

# THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL GOD DELIVERS

## GOD THE LAWGIVER

### *The Lawgiver's Tabernacle*

There are portions of the Old Testament that many consider boring especially when doing 'casual' Bible reading. This is why Bible 'study' is so important. We are blessed when we understand that EVERYTHING is in God's Word for a reason. Such is the case with the numerous references in scripture to the tabernacle and from it we find beautiful pictures of Jesus! **2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.*

Yes, being God-breathed includes all the details regarding the tabernacle that the LORD instructed Moses to build. From this lesson it is my prayer that you visualize how the tabernacle is a giant portrait of Jesus Christ and His work. Everywhere you look in the tabernacle you see items pointing to Him. This tabernacle constructed long before the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus testifies of Christ. Jesus said in **John 5:39 (ESV)** <sup>39</sup> *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,*

Regarding our chronological study, the tabernacle plans were given to Moses on the mountaintop along with the Ten Commandments as the sin of the golden calf was being committed in the valley.

After the people's sin of worshipping a false god, Moses took the Tent of Meeting where he listened to their problems and inquired of God and removed it far outside the camp (**Exodus 33:7**). This serves as a picture of how the LORD is far from the wicked. The glory of the LORD departs from the tabernacle or temple when it was polluted with sin.

With that background in mind, let's look at how God planned the tabernacle for His people.

**Read Exodus 25:1-9 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *The LORD said to Moses,* <sup>2</sup> *“Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me.* <sup>3</sup> *And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze,* <sup>4</sup> *blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats' hair,* <sup>5</sup> *tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood,* <sup>6</sup> *oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense,* <sup>7</sup> *onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece.* <sup>8</sup> *And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.* <sup>9</sup> *Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.*

The tabernacle (the House of the LORD) would be built by contributions given by the people. When we are called to give to God's kingdom we must remember like David did in **1 Chronicles 29:14 (ESV)** <sup>14</sup> *“...For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.* Everything that we have comes from God – this includes what we give to God and what we keep for ourselves!

Many different kinds of materials were needed: precious metals (gold, silver), bronze, fabrics (yarn, fine linen, and goat's hair), wood, skins, olive oil, spices, and precious stones. The giving left no one out. The gold, silver, spices and precious stones came from the rich; the blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and bronze, from another class; the goats' hair from the poor. For those who had nothing to offer, there was the giving of skill and labor. And so it is in the work of the Lord still today.

Some estimate that a ton of gold was used in the tabernacle and over three tons of silver. Where did all this wealth come from? Undoubtedly some of it came from the Egyptians who were plundered by the Jews; however, the Israelites had also experienced a victory over Amalek. God saw to it that they had everything they needed to build the tabernacle just as He had designed it.

We know from later passages that the LORD raised up two talented craftsmen (Bezalel and Oholiab) and other skilled men to do the actual work. They would erect the tabernacle that would stand in the center of the camp – where God would dwell in the midst of His people. Eventually, the Son of God would come to dwell in the midst of His people on earth! Today, God's Spirit dwells in the temple of each heart who accepts Him as Savior.

God built the tabernacle through His people. Let's read of the completed items that were placed within the temple.

**Read Exodus 40:20-33 (ESV)** <sup>20</sup> He took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark. <sup>21</sup> And he brought the ark into the tabernacle and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>22</sup> He put the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil, <sup>23</sup> and arranged the bread on it before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>24</sup> He put the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle, <sup>25</sup> and set up the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>26</sup> He put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil, <sup>27</sup> and burned fragrant incense on it, as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>28</sup> He put in place the screen for the door of the tabernacle. <sup>29</sup> And he set the altar of burnt offering at the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the grain offering, as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>30</sup> He set the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing, <sup>31</sup> with which Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet. <sup>32</sup> When they went into the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, as the LORD commanded Moses. <sup>33</sup> And he erected the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work.

Those approaching the tabernacle would first see the white linen walls. The whiteness of the fence announced this was a holy place. The wall reminds us of the barrier between man and God's presence. It is man's sin that creates a wall that separates us from Holy God. **Romans 3:23 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

There was one entrance through the white linen walls. A wall keeps out, a door lets in. Jesus said in **John 10:9 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

Surrounding the main building of the tabernacle was a courtyard. In the western half of this courtyard the tabernacle itself was to be pitched, and in the eastern half stood two items - the altar of burnt offering also called the bronze or brazen altar, and the laver of brass. The website [TabernacleProjectInfo](#) helped clarify the items in the tabernacle for me.

Brazen or Bronze Altar – This was the altar where the animals were sacrificed outside the actual tabernacle. We read in **Hebrews 13:12 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup> *So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.*

Laver of Brass – The laver was a basin where the priests washed their hands. The laver was made from metal mirrors provided by the women. (**Exodus 38:30**) Because of the dirtiness of the job of killing animals and the need for purity and cleanliness by the priests, they needed to be continually washing. As believers today we must continually be cleansed of our sins. **Psalms 51:2 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!*

Golden Lampstand - We recognize this item as the Menorah although sometimes it will have more branches today. God instructed Moses to make the lamp with six branches – three rising from both sides of a center support branch. The number six is the number of man, and speaks of imperfection. However, there is a seventh branch in the center. The number seven denotes perfection. Jesus said in **John 15:5 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup> *I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* The lampstand was the only source of light in the entire holy place; for all natural light was shut out. **John 8:12 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup> *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

Table of Shewbread – The loaves on the table were called showbread or “presence bread,” literally “bread of faces.” Every Sabbath 12 loaves of bread, representing the 12 tribes of Israel, were placed on the table. They remained there for one week. When the loaves were replaced with fresh bread, they were eaten by the priests in the holy place. The placing of the loaves on the table symbolized Israel’s recognition that they were daily in God’s presence and daily dependent upon Him for their spiritual and physical needs. This “bread” was not set out in order to feed Israel’s God, unlike food placed in pagan shrines and temples, but to acknowledge that the 12 tribes were sustained constantly under the watchful eye and care of their Lord. **John 6:35 (ESV)** <sup>35</sup> *Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

Altar of Incense – Located next to the veil that separated the Holy place from the Most Holy place (Holy of Holies), was the altar of incense. Just as the altar of incense was a piece of furniture closest to the Ark of the Covenant and mercy seat, which represented God’s throne, here on earth, we are never closer to the Father than when we are in prayer. The altar of incense was built from acacia (sometimes called shittim) wood. This is a large thorny tree with rough gnarled bark. The orange-brown wood was hard-grained. It would have needed much sanding before being fashioned into a beautiful piece of furniture. Often it takes much ‘sanding’ in our lives to fashion us into people of prayer. The incense is a picture of prayer. David said in **Psalms 141:2 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> *Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!* The fragrant incense was a sweet aroma to God just as the prayers of the saints today are a sweet aroma to our Lord.

Veil – The Veil was to be a divider or a partition between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The word “veil” actually means “a separation, a curtain” or “that which hides.” This veil was to hide the Shekinah Glory from the eyes of men. It acted as a partition to separate sinful man from the Most Holy God. **Mark 15:37-38 (ESV)** <sup>37</sup> *And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.* <sup>38</sup> *And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.* When our sins are covered by the blood of Jesus, we can come into the Holy of Holies. **Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Ark of the Covenant, and Mercy Seat – This was the most important article in the tabernacle. Located in the inner room (Holy of Holies), the Ark represented the power and authority of God. In fact, the tabernacle was built for the Ark. The Holy of Holies was the room where God’s Presence dwelt on the earth, and it was the place of “mercy” on God’s part. The Ark was the symbol of God’s relationship with His people, a relationship that was based on a promise or covenant. An ark is designed to preserve intact whatever is put therein. It preserved Noah and his family from the flood. The Ark of the Covenant was designed of God to preserve His unbroken covenant in the midst of sinning people.

The lid of the Ark was called the Mercy Seat and was a solid plate of gold. It was there the blood of the yearly sacrifice was sprinkled. **Hebrews 9:22 (ESV)** <sup>22</sup> *Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.* Oh, the blood of Jesus.

God built the tabernacle with His Presence.

**Read Exodus 40:34-38 (ESV)** <sup>34</sup> *Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.* <sup>35</sup> *And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.* <sup>36</sup> *Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out.* <sup>37</sup> *But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up.* <sup>38</sup> *For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.*

After everything and everybody associated with the tabernacle was dedicated to the Lord, then the glory of God filled the tabernacle and dwelled there. During the time of Samuel the glory of the LORD departed from Israel when the people and the priests sinned against God. When Solomon dedicated the temple, God’s glory returned. However, during the time of Ezekiel, apparently, the priests erected an idol in the temple once again driving God’s glory away.

The next time the glory of God came to earth was in the person of Jesus Christ. **John 1:14 (ESV)** <sup>14</sup> *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* What did the world do with this glory? Nailed it to a cross!

Where is God’s glory today? The body of every true believer is the temple of God. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)** <sup>19</sup> *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,* <sup>20</sup> *for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

Oh, the glory of Your Presence we Your temple give You reverence – may You rise to Your rest and be blessed as Your Glory fills this place!

# THE TABERNACLE PICTURING JESUS

