

INTRODUCTION TO THE TABERNACLE

EXODUS 25-28

In this lesson, we are going to introduce the Tabernacle, its history, and its purpose. The fact that Exodus devotes so much revelation concerning the Tabernacle serves to emphasize its importance.

The Tabernacle was the place God intended to house His presence with the Israelites. Once the Tabernacle was completed, His presence, or glory, did, in fact, enter the Holy of Holies and take up residence between and over the cherubim located at each end of the Mercy Seat covering the Ark of the covenant. The Tabernacle was the place where man met with God, but only according to the dictates of God concerning how He must be approached in that place.

Exodus 40:34–35 ³⁴Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle [מִשְׁכָּן]. ³⁵Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

The Tabernacle, and later the Temple, were the places where God's glory dwelt among the Israelites. David proclaimed that truth in the Psalms and he had to be referring only to the Tabernacle because the Temple was yet to be built at the time he wrote it.

Psalms 26:8 ⁸O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house And the place where Your glory dwells.

When used in this context, tabernacle, מִשְׁכָּן, means the portable dwelling used as a central place of worship and as the dwelling place for the glory of

God. He was dwelling with His people in that place. When the Bible refers to that specific dwelling place of God, the word is generally accompanied by the definite article, the Tabernacle, in order to show it is not referring to just any profane or common tent or dwelling place which the word can mean, but instead it is specifically referring to the dwelling place of God's glory. The Tabernacle was also called the Tent of Meeting [אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד] because God met with Moses there and through him the people. The Tent of Meeting implies a place of revelation and communication between God and Moses and through the prophet God was communicating with His people, the Israelites. The Tent of Meeting and the Tabernacle are synonymous. There was a temporary Tent of Meeting before the Tabernacle was constructed, but once the Tabernacle came into existence it was called the Tent of Meeting as well. Chronicles makes it very clear the Tabernacle and the Tent of Meeting were the same tent and it was used until Solomon built the Temple.

1 Chronicles 6:32 ³²They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting [אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד], until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem; and they served in their office according to their order.

God specifically said He would meet with Moses and with the Israelites at the Tent of Meeting which was Tabernacle and which would be a place of revelation to the prophet and through him to the people.

Exodus 29:42–43 ⁴²It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. ⁴³I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory.

Numbers 7:89 ⁸⁹Now when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim, so He spoke to him.

It was also called the Tent of the Testimony [אֹהֶל הָעֵדוּת] because the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments were housed in the Ark of the Covenant residing in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. The testimony referred to the stones and the Commandments written on them.

Numbers 9:15 ¹⁵Now on the day that the tabernacle was erected the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony [אֹהֶל הָעֵדוּת], and in the evening it was like the appearance of fire over the tabernacle, until morning.

In English, we use the word “Tabernacle,” but that is simply a transliteration of the Latin word *tabernaculum* meaning a tent with or without a wooden framework. The Latin also referred to it as the *tentorium*. The Greek word generally used is σκηνή simply meaning a tent. For example, in the Septuagint in Exodus 25:9, the Greek Septuagint reads “the pattern of the tent” rather than “the pattern of the Tabernacle” as our English translations have it.

The Tabernacle was referred to by using various other names as well. It was called the Tent of the Lord. The altar was located there which means it could be nothing less than the Tabernacle.

1 Kings 2:28, 30 ²⁸Now the news came to Joab, for Joab had followed Adonijah, although he had not followed Absalom. And Joab fled to the tent of the LORD [אֹהֶל יְהוָה] and took hold of the horns of the altar.... ³⁰So Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD [אֹהֶל יְהוָה] and said to him ...

The Tabernacle was also variously called “the house of the tent,” the house of the Lord,” and “the tabernacle of the house of God.”

1 Chronicles 9:23 ²³So they and their sons had charge of the gates of the house of the LORD [בֵּית יְהוָה], even the house of the tent [בֵּית אֹהֶל], as guards.

1 Chronicles 6:48 ⁴⁸Their kinsmen the Levites were appointed for all the service of the tabernacle of the house of God [מִשְׁכַּן בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים].

The term sanctuary was used to refer to the Tabernacle, sometimes to the whole structure and sometimes to the Holy of Holies.

Exodus 25:8 ⁸“Let them construct a sanctuary [מִקְדָּשׁ, ἁγίασμα] for Me, that I may dwell among them.

Sanctuary, מִקְדָּשׁ, means a holy or a sacred place, hence, a sanctuary. It refers to that which has been sanctified, that is, set apart as sacred and holy in contrast with that which is common and profane. It could refer to things such as the furnishings of the Tabernacle, but it usually referred to the place set aside where worship occurs. The Greek word used in the Septuagint for this verse is ἁγίασμα meaning a holy object or place, a sanctuary; or something hallowed, sanctified, or consecrated. The concept of consecrating a holy place and setting it apart for sacred purposes is reflected in the idea behind calling the two divisions of the sanctuary the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

There were actually three versions of the Tabernacle in the history of the Old Testament. The first version was simply a tent used after the rebellion of the golden calf and before the Tabernacle was built according to the specifications God provided Moses. Unger called this the provisional Tabernacle.¹ This provisional Tabernacle was only used for a short time; it was temporary.

¹ Merrill F. Unger, s.v. “Tabernacle of Israel,” *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed., ed. R. K. Harrison (Chicago, Moody Press, 1988), 1239.

Exodus 33:7 ⁷Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp.

Some theologians claim the Tent of Meeting refers only to this temporary Tabernacle of sorts, but as noted earlier the Bible equates the Tent of Meeting with the Tabernacle. It is more appropriate to view them as Dr. Unger viewed them which was as two phases of the Tabernacle's development.

The second version of the Tabernacle was the one built according to the specifications God revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Unger refers to this one as the Sinaitic Tabernacle. The specifics of this Tabernacle are what we will be studying in the next few lessons.

The third Tabernacle was a tent erected in Jerusalem by David to house the Ark of the Covenant prior to the building of the Temple by Solomon. Unger called this one the Davidic Tabernacle.

2 Samuel 6:17 ¹⁷So they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

1 Chronicles 15:1, 16:1 ¹Now *David* built houses for himself in the city of David; and he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it... ¹And they brought in the ark of God and placed it inside the tent which David had pitched for it, and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God.

David's Tabernacle didn't completely replace the Sinaitic Tabernacle which continued to be a place where sacrifices were offered at Gibeon. Offerings were presented in Gibeon where the altar was located and in Jerusalem

where the Ark was located and the situation remained this way until the Temple was built by Solomon. The Sinaitic and Davidic Tabernacles existed side-by-side until the Temple was built. Some people think the Sinaitic Tabernacle was also located in Jerusalem, but the Bible indicates it was elsewhere eventually finding a place in Gibeon. I'm not aware of any Scripture that reveals both of them together in Jerusalem at the same time. The Tabernacle at Gibeon was the location where God met with Solomon at the time he assumed the throne which leads to the conclusion the Tabernacle wasn't there while David was living and it wasn't necessary for it to be in Jerusalem after he died because the Temple was constructed shortly after his death. In fact, the Scriptures say the Tabernacle was in Gibeon after David erected the tent in Jerusalem and placed the Ark of the Covenant in it. The Tabernacle was not in Jerusalem.

1 Chronicles 16:39 ³⁹He [David] left Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place which was at Gibeon,

2 Chronicles 1:3 ³Then Solomon and all the assembly with him went to the high place which was at Gibeon, for God's tent of meeting was there, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness.

1 Kings 3:4-5 ⁴The king [Solomon] went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place; Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, "Ask what you wish me to give you."

If the Tabernacle was in Gibeon immediately after David erected the Davidic Tabernacle in Jerusalem and it was still in Gibeon after David died and Solomon assumed the throne, we can safely assume it was in Gibeon this entire pe-

riod of time and that it never resided in Jerusalem alongside the third, or Davidic Tabernacle.

The only Scripture I can find that could possibly be interpreted to put the Sinaitic Tabernacle and the Davidic Tabernacle in Jerusalem at the same time is 1 Chronicles 6:31-32.

1 Chronicles 6:31–32 ³¹Now these are those whom David appointed over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after the ark rested *there*. ³²They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem; and they served in their office according to their order.

This Scripture does not make the case the two versions of the Tabernacle existed together in Jerusalem. Verse 31 says the “ark rested there,” meaning in Jerusalem at the Davidic Tabernacle. Since it is a version of the Tabernacle, it is not out of order to refer to it as the “tabernacle of the tent of meeting.” We just noted in 2 Chronicles 1:3 the Tent of Meeting was located at Gibeon and 1 Kings 3:4-5 revealed that Solomon had to go to Gibeon to sacrifice on the altar which was located there as part of his coronation. These things are chronologically after David housed the Ark in the Davidic Tabernacle in Jerusalem. In 1 Chronicles 15-16 the move of the Ark into the Davidic Tabernacle in Jerusalem is related. In 1 Chronicles 16:37-40, it is revealed that David had Asaph and his relatives minister before the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem, but he left Zadok and his relatives in Gibeon to minister before the “tabernacle of the Lord” and offer sacrifices on the altar there. It is only possible to conclude the Sinaitic Tabernacle,

less the Ark of the Covenant, was in Gibeon, and the Davidic Tabernacle housing the Ark of the Covenant was in Jerusalem.

1 Chronicles 16:37–40 ³⁷So he left Asaph and his relatives there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required; ³⁸and Obed-edom with his 68 relatives; Obed-edom, also the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah as gatekeepers. ³⁹He left Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place which was at Gibeon, ⁴⁰to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering continually morning and evening, even according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which He commanded Israel.

The Tabernacle was obviously constructed to be portable and God gave Moses instructions concerning the manner in which it was to be moved. This was serious business and had to be followed to the letter. David failed to follow these directions and as a result Uzziah was struck dead by God for touching it.

2 Samuel 6:6–7 ⁶But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it. ⁷And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.

This so frightened and angered David that he left the Ark at the home of Obed-edom until he finally figured out the proper procedures for moving the Ark involved the Levites and then it was moved to Jerusalem according to God's directions without further incident (1 Chron. 15:1-29).

1 Chronicles 15:2, 11-14 ²Then David said, "No one is to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for the LORD chose them to carry the ark of God and to minister to Him forever."... ¹¹Then David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab, ¹²and said to them, "You are the heads of the fathers' households of the Levites; consecrate yourselves both you and your relatives, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to *the place* that I have prepared for it. ¹³"Because you did not carry it at the first, the LORD our God made an outburst on us, for we did

not seek Him according to the ordinance." ¹⁴So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel.

Throughout the history of the Tabernacle, it resided in several different places. It travelled the wilderness with them but spent the last thirty-eight years of the forty-year journey at Kadesh-Barnea.

Deuteronomy 2:14 ¹⁴"Now the time that it took for us to come from Kadesh-barnea until we crossed over the brook Zered was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war perished from within the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them.

Based on Joshua 24:26, the Tabernacle must have been placed in Shechem for a short while which is a fact ignored by almost every commentator. Shechem is a few miles north of Shiloh. The only other explanation would be that Joshua wrote on this large stone in Shechem but transported it to Shiloh and place it there, but the text doesn't seem to indicate that happened.

Joshua 24:26 ²⁶And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there [Shechem] under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

Once they left Kadesh-Barnea and the Jordan River was crossed, the Tabernacle traveled with the Israelites until it was set up in Shechem for what must have been a short time and then it was semi-permanently located at Shiloh in the territory of Ephraim which was about thirty miles north of Jerusalem east of the road that led from Shechem to the City of David. Shiloh was the location of the Tabernacle when Samuel was born (1 Sam. 1:3) where it took on some of the characteristics of a more permanent building. It was called a Temple of the Lord (1 Sam. 1:9, 3:3). Eli slept in it (1 Sam. 3:3), and it had doors and

doorposts (1 Sam. 1:9, 3:15). It was set up in Shiloh by the Israelites under the command of Joshua.

Joshua 18:1 ¹Then the whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there; and the land was subdued before them.

After Shiloh was destroyed, the Tabernacle was moved to Nob. That is the place where David ate the bread consecrated solely for the use of the priests. Ahimelech, the High Priest, was there along with the other priests who were put to death by Saul for assisting David (1 Sam. 21-22). Only Abiathar escaped death at the hands of Saul's henchman, Doeg. The exact location of Nob is unknown, but it was not far from Jerusalem. "The site of Nob was perhaps on Mount Scopus about one mile northeast of ancient Jerusalem, on the hill Qu'meh one mile further north, or Ras el-Mesharif about one mile north of Jerusalem."²

Earlier, we noted that by the time David's reign ended the Tabernacle was located in Gibeon which was about eight miles northwest of Jerusalem.

The Bible does not exactly say what happened to the Tabernacle in Shiloh. The Philistines probably destroyed the city about 1050 to 1000 BC. According to the prophet Jeremiah, God caused the destruction of Shiloh due to the rebellion of the Jews, but how He did it and the agents He used to do it were not specified.

² Chad Brand, gen. ed., s.v. "Nob," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. and exp. (Nashville, TN: B & H, 2015), 1166-1167.

Jeremiah 7:12–14 ¹²“But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first [the Tabernacle], and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. ¹³“And now, because you have done all these things,” declares the LORD, “and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer, ¹⁴therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My name [the Temple], in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, as I did to Shiloh.

There was a specific purpose for the Tabernacle and that was to provide a place where God would dwell with His people.

Exodus 25:8, 21-22 ⁸“Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.... ²¹“You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. ²²“There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

It probably won't surprise you to know there are critics—disguised as scholars—who deny the authenticity of the Tabernacle and in so doing deny the inspiration and inerrancy of the Word of God. One argument essentially claims the Tabernacle was a myth written into the biblical story at a later time in order to seemingly authenticate its existence. The Tabernacle is also said to be an ideal concept and not a real structure. Many of them believe the Pentateuch was written in stages by various authors; therefore, later authors are writing the Tabernacle back into the Pentateuch and other Scriptures in order to provide the basis or template for the later Temple the existence of which they cannot possibly deny. They also deny that Ezekiel's Temple is a Temple that will be built in any literal Messianic Kingdom, but instead it is a representation of the ideal Temple. Another excuse for denying the existence of the Tabernacle claims that

a bunch of recently liberated slaves could not possibly have possessed the artistic abilities and the skills of craftsmen needed in order to successfully construct the Tabernacle as God described it which obviously denies the fact God empowered them to build it. The intricately devised priesthood is said to be far too elaborate for the rather simple rituals that were to be performed throughout the year in conducting the Tabernacle's business. The critics also make the claim that the pre-exilic authors of Scripture did not pen any "genuine" Scripture confirming the Tabernacle, and where it was mentioned in Chronicles and the Psalms it was attributed by the critics to later authors who went back and inserted those references; therefore, they are not genuine Scriptures. After the Pentateuch, the Tabernacle is mentioned in six verses in the Chronicles and twice in the Psalms; therefore, the critics are claiming these were all added to those books later. This puts the Bible in a no win situation; it goes like this: If the Bible doesn't mention something in certain books or doesn't mention it often enough, then that something is deemed impossible to have existed, but if the Bible does mention it, then somebody came along later and inserted it and it still isn't factual. Another argument denying the existence of the Tabernacle involves the architecture. Supposedly, the structure was so poorly constructed that it probably couldn't even remain standing, a claim disproven by engineers. Other critics claim one author of the Pentateuch knew nothing of a Tabernacle; therefore, the priestly author made it up which is a theory that denies the fact of Moses' authorship. Or, the Israelites only had a tent type of sanctuary which was not a

place of sacrifice but a place of oracle just like the portable sanctuaries the pagans supposedly used.³ It is very interesting to note so many “Bible scholars” seem to be very eager to connect the Word of God with pagan myths and practices.

A very perceptive observation concerning the critical school of biblical theology was made by Dr. Feinberg: “one of the characteristic features of the critical school is the tenet that development always proceeds from the simple to the complex. Why is this principle departed from at this point when the Tabernacle and the Temple are discussed?”⁴ Why indeed? They do it because that is the only way to deny the truth of the Bible in terms of the Tabernacle. If they held true to their erroneous principles, they would start with the simplicity of the Tabernacle and end with the more complex Temple just as the Old Testament does, but they can’t do that because it doesn’t allow them to deny the existence of the Tabernacle. This violates their own procedural processes and it is illogical and deceitful, but it is what they must do in order to affirm their biblical skepticism. It is also important to note this notion of simple to complex is based on an evolutionary thought process which depends on simple to complex for everything that exists.

It should be obvious that we believe in the historicity of the Tabernacle because the Bible clearly reveals the existence of the Tabernacle. We believe

³ C. L. Feinberg, s.v. “Tabernacle,” *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 5 vols., gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975, 1976), 5:578-579.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5:579.

that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God and as such what it reveals we believe to be fully factual, revealed by God, and therefore reliable. We do not believe in evolution, and it is perfectly reasonable to believe an omnipotent God could create complex structures from nothing just as He said He did.

In terms of the Messianic Kingdom, God promised to tabernacle or dwell with the Israelites in their own land enjoying the Covenant promises God made with them.

Ezekiel 37:24–28 ²⁴“My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. ²⁵“They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. ²⁶“I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. ²⁷“My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. ²⁸“And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.””

The first Tabernacle was a type of the fulfillment of God's presence with men in the Davidic, Messianic Kingdom and on into eternity. Ezekiel predicted that the Sinaitic type would one day be fulfilled by the antitype in the Messianic Kingdom.

The New Testament also has references to the Tabernacle which serve to confirm its existence as well.

John tied the Incarnation of Jesus in Israel among the Jews with the presence of God in the Tabernacle, which was also in Israel among the Jews, and

which is a fact not readily apparent to anyone who does not know the Old Testament well.

John 1:14 ¹⁴And the Word became flesh, and dwelt [σκηνώω] among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Dwelt, σκηνώω, means to encamp or to pitch a tent. It assumes the meaning to dwell as in tents, and to tabernacle. It is the word used in the Septuagint to translate the fact Lot "moved his tents" (NASB, KJV, ASV, RSV), "pitched his tent" (NKJV, NET), or "set up his tent" (HCSB) (Gen. 13:12). John was saying that Jesus tabernacled among the Jews at His First Advent just as God was present with them in the Tabernacle. Obviously, in terms of application, we can say that during this dispensation faith in Christ results in Him dwelling or tabernacling with us as individual believers the moment we come to faith, but during the Incarnation, He specifically dwelt among the Jewish people in the nation of Israel, believers and unbelievers alike.

Just prior to his martyrdom, Stephen referred to the Tabernacle in his address before the Council.

Acts 7:44 ⁴⁴"Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony [ἡ σκηνή τοῦ μαρτύριον] in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed *him* to make it according to the pattern which he had seen [NASB].

This statement by a Jewish man living centuries after the Tabernacle authenticates its existence contrary to the claims of critics who want to deny its existence. We've already discussed this name for the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of the Testimony, which directly connected the Tabernacle with the tablets of

stone upon which were written the Ten Commandments. This should have been translated by the NASB and most of the other English translations as “the Tabernacle of the Testimony” as the ASV and the HCSB translate it simply because that makes the connection to the tablets more visible to us in English, not to mention the fact that’s how the original Greek text reads.

Acts 7:44 44“Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses commanded him to make it according to the pattern he had seen [HCSB].

Testimony, μαρτύριον, means testimony, witness, or proof; it refers to the declaration which confirms or makes something known. The Septuagint uses this word to translate the Hebrew word הַעֲדוּת, in, for example, Exodus 25:16 which refers to the Ark of the Testimony. When the definite article, הַ, is used, it is referring to the stones upon which were written the Ten Commandments. The Hebrew testimony, עֲדוּת, means “a statute, stipulation, regulation, i.e., a principle or contingent-particular point of law, having authority to give consequences for not keeping, with a possible focus that these commands serve as a warning, urging, or witness to the covenant agreement.”⁵ In Exodus 25:16, it is referring to the Ark of the Covenant containing the stone tablets. Stephen was referring to the Ark of the Covenant that resided in the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle and which contained the Testimony, that is, the stone tablets.

⁵ James Swanson, s.v. “עֲדוּת,” *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

The Tabernacle God had Moses construct in the wilderness was a copy of the true Tabernacle that was made by God in heaven. The author of Hebrews made this truth very clear in his defense of a better ministry through the High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 8:1–2 ¹Now the main point in what has been said is *this*: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ²a minister in the sanctuary and in the true [ἀληθινός] tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

The only hint of a heavenly Tabernacle in the Old Testament was a reference to the pattern of the Sinaitic Tabernacle that was shown to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. This does not definitively state God showed Moses the heavenly Tabernacle; He may simply have shown the prophet a pattern, it seems to at least be possible Moses saw the true Tabernacle.

Exodus 25:9 ⁹“According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct *it*.”

John also confirmed the existence of a Tabernacle in heaven and he was privileged to see it in a vision.

Revelation 15:5 ⁵After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened,

True, ἀληθινός, means what is true and conformed to the truth. In this context, it refers to what is true in itself, genuine, and real and not what is false. There is a true, divinely constructed Tabernacle in heaven and revealed to Moses by God that was the prototype for the Tabernacle Moses constructed, at God's direction, during the wilderness journey of the Exodus.

The Tabernacle—and later the Temple—were mere shadows of the reality that exists in the true Tabernacle in heaven.

Hebrews 8:4–5 ⁴Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; ⁵who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “SEE,” He says, “THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.”

Hebrews 9:23–24 ²³Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

Obviously, the Tabernacle was a type of the true Tabernacle in heaven, but types are an important issue in reference to this structure because some people try to find a type in every single detail no matter how minute. This can devolve into allegorical nonsense. For an example of an excessive typological/allegorical interpretation of the Tabernacle and other accoutrements in it, see Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 3.7.7. “He wrote that the seven branches of the lampstand represent the courses of the planets. The colors of the curtains and clothing represent the four elements (earth, water, air, and fire). The two shoulder stones stand for the sun and moon. The 12 breastplate stones represent the 12 months or the 12 signs of the Greek zodiac. His suggestions do not seem to be the best interpretations of the significance of these things.”⁶ We need to use caution in this area. Some theologians are very careful to label

⁶ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, 12 vols. (Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2010), 1:241.

something a type only if the New Testament specifically identifies the antitype. That might be overly cautious, but it is much better than going overboard on identifying types as many theologians do in Exodus.

It seems rather apparent that those critics who deny the existence of the Sinaitic Tabernacle are not only also denying the truth of the Word of God but they are denying the truth of the God of the Word. According to the Word of God, God Himself personally and specifically showed Moses the pattern of the Tabernacle he was to have constructed and it was a pattern of what already existed, in perfect form, in heaven.

The concept of God tabernacling with men is connected to the New Heaven and the New Earth, in other words, eternity. What God presented as a type in the Tabernacle/Temple in terms of dwelling with men will be fulfilled in eternity as God dwells with men forever. This time, it will not just be Jews; it will be Jews and Gentiles with both groups being in the family of God.

Revelation 21:3 ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

Some translations replace "tabernacle" with "dwelling" which is exegetically and grammatically correct, but in English it downplays the link back to Exodus and the Tabernacle revealed there. The word "people," is plural and while people is plural in English, it would probably be helpful if English translations read "peoples" instead. Only the ASV translates it that way in our commonly used Bi-

ble translations. It is Jew and Gentile together, people of all nations in one family, God's family, together for eternity tabernacling with God.

This is not a spiritual reality alone; it is a physical reality. God Himself will be dwelling among His people in His Eternal Kingdom and man will be in complete fellowship with God which was His intention from the beginning of Creation. It will be as though every believer is living in God's tent with Him in a familial relationship that can never be broken. The original Tabernacle constructed by Moses about 3,500 years ago pointed to this reality.

We are going to look at some artist's renderings of the Tabernacle, but as we do, remember no one alive has seen it. These artists have taken the revelation of the Bible and added their interpretation to it in order to create these impressions of what it looked like. They are certainly somewhat accurate, but the details may or may not be somewhat embellished; we don't really know. One other warning concerning the Tabernacle that actually applies throughout the Old Testament is to beware allegory and typology. Many theologians, particularly those who fail to understand Israel and the Kingdom, try to put Christ Jesus into every minute detail of the Old Testament and perhaps especially the Tabernacle and the Temple. Certainly, there is a lot of typology present in them, but it can be way overdone to the detriment of actually understanding what the Old Testament revelation is trying to tell us.

The Tabernacle was enclosed by a fence that separated the outer court which contained the laver and the altar from the small building that contained

the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies which were separated one from the other by a veil. The Holy Place contained the menorah, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense. The Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant with its mercy seat upon which the glory of God resided.

The arrangement of the Israelite tribes around the Tabernacle is interesting although perhaps too much is made of it. If you diagram the tribes and how they were arranged, the camp, as viewed from above, appears to be a cross. That certainly didn't have any significance at the time to the Israelites, but looking back on it now, we can probably attach some significance to it. Maybe.

In Numbers 23-24, Balaam looked down on the Israelite camp and saw both part of it and all of it, but no significance was attached to the actual shape of the encampment.