



## LifeLight: Exodus-Part 2

### Session 4 - Exodus 25-27

# The Tabernacle and Its Furnishings

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**O**n the mountain, Moses receives plans to build a dwelling place for God. Since Israel has covenanted to be His people, the God of the Universe will now choose to dwell with them.

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### THE TABERNACLE

The God who is above all, the God of every nation, who is totally “other” (set-apart, holy) now promises to dwell locally on earth with Israel. The picture of the tabernacle gives us a glimpse of Christ who is to come. He identifies himself as the temple (John 2:18-22) and the one who “tabernacled among us” (John 1:14).

The tabernacle will be constructed out of fine materials that Israel likely carried with them out of Egypt. But the materials will not be demanded from them, they will be surrendered willingly. Exodus 25:1-2 describes a freewill *offering* which is different than a tithe. God’s presence with Israel will happen as a result of their own desire and cooperation. He will not force himself on Israel.

### THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY/WITNESS (A.K.A. COVENANT)

The “ark of the covenant” is the heart of the worship area, the most set-apart place. In it were the (tablets of) Testimony/Witness. It is a reminder that this whole strange ritual of worship is centered on maintaining and preserving this (covenant) relationship God has begun with Israel to be His nation that will bless all nations. **Since the Testimony is the center of the worship, all of the rest of the worship revolves around it** (even God sits above it, on its foundation). So now that the relationship we have with God is based on a new covenant, the blood of Jesus, He becomes the new foundation and center for worship. Christian worship then SHOULD LOOK DIFFERENT because its foundation is different.

In 25:8 God uses two terms together, “sanctuary...I will dwell” the tension between these two terms should be noted. Sanctuary implies distance, separateness. Yet, the fact that this *sanctuary* is to go with Israel wherever she travels demonstrates that God *dwells with* Israel (Immanuel).

### THE ATONEMENT COVER

Also called the “mercy seat.” It is the place on which God would sit enthroned, not in power and judgment but in mercy. It is telling that the cover of the ark/chest that keeps the witness of the stipulations between God and Israel also is the place where atonement is made. It is on the *mercy seat* that blood would be sprinkled to atone for Israel’s sins annually. **God recognizes from the beginning that these covenant stipulations will be impossible for Israel to keep** but he makes provision to keep the relationship going, it will be through sacrifices.

Here you also get one of many references to the furniture needing to be constructed out of one piece of wood. Perhaps this is demanded for quality and craftsmanship; this isn’t to be shoddy, piecemeal work. Perhaps this also foreshadows the “wholeness” of Christ’s sacrifice, we know that not a bone was broken when he made atonement once for all.

On either side of the atonement cover, cherubim sit facing each other, creating the space for God’s throne. We should note that cherubim were not distinct to the Tabernacle. The use of common political & religious signs (cherubim, etc.) might suggest that although God is holy (other, set-apart) he also uses objects that make sense to humans in worship. **Although some things in worship are unique, we should know that he also uses “culturally relevant” objects, symbols, and figures and redeems them for his purposes.**

## THE TABLE

Designed for the *showbread* or the *bread of the presence*. Bread was to sit before the Lord always. Older bread was used to feed the priests. God, Israel's bread-giver, was to be honored by returning bread to him. It also **foreshadows Jesus, the bread of life, through whom God is always present with us.**

## THE LAMPSTAND

The rationale for the flowery design of the lampstand is hard to nail down. Perhaps it was a kind of decoration common in religious or royal design work. Out of one branch (one light) six lights are to come. The sevenfold nature of the light signifies completeness. The lampstand served to give light to the darkened holy place, but also represents the light of God in Christ and the light of believers (also local churches) in the dark world.

## THE CURTAIN AND COVERINGS—THE TABERNACLE ITSELF

Curtains woven of fine fabrics were to be hung on frames of wood, this would make up the tabernacle. The tabernacle's structure itself is designed to create separations. The court, which is the place where burnt offerings are brought, is sealed off from the rest of the world going on outside of it. The holy place, which houses the table, the lampstand, and the incense altar, is sealed off from the outer court. The most holy place, the holy of holies, which houses the ark itself, is set apart from all the rest of the tabernacle space. The varying degrees of separation are not spatial only, they are reinforced by restrictions on whom may gain access to the different regions.

**The veil** (26:31:33) - another curtain of separation (with cherubim marking it) separates the most holy place (the holy of holies) from the holy place. This is the equivalent of the temple curtain that was torn at Jesus' death.

## THE ALTAR OF SACRIFICE

The main altar where sacrifices were to be offered was in the courtyard. It provided utensils for blood to be shed and for sacrifices to be burnt. This shows us that the ability to keep access (relationship) with God is dependent on blood. **This prepares us for Christ who would be the ultimate sacrifice and whose blood would bring us into a new and better covenant relationship with God.**

### Types of sacrifices:

Type	Bible Reference	Elements	Purpose
1. The whole burnt offering	Lev 1; 6:8-13; 8:18-21	Bull, ram, or male bird whole no defect	Atonement for unintentional transgressions, expression of surrender and devotion
2. The grain offering	Lev 2; 6:14-23	Grain, flour, oil, incense, baked bread, etc	Recognition of God's provision and faithfulness
3. The fellowship offering	Lev 3; 7:11-34	Any animal without defect	Thanksgiving and fellowship-part of sacrifice was a communal meal with priests
4. The sin offering	Lev 4:1-ff; 6:24-30; 8:14-17; 16:3-22	Varies depending on who is offering it	Compulsory sacrifice for all kinds of sins, intentional or unintentional
5. The guilt offering	Lev 5:14-ff; 7:1-6	Ram or Lamb	Compulsory sacrifice for sins requiring restitution

Portions taken from [Concordia Self-Study/NIV Study Bible](#). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

## THE OIL

Oil is to be offered by Israel to keep lamps burning in the temple all the time. Oil is often a mark of the Holy Spirit (as it was used in anointing, and still is).