



A Course
In
**THE
TABERNACLE,
STUDIES IN**

Prepared by the
Committee on Religious Education
of the
American Bible College

A COURSE

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Pineland, Florida 33945

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The compiler of this course is using, almost exclusively, public domain's "TABERNACLE" taken from Rev. John McClintock and James Strong's CYCLOPEDIA OF BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE. Although this was published many years ago, it is still recognized as an authoritative treatise on this subject. The reader is encouraged to purchase this product from 200 AGES software at 1-800-297-4307 or to down load the information via the Internet.

It is imperative that a student of the Bible accurately understand the Old Testament concept of the Tabernacle! Otherwise, he will not comprehend the Mosaic Law nor will he grasp the tabernacle phraseology found in the New Testament and in particular in the Book of Hebrews.

As biblical scholars, Drs. McClintock and Strong presented an accurate view of the tabernacle in its Old Testament setting and presented a proper New Testament application. The tabernacle furniture topics were copied from different sections of their work under their alphabetical titles. Although being of Majority and Massoretic texts in nature, they often used their own translations for applicable Hebrew and Greek words in support for their interpretations. This should not be construed to imply that the American Bible College is correcting God's Word. The American Bible College believes the King James Version is the preserved Word of God, and this method of study allows the writer to accurately present the historical meaning in a relevant, current setting.

During this course the student is required to read through STUDIES IN THE TABERNACLE ten times.

It is our desire that this study will be spiritually enlightening and rewarding as you understand THE TABERNACLE in history and prophecy as relevant to the Church. All additional references will be footnoted and bracketed.

Respectfully your servant in Christ Jesus,

Dr. Marvin W. Royse

FOREWORD

APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THIS BOOK

The Tabernacle is very relevant to the past, present and future restoration of Israel as well as the Church. It is profound in its historic and prophetic promises to the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. A lifetime of study would be too short to master it. The thoughts are deep, and the student who is not willing to do prolonged and patient thinking ought not to undertake this book. To get at the meat of this book it must be carefully broken down and analyzed into its component parts. Each part must be studied by itself and then in its relation to the other parts. Analysis is not enough. We must synthesize each phrase to see the Tabernacle in its total Bible usage.

Suggestions for Study

As we undertake these studies in the Tabernacle, our primary effort should be to familiarize ourselves with the text itself. This we may do through careful reading and rereading. Following Dr. James M. Gray in his book, *How to Master the English Bible*, we suggest the following five rules for this reading:

- (1) Read the whole book at one time, ignoring chapter and verse divisions.
- (2) Read it continuously, right through at a single sitting, without break or interruption.
- (3) Read it repeatedly, over and over again; not twice, but ten or fifteen times.
- (4) Read it independently, without consulting other people's interpretations until you have direct contact and immediate acquaintance with the book itself.
- (5) Read it prayerfully, seeking your interpretation from the Holy Spirit who is present in the subject matter and also in the heart of the devout reader.

Reading is our first step, but mere reading is not study. Having read the book, we should study it carefully and purposefully, closing the book from time to time to summarize our study. We will use as our guide in this study the comments of Drs. McClintock and Strong and other recognized Bible scholars. Additional books should be consulted where available, and a comparative study made of the different interpretations.

Some Values to Be Sought

Closely connected with our purpose in reading and with the problems that we face are the values that we seek. First, we want a working knowledge of the *content* of *The Tabernacle*. Then, we want to know its *aim* and *purport*. Finally, we want to lay hold of the message of this book both for its original writing and its present century readers. The final test of value will be not how much of its content we have mastered, but how much Christ has mastered our lives through these *Studies in The Tabernacle*.

ANALYSIS OF THE TABERNACLE¹

TABERNACLE [TAB ur nack el] — the tent that served as a place of worship for the nation of Israel during their early history.

On Mount Sinai, after the Lord had given the commandments, judgments, and ordinances to Moses, He instructed Moses to construct the tabernacle. This was to be [the] center for worship and a place where the people could focus upon the presence of the Lord. This tabernacle was to replace the temporary tent that had been pitched outside the camp (Ex. 33:7–11). God began the description of this building by giving His people the opportunity to participate in its construction. They did this by giving an offering of the needed materials, including a combination of rare and beautiful fabrics and precious metals, along with supplies easily available in the wilderness.

After describing the offering (Ex. 25:1-9), the Lord proceeded to specify in minute detail the pattern for the tabernacle. He began by giving a description of the holiest item in the entire structure: the ARK OF THE COVENANT (Ex. 25:10-22). Other items in the tabernacle for which the Lord gave minute construction details included the seven-branched lampstand (Ex. 25:31-39); the intricate curtains of the tabernacle (Ex. 26:1-25); the veils, and the screen (Ex. 26:1-37); the large bronze altar of burnt offering (Ex. 27:1-8); and the hangings for the courtyard (Ex. 27:9-19).

A brief recipe for the oil to be used in worship is given in Exodus 27:20-21, followed by a description of the priests' garments and consecration (Exodus 28-29). Directions for making the golden incense altar are given in Exodus 30:1–10. After a brief statement about a tax assessment (Ex. 30:11-16), the Lord told Moses to build a bronze laver (Ex. 30:17-21).

Mixed in with these instructions about specific items of the tabernacle are plans for the architecture and design of the building. The tabernacle was in the form of a tent 10 cubits* wide and 30 cubits long. It was to be set up with its only entrance toward the east. The tent consisted of a wooden framework made of 46 identical planks 10 cubits long and 1 1/2 cubits wide; there were 20 planks each on the north and south sides. Six of the planks were on the west end, along with two additional planks that were 1/2 cubit wide. All of these planks were acacia [shittim] wood plated with gold.

*[The Hebrew cubit was the measurement of the lower arm (from the elbow to the tip of the third finger) and considered by most to be 21 inches in length.]

Over this framework were four separate coverings that made up the roof of the structure. The first covering was made of fine-twined linen of blue, scarlet, and purple with intricately portrayed CHERUBIM. The second covering was of pure white goats' hair. The third was of rams' skins dyed red. The topmost covering was of material referred to in the NKJV as badger skins. Other English translations suggest that this should be translated porpoise skins, skins of sea cows, or possibly leather.

The tent constructed in this manner was then divided into two rooms divided by an intricate veil of blue, scarlet, and purple linen embroidered with cherubim.

The inner, western room was called the HOLY OF HOLIES. It was 10 cubits square, and it contained only one piece of furniture—the holiest item in the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant. The ark was a chest made of acacia wood covered with gold, 2 1/2 cubits long and 1 1/2 cubits in width and height. In addition, a gold border extended above the top of the ark to keep the lid stationary. The ark also had golden rings on each side so it could be transported with poles that were placed through the rings. The lid of the ark was called the MERCY SEAT. Upon it were two gold cherubim that faced each other. The ark contained a copy of the stone tablets with the TEN COMMANDMENTS, a gold pot filled with MANNA; and Aaron's rod that budded.

The outer, eastern room was called the Holy Place. Ten cubits wide and 20 cubits long, it was entered through the blue, scarlet, and purple linen curtains that served as a door. This door was always aligned toward the east. It contained

¹ Ronald F. Youngblood, general editor; F. F. Bruce and R. K. Harrison, consulting editors, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary; An authoritative one-volume reference work on the Bible with full color illustrations [computer file], electronic edition of the revised edition of Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995.

three items. On its western side, next to the veil, was the altar of incense, or golden altar, one cubit square and two cubits high. Upon this altar, made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, the morning and evening incense was burned.

On the southern side of the Holy Place was the seven-branched golden lampstand, or candlestick, comprised of a pedestal, a shaft, and three branches extending to both sides of the shaft. This lampstand was made of a talent of fine gold. On the northern side of the Holy Place was the table for the SHEWBREAD, or bread of the Presence. This table was made of gold-covered acacia wood two cubits long, one cubit wide, and one and one-half cubits high.

Surrounding the main building of the tabernacle was a spacious courtyard 100 cubits long in its east-west direction and 50 cubits wide from north to south. This courtyard was surrounded by a fence five cubits high, formed of bronze pillars with silverwork, resting in bronze sockets, placed five cubits apart, and hung with fine linen. 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 or the great bronze altar, and the laver.

The description of the actual building of the tabernacle is recorded in Exodus 35-40. The workers were first enlisted. Then the building of each item of the tabernacle is described in Exodus 36-39. The record of the tabernacle's construction occurs in Exodus 40. Up to this time, the nation of Israel had used a temporary tent called the tabernacle of the congregation; it is mentioned in Exodus 33:7-11. The tabernacle continued to be called the tabernacle of the congregation, among other names, after its construction. When the Israelites pitched camp in the wilderness, the tabernacle was to be placed in the center, with the Levites camping next to it (Num. 1:53). Then the tribes were to be arrayed in specific order on the four sides of the tabernacle (Numbers 2).

Responsibilities for the care and moving of the tabernacle were delegated to various families of the tribe of Levi (Num. 1:50-52; Numbers 3-4). The Levitical family of Kohath was to disassemble the structure and cover the tabernacle furnishings with the badger skins. The tapestries were the responsibility of the family of Gershon. Merari's family had charge of the boards, pillars, foundations, pins, and cords. All these Levitical families were commissioned to care for the sanctuary.

The first day of tabernacle worship is described in Numbers 7-9. The guiding pillar of cloud and fire rested upon the tabernacle when the people were encamped. When the people were on the march, with the pillar serving as their guide, the tribes that camped on the east of the tabernacle were first in marching order. These were Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. The tabernacle was taken down and carried by the assigned family members of Gershon and Merari (Num. 10:17).

The next group in the marching order were the tribes that camped on the south of the tabernacle. These were Reuben, Simeon, and Gad. Following these, the family of Kohath carried the holy objects of the tabernacle.

Then came the tribes that camped on the west of the tabernacle. These were Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin.

The rear guard of the march was composed of the tribes that camped on the north of the tabernacle. These were Dan, Asher, and Naphtali.

When the tribes were camped, two silver trumpets were used to summon the tribes to gather at the tabernacle. The tabernacle was also the place where the 70 elders advised and counseled the people (Num. 11:16). It was also the place of specific judgments (Num. 12:4) and appointments (Deut. 31:14).

During the conquest of the land of Canaan by the Israelites, the tabernacle remained at Gilgal, while the ark of the covenant was evidently carried from place to place with the armies of Israel. The ark was reported at the crossing of the Jordan (Josh. 3:6), at Gilgal (Josh. 4:11), at the conquest of Jericho (Josh. 6:4), at the campaigns against Ai (Josh. 7:6), and at Mount Ebal (Josh. 8:33).

The tabernacle was finally placed on the site it was to occupy during the duration of the period of conquest and judges, at Shiloh (Josh. 18:1). Here the tribes were assigned their territorial allotments.

As the years passed, certain other structures were added to the tabernacle while it remained at Shiloh. These included living quarters for the priests and Levites who served at the tabernacle. By the end of the period of the judges, during the administration of Eli, at least some of the attendants lived on the premises (1 Sam. 3:3).

During the Israelites' battle against the Philistines at Aphek, the ark of the covenant was removed from the tabernacle and taken into battle. Lost to the Philistines, it finally came to rest at Kirjath Jearim (1 Sam. 4:1-7:1). It remained here until the time of David's reign.

With the departure of the ark, the tabernacle lost some of its esteem in the eyes of the Hebrew people (Ps. 78:60). During the reign of Saul, the tabernacle was at Nob (1 Sam. 21:1). From the latter part of David's reign throughout the fourth year of Solomon's reign, the tabernacle was at the high place of Gibeon (1 Chr. 16:39; 21:29). When the Temple

was completed, Solomon had the Levites bring the tabernacle to Jerusalem (1 Kin. 8:4; 2 Chr. 5:5), presumably to be stored in the Temple area.

The New Testament uses some terminology and concepts drawn directly from the tabernacle. The supreme event of all the ages is the existence of God's son in human form. The Bible declares that the Word became flesh and "tabernacled" (Greek word rendered as "dwelt" in the NKJV) among us (John 1:14). In his final speech, Stephen accepted the Old Testament account of the tabernacle as historical (Acts 7:44). In Romans 3:25, Paul used the word "propitiation," which might also be translated "mercy seat." Titus 3:5 probably refers to the laver. Revelation 8:3-5 speaks of the golden incense altar. In Revelation 13:6 and 15:5, reference is made to the heavenly tabernacle. Practically every feature of the tabernacle is found in the Book of Hebrews.

COMMENTARY ON THE TABERNACLE²

Chapter I. — *Terms and Synonyms.*

“Tabernacle” is the rendering, in the A. V., of the following Heb. and Gr. words:

1. The first word thus used (Exodus 25:9) is מִשְׁכָּן, *mishken*, from שָׁכַב, *to lie down* or *dwell*, and thus itself equivalent to *dwelling*. It connects itself with the Jewish, though not scriptural, word Shechinah (q.v.), as describing the dwelling place of the divine glory. It is noticeable, however, that it is not applied in prose to the common dwellings of men, the tents of the patriarchs in Genesis, or those of Israel in the wilderness. It seems to belong rather to the speech of poetry (Psalm 87:2; Song of Solomon 1:8). The loftier character of the word may obviously have helped to determine its religious use, and justifies translators who have the choice of synonyms like “tabernacle” and “tent” in a like preference. In its application to the sacred building, it denotes (a) the ten tri-colored curtains; (b) the forty-eight planks supporting them; (c) the whole building, including the roof. See DWELLING [in McClintock and Strong].

2. Another word, however, is also used, more connected with the common life of men; אֹהֶל, *ohel*, the *tent* of the patriarchal age, of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob (Genesis 9:21, etc.). For the most part, as needing something to raise it, it is used, when applied to the sacred tent, with some distinguishing epithet. In one passage only (1 Kings 1:39) does it appear with this meaning by itself. The Sept., not distinguishing between the two words, gives אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד for both. The original difference appears to have been that אֹהֶל represented the uppermost covering, the black goats-hair roof, which was strictly a tent, in distinction from the lower upright house-like part built of boards. The two words are accordingly sometimes joined, as in Exodus 39:32; 40:2, 6:29 (A.V. “the tabernacle of the tent”). Even here, however, the Sept. gives אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד only, with the exception of the *var. lect.* of אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד אֶלְמָנִים in Exodus 40:29. In its application to the tabernacle, the term *ohel* means (a) the tent-roof of goats-hair; (b) the whole building. See TENT [in McClintock and Strong].

3. בַּיִת, *bayith*, *house* (בֵּית, *domus*), is applied to the tabernacle in Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Joshua 6:24.; 9:23; Judges 18:31; 20:18, as it had been, apparently, to the tents of the patriarchs (Genesis 33:17).

So far as it differs from the two preceding words, it expresses more definitely the idea of a fixed settled habitation. It was therefore fitter for the sanctuary of Israel after the people were settled in Canaan than during their wanderings. For us the chief interest of the word lies in its having descended from a yet older order, the first word ever applied in the Old Test. to a local sanctuary, Bethel, “*the house of God*” (28, 17, 22), keeping its place, side by side, with other words — tent, tabernacle, palace, temple, synagogue—and at last outliving all of them; rising, in the Christian *Ecclesia*, to yet higher uses (1 Timothy 3:15). See HOUSE [in McClintock and Strong].

4. קֹדֶשׁ, *kódesh*, or מִקְדָּשׁ, *mikdash* (מִקְדָּשׁ, *sanctuarium*'), the *holy*, consecrated place, and therefore applied, according to the graduated scale of holiness of which the tabernacle bore witness, sometimes to the whole structure (Exodus 25:8; Leviticus 12:4), sometimes to the court into which none but the priests might enter (Leviticus 4:6; Numbers 3, 38; 4:12), sometimes to the innermost sanctuary of all, the Holy of Holies. (Leviticus 16:2).

Here also the word had an earlier starting-point and a far-reaching history. *En-Mishpat*, the city of judgment, the *seat* of some old oracle, had been also Kadesh, the sanctuary (Genesis 14:7; *Ewald, Gesch. Isr. 2*, 307). The name *El-Kuds* still clings to the walls of Jerusalem. See SANCTUARY [in McClintock and Strong].

² Rev. John McClintock and James Strong, CYCLOPEDIA OF BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE, (PUBLIC DOMAIN taken from 2000 AGES Software, Inc, P. O. Box 216. Rio, WI., 53960).

