

IMMERSE:

A Study Guide to the Journey into God's Presence

Primary Text: Exodus 25–31

Introduction: Fish Out of Water

Imagine a fish lying on the shore. Everything around it may look beautiful, but the fish cannot live there. In many ways, this is what life without God feels like. We may pursue success, relationships, comfort, and meaning, but something always feels incomplete.

Why? Because humanity was created to live in the presence of God. The story of Scripture begins in Eden, where humanity walked with God. But when sin entered the world, that relationship was broken. God's response was not abandonment—but restoration.

One of the most powerful pictures of that restoration is found in the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was not merely a place of worship. It was a **roadmap** showing how humanity returns to God's presence and becomes who they were created to be.

The Power of Ritual

Rituals take **ordinary actions and give them extraordinary meaning**. Examples in everyday life help us understand this. A **ring** is just metal, but when placed on a finger during a wedding ceremony it becomes a symbol of an endless promise. A birthday **cake** is just flour and sugar, but when candles are lit and people gather around it becomes a celebration of a life. Rituals help us remember what **truly matters**. God designed the Tabernacle in the same way. Every piece of furniture, every material, and every movement carried spiritual meaning.

The Tabernacle as a Roadmap

The Tabernacle mirrors the journey back to Eden.

- Eden was entered **from the East**
- The Tabernacle gate also faced **East**
- Cherubim guarded Eden
- Cherubim were woven into the **veil**

This journey moves us from: Living as a Human “Doing” (painful striving — slavery) to Living as a Human “Being” (purposeful stewardship — sonship)

Even the materials communicate this message:

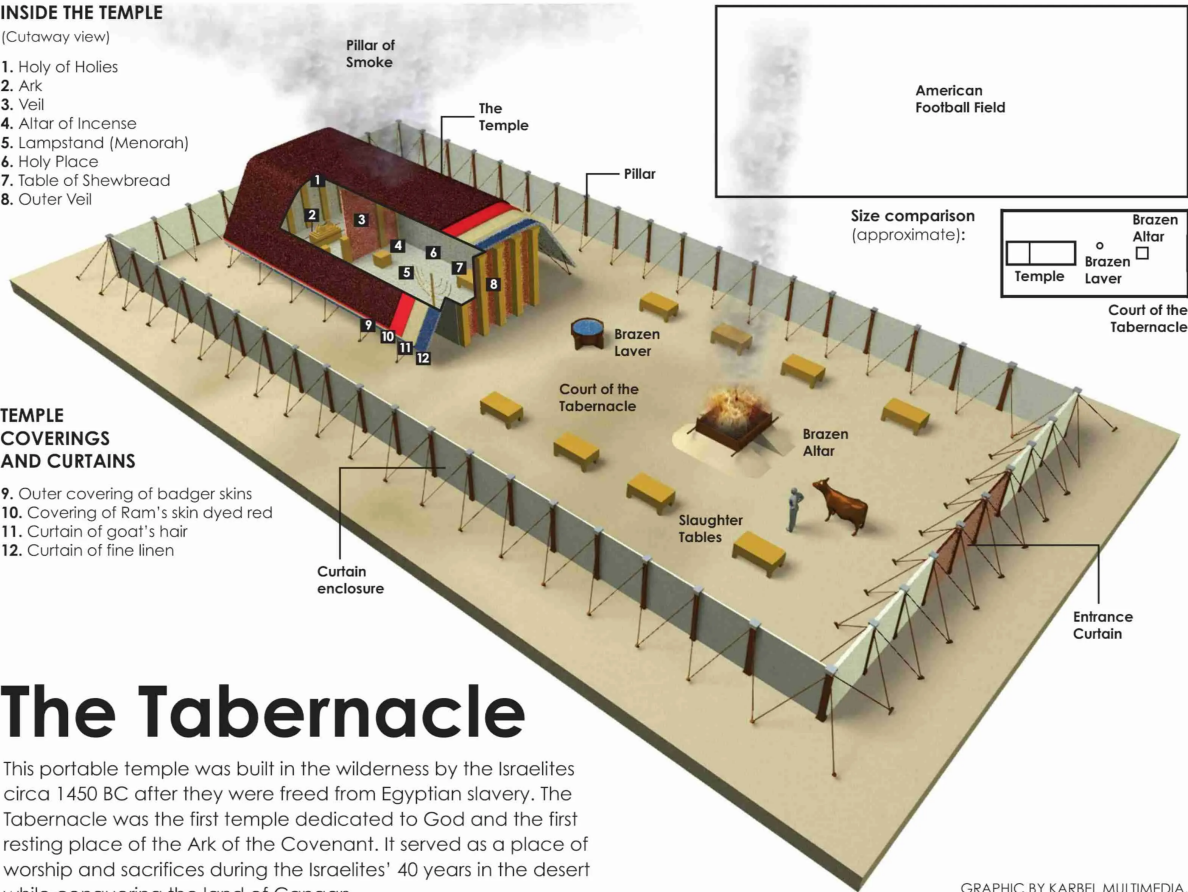
Acacia Wood represents humanity and **Gold** represents divinity

When covered together, they symbolize **God and humanity united again**.

INSIDE THE TEMPLE

(Cutaway view)

1. Holy of Holies
2. Ark
3. Veil
4. Altar of Incense
5. Lampstand (Menorah)
6. Holy Place
7. Table of Shewbread
8. Outer Veil



TEMPLE COVERINGS AND CURTAINS

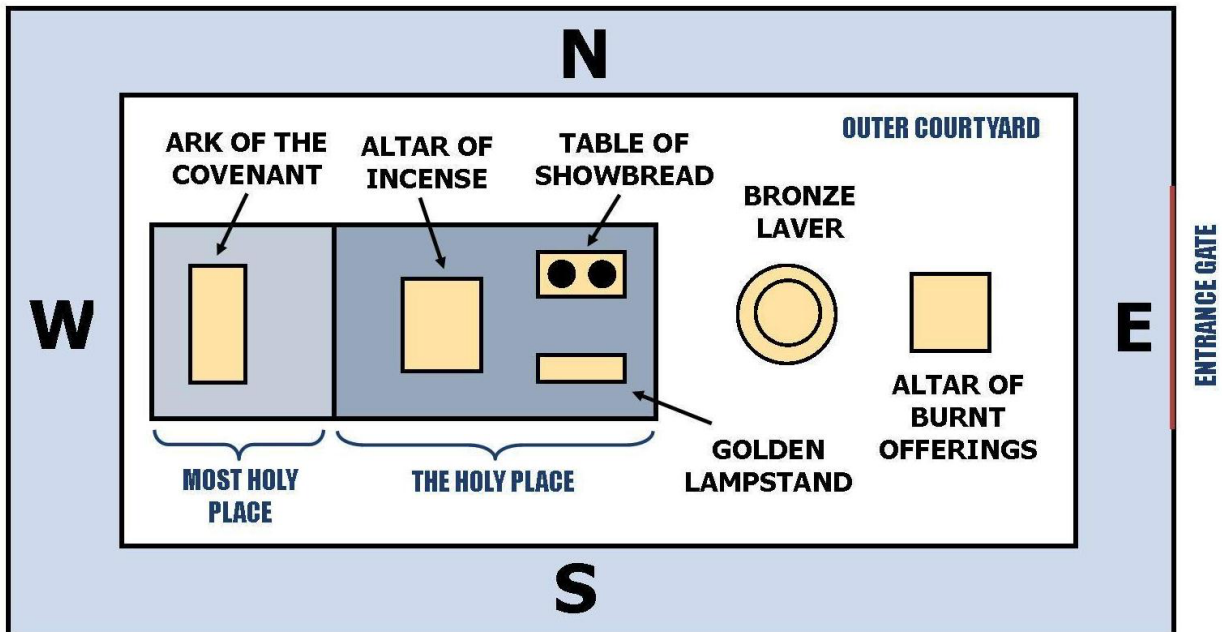
9. Outer covering of badger skins
10. Covering of Ram's skin dyed red
11. Curtain of goat's hair
12. Curtain of fine linen

The Tabernacle

This portable temple was built in the wilderness by the Israelites circa 1450 BC after they were freed from Egyptian slavery. The Tabernacle was the first temple dedicated to God and the first resting place of the Ark of the Covenant. It served as a place of worship and sacrifices during the Israelites' 40 years in the desert while conquering the land of Canaan.

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THE TABERNACLE OF MOSES (EXODUS 35-40)



Movement One: Awareness and Surrender

The Outer Court

A Transformed and Sacrificial Life

This is where the journey begins. Before we can experience God's presence, we must become aware of our need for Him and surrender our old life.

The Gate – One Way In

There was only **one entrance** to the Tabernacle. Jesus echoes this truth in John 14:6: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” We begin the journey by surrendering our lives to Christ.

Reflection Questions

- What does surrendering your life to Christ mean to you?
- Have you personally made that decision?

The Altar – Death of the False Self

At the Bronze Altar sacrifices were made. This represents the death of our **false self**—the identity built around sin, fear, pride, and self-protection. Jesus said: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:11 Transformation begins when we remove the masks we hide behind and allow God to confront who we really are. Like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, the old identity must die so something new can emerge.

Reflection Questions

- What “mask” do you tend to wear around others?
- What parts of your life need to be surrendered to God?

The Basin – Be Washed and Made New

The basin was made from **bronze mirrors**. Priests would see their reflection before washing. This symbolizes self-awareness and cleansing. Jesus said: “Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst.” John 4:14 God washes away old patterns and renews our thinking. Paul writes: “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Romans 12:2 This is where spiritual transformation begins. Psychologists call this **cognitive restructuring**—replacing destructive thoughts with truth. Scripture calls it **renewal of the mind**.

Reflection Questions

- What patterns or beliefs does God want to wash away in your life?
- What truths from Scripture can replace those lies?

Movement Two: Formation and Integration

The Holy Place

A Communal and Servant Life

Once inside the Holy Place, priests followed daily rhythms. Transformation happens through **practice and repetition**. Spiritual growth requires training, not just inspiration.

The Lampstand – Light for the Journey

The lampstand was shaped like an almond tree—the first tree to bud in the spring—symbolizing new life and awakening. Its light was never allowed to go out, reminding Israel that God’s presence continually illuminated their path. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12), and as we follow Him, His truth becomes the **lens** through which we see and understand everything.

Reflection Questions

- What influences shape the way you see the world?
- How can God’s truth become your primary lens?

The Bread of the Presence – Daily Dependence

The Hebrew name for the showbread literally means “bread of the face,” referring to bread placed before the face—or **presence**—of God in the Tabernacle. It symbolized that God’s people lived continually in His presence and were sustained by Him. Jesus later declared, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35)—reminding us that just as physical bread sustains the body, Christ Himself sustains our souls.

Reflection Questions

- Where do you tend to look for fulfillment or satisfaction?
- How can you cultivate daily dependence on Christ?

The Altar of Incense – A Life of Prayer

Incense was offered every morning and every evening, and the rising smoke symbolized prayers continually ascending to God. Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches” (John 15:5), reminding us that transformation happens as we remain connected to Him. Prayer is the rhythm that keeps us rooted in God and connected to the source of life.

Reflection Questions

- What rhythms of prayer exist in your life right now?
- How might you begin practicing daily prayer?

Movement Three: Identity and Purpose

The Holy of Holies

The Supernatural Life

The Holy of Holies represented the deepest intimacy with God. Here identity shifts from external motivation to **internal transformation**.

The Veil – Access to God

The veil was woven with images of **cherubim**, echoing the cherubim who guarded the entrance to Eden after humanity was separated from God. It symbolized the barrier between a holy God and sinful humanity. But when Jesus died on the cross, “the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Matthew 27:51)—a powerful sign that through Christ the barrier was removed. Jesus declared, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), and through Him we now have direct access to the Father.

Reflection Questions

- What does it mean for you personally to have access to God?
- How does that change the way you see yourself?

The Ark – The Presence of the King

Inside the Ark were three significant items. The tablets of the Law represented God’s truth, reminding His people of His covenant and the way they were called to live. The jar of manna represented God’s provision, a reminder that He faithfully sustained them in the wilderness. Aaron’s rod that budded represented God’s authority, confirming the leadership He had appointed. On top of the Ark was the Mercy Seat, the place where God’s presence dwelled and where atonement was made for the sins of the people. It was here that justice and mercy met. In the presence of God, our lives are reordered—His truth shapes us, His provision sustains us, and His authority guides us. This is where our identity is restored as we learn to live as His people.

The Purpose of the Journey

The High Priest did not remain in the Holy of Holies. After encountering the presence of God, he returned to the people. When he entered God's presence, he carried the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on his shoulders and over his heart (Exodus 28). The shoulders symbolized responsibility, and the heart symbolized love. In this way, the priest represented the people before God and carried them with him when he came back out. This reminds us that encountering God's presence is never meant to end with us. God meets us so that we can return to the world carrying His presence and His love for others. Paul writes: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." 2 Corinthians 5:20. Throughout Scripture we see this pattern again and again. People encounter God—and then they are sent. The disciples waited in the upper room, encountered the Spirit, and were sent into the world. The presence of God transforms us—but it also sends us.

Practical Steps: Seven Invitations

This journey is not just ancient history. It is an invitation for every person today.

- 1. Come Through the Gate:** Surrender your life to Christ.
- 2. Offer Your Life on the Altar:** Die to the old self.
- 3. Be Washed and Made New:** Allow God to cleanse and renew your heart.
- 4. Renew Your Mind with Truth:** Replace lies with God's truth.
- 5. Practice His Presence:** Build rhythms of prayer, Scripture, and worship.
- 6. Step Through the Veil:** Step into who God says you are.
- 7. Live as an Ambassador and Priest:** Represent Christ in the world.

Final Reflection

The Tabernacle was never just a tent in the wilderness. It was a map. A map showing how humanity finds its way back to God. And the incredible truth of the gospel is this: We are no longer trying to reach God through a building. Through Christ, we have become His temple. God's presence now dwells within His people.