPE:** God has provided a means for fellowship to occur.

12 loaves of bread every week (12 tribes of Israel).  
Bread was to be eaten at the end of each week ONLY by the priests.

It was called showbread because it was always in God's presence.  
It was symbolic of God's desire for fellowship with us, in his presence.  
It is also a picture showing that mankind as a whole could not enjoy this type of intimate fellowship with God because of sin.

**Jesus makes Fellowship Possible**

**John 6:35 (NIV)**

*Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

**1Corinthians 1:9 (NIV)**

*God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*

**THE ALTAR OF INCENSE (1.5' x 1.5' x 3')**

**BARRIER:** Communication with God is disrupted by our sinfulness

Scripture tells us, *"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened"* (Psalm 66:18). Our sin interferes with our worship and our dialogue with God.

**HOPE:** Through a substitute sacrifice our prayers can go up to God.

A special formula was used that was not to be used for any other application.  
Blood from the altar of sacrifice was to be placed on the horns of the altar of incense every year. It was only through sacrifice that worship and communication with God was made possible.

Nadab & Abihu offered unauthorized incense and fire came out and consumed them  
(Lev 10:1-3)

**Jesus is our Intercessor**

**Hebrews 7:25 (NIV)**

*Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

Through Jesus' sacrifice we now truly worship and talk with God.

**THE VEIL**

**BARRIER:** We are separated from the throne room of God.

**Hebrews 12:14 (NIV)**

*Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

Because of our sin we cannot enter into the presence of God. We cannot come before his throne.

**HOPE:** The throne of God is nearby.

Jesus removes the Barrier

**Mark 15:37-39 (NIV)**

*With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.*

<sup>38</sup> *The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*

<sup>39</sup> *And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"*

**Hebrews 10:19 (NIV)**

*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,*

**THE HOLY OF HOLIES (15' x 15' x 15')**

**BARRIER:** No one is able to enter the throne room of God.

**HOPE:** A representative can go before God on our behalf.

Only the High Priest, once a year, could enter the Most Holy Place and offer atonement. He had to wash himself, put on special clothing, burn incense so the smoke would fill the room and shield his eyes, and bring blood to make atonement for Israel's sins.

Jesus Brings Us to God's Throne

**Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)**

*Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

**THE ARK OF THE COVENANT**

**BARRIER:** Covenant with God requires the shedding of blood

Blood from the altar had to be sprinkled on the atonement cover of the ark (Lev. 16:14). Covenant always requires the shedding of blood and should covenant be broken the death penalty would be invoked. That's why yearly the High Priest needed to bring the blood of the sacrifice to the Ark of the Covenant to atone for our sin.

**HOPE:** God has established covenant with us

The atonement cover of the Ark is the seat of God's throne, the box is his footstool. (1Chronicles 28:2)

Jesus provides our Atonement

**Hebrews 10:11-14 (NIV)**

*Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup> But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. <sup>13</sup> Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, <sup>14</sup> because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.*

Jesus' shed blood, once and for all, pays the penalty for our sin and so our covenant with God cannot be broken.

**1) Manna:**

**Barrier:** Rejection of God's provision. (Exodus 16)

The Israelites grumbled about God's miraculous provision of Manna in the wilderness. This was symbolic of their ongoing, consistent discontentment with how God graciously provided for them.

**Hope:** God will meet our every need through faith.

Jesus is our Provision for Life

**John 6:48-51 (NIV)**

*I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. <sup>50</sup> But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

**2) Aaron's Budding Staff:**

**Barrier:** Rejection of God's appointed leadership. (Numbers 16-17)

The Israelites rejected Moses and Aaron as leaders over the Israel nation claiming they also had every right to lead. They were forgetting that Moses and Aaron were both appointed by God to these positions.

**Hope:** God provides leadership.

**Jesus is our High Priest**

**Hebrews 6:19-20 (NIV)**

*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, <sup>20</sup> where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*

**3) Stone Tablets:**

**Barrier:** Rejection of God's holiness. (Exodus 32)

God had just verbally provided the conditions of the covenant with the Israelites and they all with one voice agreed to follow God on his terms. Moses then went up onto Mount Sinai to receive God's "hard copy" of the laws on two stone tablets.

No sooner was he gone than Israel blatantly rejected God's laws and broke covenant with God. This is when Moses then comes down the mountain, sees the idolatry, and smashes the two tablets of the law.

**Hope:** God establishes covenant with us.

**Jesus offers us a new covenant**

**Hebrews 9:15 (NIV)**

*For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*



What strikes you most about how God established the Mosaic Law and specifically the tabernacle?

All the Mosaic Law represents the nature of our relationship with God, both the barriers and the hope of restored relationship and life. It all reveals Jesus.

How might this affect how you read through the Old Testament?

**HOMEWORK:**

Spend some time this week reflecting on all God had to do to make it possible for you to be reconciled to him.