

The Tabernacle¹

I. The tabernacle as a new Garden of Eden / new creation

Eden / Creation	Tabernacle
Eden was the mountain of God (Ezek 28:14, 16).	The tabernacle was a portable mountain (the three zones match the three zones of Sinai).
Eden had the tree of life (Gen 2:9).	The tabernacle had the tree-like lampstand (Exod 25:31–37).
Eden had water flowing from it (Gen 2:10–14).	The tabernacle had the laver / sea (Exod 30:18).
The purpose of Eden was for God to dwell with humanity, in joyful fellowship.	In the tabernacle, God again dwelt with humankind (Exod 25:8; 29:45).
Eden was tended by Adam, the first priest, who was “to work it and keep it” (Gen 2:15).	The tabernacle was tended by the priests, who “work” and “keep” it (same verbs): Num 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:5–6
After Adam’s fall, the garden was blocked by the cherubim, angelic guards (Gen 3:24).	The tabernacle had cherubim worked into the curtains that blocked the way of entrance (Exod 26:1, 31).
The way to enter Eden was through the east (Gen 3:24).	The way to enter the tabernacle was through the east (Exod 27:13).
God created the world using his consummate wisdom (Prov 3:19; 8:27).	The tabernacle and its furnishings were made by Bezalel, whom God furnished with his wisdom (Exod 31:3).
God created the world in six days, by speaking (Gen 1).	God speaks six times to Moses about the tabernacle (“The LORD said to Moses”: 6x in Exod 25:1–30:11).
When God “finished” his work, he “looked” and “behold” it was good. He “blessed” the people (Gen 1:28; 2:2–3).	When Moses “finished” his work, he “looked” and “behold” it was done as God had commanded. So he was “blessed” the people (Exod 39:32, 43; 40:33; same Heb. words).
The seventh day was a day of rest.	The seventh time we have “The LORD said to Moses,” it is about sabbath (Exod 30:12).

- “In the midst of a fallen world, in exile from the Garden of Eden—the original ‘heaven on earth’—God undertakes another act of creation, a building project that is nothing less than a return to pre-Fall splendor” (Enns, p. 521).
 - The tabernacle thus reflects God’s grace: even after the fall, God makes a way of return into his presence, a way that is paved with sacrifice.
- Eden and the tabernacle are so similar because of a more fundamental similarity: both are pictures of heaven, God’s ultimate dwelling place.
 - The tabernacle falls short of Eden and heaven by how it simultaneously keeps people *away* from God. Only the high priest may enter the most holy place (God’s throneroom) once per year, on the day of atonement.

¹ For this handout, I relied on Leithart’s *A House for My Name*, Beale’s *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, Poythress’ *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, and Enns’ *Exodus Commentary*.

II. The tabernacle as a type (foreshadow) of Christ and the church

- In Christ, “the Word became flesh and dwelt [lit., ‘tented’] among us” (John 1:14). His body is a temple (2:21).
- Jesus is the ultimate dwelling place of God, the ultimate tabernacle.
 - The gospel of John as a tour of the ultimate tabernacle:
 - Jesus as the sacrifice (John 1:29) // The first altar.
 - Jesus as waters of life (John 4:10; 7:38) // The laver.
 - Jesus as the bread of life (John 6) // The showbread.
 - Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12) // The lamp.
 - Jesus as the ultimate day of atonement sacrifice, whose blood is brought into the most holy place (John 19) // The final sacrifice.
 - When Jesus is raised, Mary sees *two* angels, one at the place of his head, one at the place of his feet (John 20:12) // The two cherubim on the ark.
 - Thanks to Jesus’ sacrifice, the veil in the temple was torn in two (Matt 27:51). The way is now open for us to enter the most holy place (Heb 9:8; 10:19). We have unmitigated fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.
 - We are in a better place than Eden: we can never lose this fellowship.
- The church (in union with Christ) is also the ultimate tabernacle:
 - Acts 2:3: tongues of fire on the disciples: the Spirit descending to dwell in them. This parallels how God came down on the tabernacle: Exod 40:34.
 - Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6: Jesus is the cornerstone of the new temple.
 - 1 Cor 3:10: Paul and the apostles are builders.
 - Rev 21:3: “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.’”