

The Tabernacle and The True and Living Way

1. Introduction

The Tabernacle, or the Tent of Dwelling, as we meet it in both O.T. and N.T. has always presented a fascination for those who read Scripture. For some it is a temporary provision by God for His dwelling among His people, as also the opportunity for them to worship, especially by the sacrificial system. Its mentions in the N.T. indicate a heavenly Tabernacle, somewhat on the lines set out in principle in the Mosaic Tabernacle. Such indications would appear to have immense spiritual value. Naturally they are well studied.

There is also a school of thought which is interested primarily in typology, and it seeks to gather what it calls 'the spiritual meaning' from every part of the Tabernacle, as also from its various uses. Doubtless there is much to be said for this approach. There is yet again a school of thought which might almost be called mystical. It may even prove to be gnostic. It has the view that there is a truth which is esoteric, that is the outward hides a deeper, spiritual meaning, disclosed only to the initiates who have been received into its deeper meaning. It comes very close to what Moses calls 'the secret things' which he says belong only to God (Deut. 29:29). The gnostics were people who thought that the very possession of knowledge was sufficient for salvation. When one knew a thing one had arrived, so to speak!

The trouble with this latter kind of approach is that it breeds an elitism. It seems to claim that those without this special knowledge are of a lesser breed than those with it! For this reason it is good to examine what Scripture tells us about the Tabernacles, that is the one which is earthly, and the one which is heavenly. Should we be called upon to use typology, then we should not go at all by hunches, speculations, or pious exaggerations. We should go only by the clear text of Scripture, and build only upon what is undoubtedly given to us. Whilst the Scripture does claim we may know 'the deep things of God', it never gives us encouragement to search out 'the secret things' for these belong only to God Himself. Man needs only to know what God has obviously revealed to him.

2. The Story of The Tabernacle In The O.T.

(i) The Matter of Altars

We meet altars, of course, long before we come to Moses and the people of

Israel in the wilderness. From Abel to Abraham they are present. In Exodus 24 when God meets Israel at Sinai, an altar is built with 12 pillars, each pillar representing a tribe of Israel. Here the covenant is made between God and Israel. The blood collected from the sacrifice was divided into two, half being sprinkled on the altar (Hebrews 9:19-20 says on the Covenant-book also), and half on the people. This altar is without a form of tabernacle.

(ii) Transition to Tabernacle

In Exodus 33:7-11 we read of a tent of meeting. It seems it was habitually pitched, and pitched outside the camp, whereas the later tabernacle was pitched within the camp. The term 'tent of meeting' also applies to the later tabernacle. This however was the place where God met Moses, and the sign of that was the pillar of cloud which would descend and rest at the door of the tent when Moses had entered.

(iii) The Tabernacle

(a) Its Designation

The first 'tent of meeting' had no covenant-ark within it. Joshua was the only one who ministered (if that is the word). See Exodus 33:11. The true tabernacle is described in the following passages:- Exodus 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 34-50, Numbers 3:25ff, 4:4ff, 7:1ff. The principle of the tabernacle is given in Exodus 25:8, 'Make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst.'

A tabernacle or tent may be understood by reference to it throughout Scripture. Tents have always been the homes of nomadic people, but in Scripture dwelling is not necessarily temporary. Whilst a tent may be moved from place to place it is nevertheless the permanent dwelling of the owner or family. The Tabernacle was called 'the tent of meeting' (**ohel moed** - Heb.) in Exodus chs. 28-31, and 'dwelling place' (**miskan** - Heb.) in Exodus chs. 25-27. It is also called 'the tent of testimony' (**ohel edut** - Heb.) in Numbers 1:50, 53, Exodus 38:21, cf. Acts 7:44, Rev. 15:5. The Hebrew word **miskan** is translated by the Greek word for tent **skene**, and from Luke 16:9 and Hebrews 8:2 it is clear that it can refer to what is permanent, e.g. 'eternal habitations', 'the true tent', i.e. the 'eternal tent

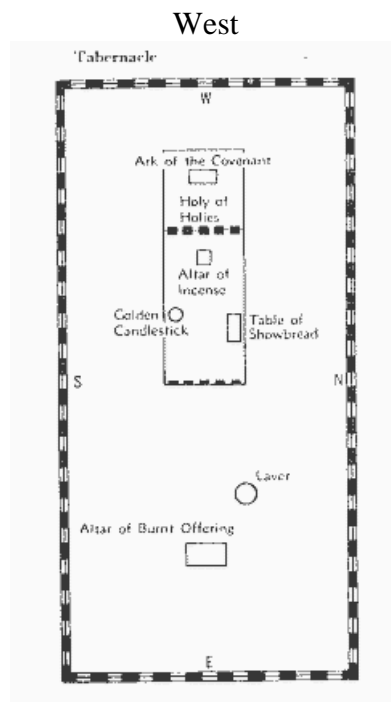
What, then, is the significance of the terms, 'tent of meeting', 'tent of dwelling', and 'tent of testimony'? The first of course means that God meets His people where they are. For many years 'tent of meeting' was translated 'tabernacle of the congregation', i.e. the congregation (a) Meets together, and (h) Meets God. It seems, however, that 'meeting' should follow, from Exodus 33:7 where Moses met God and God met Moses. Presumably God could dwell in the midst of His people, but He not meet them, nor they Him. The congregation (Heb. **edah** and **qahal**) did not always mean the congregation meeting together. The tent, nevertheless, was for the whole of the people of Israel, the congregation.

'Tent of dwelling' is in line with Exodus 25:8, 'Let them make for Me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst.' God desired to be with His people, especially for their sakes. 'Tent of testimony' was so called because it contained the covenant tablets, from which the ark was called 'the ark of testimony'.

(b) Its Form or Pattern

This is an extremely involved question, as well as requiring description. We need to read the passages indicated above, and then refer also to the appropriate chapters in the Epistle to the Hebrews of the N.T. However it is also good to examine the various studies which have been made on the subject.¹ It is one thing to read the text of Scripture. It is another to construct the shape of the Tabernacle itself. It is not surprising, for example, that some see it as an oblong flat-roofed structure, whilst others see it as having a sloping roof coverage with a ridge pole, presumably so that the rain could run off. For purposes of simple understanding the sketch given immediately below will give the general idea of both the Dwelling Place and the Court of the Tabernacle.

Tabernacle



It can be seen that at the Eastern end of the court was the altar of burnt offering, and forward of that, perhaps a little to the right was the laver where the priests cleansed themselves. West of these two elements was the actual tabernacle, itself divided into two sections, the first being the Holy Place, with its Golden Candlestick, Table of Showbread, and Altar of Incense. The perfect cube of the Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant with its various elements of which we will later speak.

¹ See Bibliography.

(c) The Construction Materials and Furniture

In Exodus 25:1-9 we read of the demand of God for the voluntary offering of materials for the building of the Tabernacle. 'Speak to the people of Israel that they take for Me an offering; from every man whose heart makes him willing you shall receive the offering for Me. And this is the offering which you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, goatskins, -acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.'

The Framework of the actual Tabernacle was made of 48 frames, these being of - timber, each piece supposed to be 15ft high and 27 inches wide. Since such width in acacia is not available, it is suggested that they were in fact thinner, and so panels were made of that width. Three vertical arms were joined to three cross- pieces, thus holding the framework together. These were placed in wooden supports, and over the whole framework were hung two large curtains. Three sides of the timberwork were composed of the acacia timber, but the front was left open. The 48 boards were overlaid with gold.

The front was closed with an embroidered screen (Exodus 26:36-37). The Tabernacle was divided into two sections separated by a veil which hung from four pillars overlaid with gold, and set in sockets of silver. The veil, like the covering of the Tabernacle, was woven with blue, purple and scarlet, with figures of cherubims. It is thought by some, as we have mentioned, that the oblong, box- like construction had a high ridge pole set above it, longitudinally, and that the actual tent (not the framework proper) was draped over all. Thus some distinguish between the dwelling place, the framework (Heb. miskan) and the covering, the tent Heb ohel).

The Coverings. In Exodus 26:1-14 and 36:8-9 the coverings are described. They consist of three coverings for the wooden framework, that is the total covering of the Tabernacle itself, the covering of goats' hair, and the covering of rams' and goat skins spread over the entire structure. The first covering was made of ten curtains of fine-twined linen woven with blue, purple, and scarlet, with figures of cherubim. The second covering was of eleven curtains of goats' hair, and third and top-covering was rams' skins which were dyed and red, and also goatskins. The way in which these are joined together, interwoven and so on is described in Exodus 36.

When it comes to the **Court of the Tabernacle** the description of its size and components can be seen in Exodus 27:8-19 and 38:9-20. This court was a rectangle, based on an East to West setting, being 150 feet long and 75 feet wide, i.e. its distance twice its width. The Tabernacle was to the West and the Altar to the East. The court was fenced off by five white curtains 7 feet and 6 inches in height. These were made of fine twined linen supported on bronze pillars and attached by silver hooks. The entrance was through curtains hung at the east end.

Apart from the Tabernacle proper the furniture of the Courtyard was the altar and the laver. **The altar of burnt offering** was so-called because of the offering made upon it. At the same time it was also called the bronze altar because this was what it appeared to be. The fire on it was never to be allowed to go out (see Lev. 6:13). It was made of a hollow chest of acacia wood, covered with bronze, and its measurements were 7.5 feet long, and the same in width, whilst it stood 4.5 feet high, having four horns at the corners. Halfway up the altar was a ledge and below it a grating which went around the four sides allowing the sacrificial blood to be poured out and sprinkled or

dashed against the base of the altar through its bronze network. By means of a ring at each of the corners of the grating it was possible to support the altar by poles when it was being transported. The poles with which it was carried were also covered with bronze. **The horns of the altar** were sprinkled with blood at the consecration of the priests (Exodus 29:12), at the presentation of the sin-offering (Lev. 4:18-34) on the day of the Atonement (Lev. 16:18). Those offering sacrifices were allowed to come to the altar, for they had to lay their hands on the sacrificial victim (Leviticus 1:4).

The Laver was for the use only of the priests, but obligatory for them (Exodus 30:17-21, 38:8). They could meet death if they did not wash (Exodus 30: 20-21). The laver had two sections which may have once been apart, namely the laver itself, and a portion below it in which the priests could wash their feet. It would be unseemly to wash both hands and feet in the same portion. The laver was made from the bronze mirrors of the serving women (Exodus 38:8). These served at the door of the tent of meeting.

The utensils used at the bronze altar were themselves made of bronze or copper, and included pots and shovels to remove the ashes. There were basins for the sacrificial blood, fleshhooks for the sacrifices, and firepans to keep the ashes preserved as they travelled, so that fire would never go out.

The Tabernacle (or Sanctuary) proper was of 45 feet in length and 15 feet in width. The length of the first section known as the Holy Place was twice its width, i.e. 30 by 15 feet, whilst the Holy of Holies was a complete square, and in fact its height made it a perfect cube. In Exodus 26 and 36 the curtains are described which were used in the Tabernacle. There were ten, each of which were 42 feet by 6. These were of coloured fabric with woven cherubim and were joined in two sets of five along the sides of the Tabernacle. Fifty loops of violet thread were sewed, and the curtains were held together by fifty gold clasps, so that the whole Tabernacle was united (26:6). Over all this, as we have seen, was placed a tent, one covering of goat's hair, with five or six curtains coupled by hooks and clasps, amounting to a total size of 60 by 45 feet to make certain that the Tabernacle was wholly covered. The covering overlapped the linen and allowed an extra fold at the front. Also, as we saw, the tent had two coverings, one of rams' skins dyed red, and another of goatskins (cf. 26:9, 14, and 40:19).

The frames, as we saw, were forty-eight in number. They consisted of two arms connected at the top, centre, and bottom by cross rungs with silver bases for each frame. The silver bases formed an unbroken foundation around the Tabernacle, and were held together by five bars. Both frames and bars were gold-plated. The front of the structure was enclosed by curtains, but the support of this area is a little difficult to conjecture. However, the screen was the entrance to the Holy place, but there was a veil between this Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, this veil being made of variegated material - with - - embroidered cherubim, draped over four pillars of acacia wood, and these were overlaid with gold, and supported by four silver bases.

The Holy Place contained three pieces of furniture, namely the table of showbread, the golden lampstand, and the golden altar of incense. **The Table of Showbread** (Num. 4:7, II Chron. 29:18) was located at the Holy Place set on the north, i.e. the right side as the priest entered. It was made of acacia wood, overlaid with pure gold, three feet long, eighteen inches wide, and twenty-seven inches high. Around its top ran a moulding of gold to prevent things falling off, whilst it had rings at each corner for purposes of transportation. Twelve loaves of bread would be placed each Sabbath and renewed the next and could be eaten only by the Levites, who in any case prepared them (I Chron. 9:32). Bowls of incense were set alongside the bread 'for a memorial. even an offering of fire

unto the Lord' (Lev. 24:5-9). Three kinds of pure gold vessels were used on the table, possibly to bring the bread to the table and even contain it. Some form of spoon or incense implement was also used, and in addition cups or flagons or bowls were used and this possibly for wine.

The Candlestick or lampstand stood on the South or left side of the Holy Place, directly across from the table of showbread (Exodus 40:24). A talent of pure gold was used in the making of the lampstand and its vessels. The lampstand consisted of a pedestal with a central shaft and six golden branches, three on either side, all being adorned with almonds and flowers. The lamp was lit at the time of evening sacrifice and extinguished, trimmed and refilled at the time of the morning sacrifice (Exodus 30:7-8, I Sam. 3:3). The oil used was that of pure beaten olive oil. With it were tongs, snuff-dishes, the tongs being used to adjust the wick and hold it while it was being lit, the snuffdishes were used to hold the trimmed pieces of wicks whilst snuffers of course extinguished the light. -

The Altar of Incense was placed in the centre of the Holy Place, although close to and in front of the veil. It was eighteen inches long and wide and three feet high, overlaid in gold and shaped exactly like the bronze altar (Exodus 30:110, 37:25-28). Perpetual sweet-smelling incense was offered on it night and morning, and on the Day of Atonement, as we have seen, propitiation was made upon its horns. Some argue that this altar was inside the Holy of Holies (cf. Hebrews 9:4, Exodus 30:6 and I Kings 6:22), but that is not likely.

In the **Holy of Holies** there was simply the Ark of the Covenant. Its measurements were 3 feet 9 inches by 2 feet 3 inches by 2 feet 3 inches (Exodus 25:10- 40, 31:1-10, ch. 37). It contained the Ten Commandments (II Kings 11:12, Psalm 132:12, cf. Exodus 31:18, 34:29, Deut. 9:10-11, 10:1-5), the pot of manna (Exodus 16:33ff), and Aaron's rod that budded (Numbers 17:10). It was covered inside and out with pure gold, as were also its moulding rings and staves. On the lid of the ark was a solid slab of gold called the mercy seat or the covering. It was identical with the top of the ark itself, and had upon it figures of gold, namely the cherubim. Their faces were towards the mercy seat, and their wings touched overhead. It was between the cherubim that the God of Israel dwelt visibly (Exodus 25:19-22, 30:6, 37:8, Numb. 7:89). Here He met with the representatives of His people, first Moses, then Aaron. The cherubim were soldered to the solid gold of the mercy seat, thus making it of one piece. As such they were to minister to the Lord, guarding the mercy seat, especially against pollution. The mercy seat was the place of propitiation, i.e. (in Greek) the **hilasterion** or propitiation place. Here was the place where the high priest offered the blood of the Atonement, thus rendering God favourable to the people. In fact, of course, God had initiated the propitiation. When we say God dwelt visibly we mean that it was between the golden cherubim that the Shekinah glory rested (cf. Exodus 40:34-35, Lev. 16:2).

The constructors of the Tabernacle and Furniture were Bezalel the son of Uri, and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach. This is seen in both Exodus 31:1-12, and 35:30-36:1. In 31:3 God says, speaking of Bezalel, 'I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for every craft.' He then adds that He has also appointed with Bezalel, Oholiab, and has given to all able men ability to make all that He has commanded Moses. The same thought is repeated in 35:30-6:1. It means, of course, that the Tabernacle, its design, coverings and furniture, is of immense significance.

What should be noted is the enthusiasm of the people of Israel. In Exodus 25:1f God says, 'Speak to the people of Israel that they take for me an offering: receives the offering for

me.’ In Exodus 36:3ff we read of the immense response of the people. The story is that so much did they bring that the workmen who were doing the tasks of building the Tabernacle and its furniture had to ask Moses to restrain them, which he did: ‘so the people were restrained from bringing; for the stuff they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more.’

(d) The Consecration and Use of the Tabernacle

In Exodus 29:44 God promises, ‘I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests.’ He adds the purpose for which the tent is consecrated, ‘And I will dwell amongst the people of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God.’ In Exodus 40:1ff we have instructions for - the final putting together of the Tabernacle. In 40:16ff we are told that Moses assembled the Tent and furniture according to this order. This assembly took place one year after the command had been given, ‘...in the first month, in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. Moses erected the tabernacle...’ In verse 33 it concludes, ‘So Moses finished the work.’

In verses 34-38 the story of the consecration is given, ‘Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would go onward; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not go onward till the day that it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.’

Directions for the care of the Tabernacle are given in Numbers 3:25-4:33, 7:2-9, and 10:17, 21. When Israel was encamped then the tabernacle was at the centre of the camp with Levites on three sides and Moses and Aaron and his sons on the fourth (East) side. Judah was situated at the centre of the East side, with Ephraim at the centre of the West side and Reuben on the South side. The number of Levites who ministered at the Tabernacle was 8,580 (Numbers 4:48). The placement of the tribes, the selection and numbering of the Levites (in their families), and other instructions on the care and carrying of the Tabernacle and furniture are given in Numbers 1 to 4. During the setting up of the Tabernacle no one other than a Levite is to come near, under pain of death. Hence the policing of the Tabernacle by the Levites, ‘that there may be no wrath upon the congregation of Israel’ (Numbers 1:51-53).

We have seen that the camp only moved when the cloud that rested upon the sanctuary was taken up from over the dwelling (Exodus 40:37, Numbers 9:17). While the cloud remained over the dwelling the camp remained stationary (9:18f). When a silver trumpet sounded a blast this initiated the breaking up of the camp (10:1ff). The priests took down the veil and covered the ark with it and two other covers (4:5ff). In the same way all the furniture was to be wrapped (4:7- 14). The Kohathites carried all the pieces that were transported by the poles. The Gershonites were entrusted with the curtains of the Tabernacle, the tent of meeting with its covers, the screen, the hangings of the court, the screen, the altar and the equipment. The Merarites transported the frames, bars, pillars and bases of the Tabernacle proper, as also the pillars and bases of the court. The Levites march in the middle of the nation with six tribes preceding them, and six following in the rear.

The actual transportation happened as follows:- The ark and the two altars were carried by the sons of Kohath, a descendant of Levi, under the supervision of the high priest (3:31-32, 4:15). The rest of the disassembled structure was carried in six covered waggons, given by a prince and drawn by two oxen (7:7). Before Israel departed from Sinai the Tabernacle had been erected for fifty days (10:11).

(e) The Sites of the Tabernacle

Israel journeyed from Horeb in Arabia to Kadesh-barnea in the Negev of Judah. Of the forty years spent marching to Canaan, almost thirty-eight years are spent at Kadesh, and the tabernacle remained here through those years apart from one year spent going to the Red Sea in the South. It appears from Amos 5:25 - 'Did you bring to Me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?' - that no sacrifices were offered. This could of course be an ironical question, suggesting that, in fact, their sacrifices were not true ones, as offered from the heart. Certain higher critics also think that the Tabernacle is the figment of later priestly imagination, and its mentions are redactions, interpolating later idealistic ideas into former times.

When Israel finally crossed the Jordan a place was set out for the Tabernacle near Jericho at Gilgal (Joshua 4:19, 5:10, 9:6, 10:6, 43). The site was not permanent, and was later moved to Shiloh in Ephraim. This was a central location for the tribes and allowed the men to attend the three annual pilgrimage feasts (Joshua 18:1, 19:51). With the settling of the tent at Shiloh certain elements of permanency appeared so that it could be called 'the temple' (I Sam. 1:9, 3:3), and had doors and posts (I Sam. 1:9, 3:15).

During the period of the judges Israel fell into apostasy, and the Tabernacle does not seem to have figured largely. In Samuel's time there was the tragedy of the Ark falling into the hands of the Philistines when Israel was defeated (I Sam. 4:1ff). As Samuel became the prophet-priest of the nation it appears that he presided over the worship of the nations, and as such, offered burnt offerings and peace-offerings. When the Ark was restored to Israel it remained at Kiriathjearim (I Sam. 7:1-2). It is known that Samuel did a circuit of Israel so that Gilgal, Bethel, Mizpah and Ramah became places where justice was effected, and at those places there was, of course, religious association.

The next mention we have of the Tabernacle is its presence at Nob where Ahimelech was high priest (21:1ff). Later Saul had all the priests of Nob slain with the exception of Abiathar (22:1ff). The Tabernacle was then moved to Gibeon (I Chron. 16:39, 21:29). When David as King of Israel had defeated the city of Jebus, he prepared a place for the Ark of God, and the Tabernacle, on Zion (II Sam. 6:17ff, cf. I Chron. 16:1). The tent which he pitched for the Ark seems to have been a new tent (II Sam. 7:2, 1 Chron. 17:1). Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were offered on the site. The Ark was brought from Kiriath-jearim and delivered to the priests (II Sam. 6:1ff). The bringing is famous for the striking dead of Uzzah who sought to steady the Ark, and in touching it was judged. For this reason it remained in the home of Obed-edom for three months, from which place it was transferred with solemnity and reverence to David's Tabernacle. From II Sam. 7:6 it seems that this Tent was continuously present.

It was, however, soon to be replaced by Solomon's Temple. Meanwhile, it appears the Tabernacle at Gibeon remained in use, that is its altar was utilised, and at the same time the altar at Jerusalem was also used (cf. I Kings 8:4). The building of Solomon's Temple was a replica of the Tabernacle, even though the dimensions were larger. The furniture of the Tabernacle was transferred to the the Temple.

(f) Conclusion on the Tabernacle

Volumes have been written on the meaning and significance of the Tabernacle, and we will seek to discover something of these principles. However, the facts of the building of the Tabernacle, its uses, and its relationship to the Solomonic Temple are all matters which are strongly debated by various scholars. Certain Biblical critics do not see the matter as simply as it has been set out above. True, the text of Scripture gives us in essence what we have outlined, but the critics see certain anomalies, and have conjectured that the Tabernacle could not have existed in the forms set out in Exodus and Numbers. They claim this is a reading back, by the priestly caste, of certain principles which gradually evolved.

For anyone interested in the Tabernacle, these criticisms can be read in most of the treatments mentioned in the Bibliography.

3. The Meaning and Significance of The Tabernacle In The O T.

The former factual information, given as it is to present the general picture, is also greatly lacking in that almost nothing of its background is presented. We mean by this that the idea of the Tabernacle was integral to the whole idea of Israel. Indeed little of it can be really understood apart from the Covenantal nature of Israel's relationship with God. Israel was a Covenant- people, and with its roots back in the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the light of these it can be seen that such an arrangement as the Tabernacle was necessary to Israel. This can be seen from the following:

(i) God is the God of His People

The promise to Abraham was virtually that Abraham's chosen descendants would be God's people. Genesis 17:8 - '...and I will be their God'. This principle became more intimate with the children of Jacob (Israel), especially in their suffering in Egypt. In Exodus 2:24, 'And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the people of Israel, and God knew their condition.' In Exodus 7:16 God commands Pharaoh, 'Let my people go'. Later this is repeated, and it is said that Israel is God's first-born son. When Israel is released and crosses the Red Sea a covenant is made with God (Exodus 24) so that it is very plain that Israel is God's people. Then it is that God says, '...let them make for Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.' When God promises to consecrate the Tabernacle He says, 'And I will dwell among the people of Israel, and I will be their God.' He adds, 'And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them forth from the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God'. For God to be the Covenant-God of Israel is indeed a special matter.

(ii) God Dwells With His People

In Ezekiel 37:27 the promise of God is, 'My dwelling shall be with them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people', and points back to past promises and future restoration (cf. Rev. 21:1-3). How then does God dwell with His people? Only in the situation which is holy, commensurate with His transcendence and holiness. In Exodus 25:8-9 God says they are to make a sanctuary for Him to dwell in, but it must be according to the pattern He shows them, i.e. that principle which relates to His true being. He dwells in nothing other than this.

Solomon at the dedication of the Temple makes it clear that God does not dwell within a temple, solely, for the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, but He is nevertheless present to His people through this medium of the Tabernacle and its furniture. Paul later tells the Greeks that God does not dwell in shrines made by man (Acts 17:24), but he would not have denied the presence of the glory of God amongst His people for His covenant purposes.

(iii) The Tabernacle Embodies the Necessary Conditions for God's Indwelling

Doubtless the actual elements of the building all symbolised principles of the presence, holiness, righteousness and mercy of God. For this reason the materials, the embroidery, the nature and quality of metals, furniture and rituals would need to be considered. It does not mean of course that an understanding of symbolism was necessary for the true worship of His people, but worshipping they were following what God had laid down for them.

Something of this can be seen in the cordon which the Levites make around the Tabernacle, and insistence that only consecrated priests and assistants touch the Tabernacle and conduct the rituals of sacrifice and worship. The meaning of the altar with its covenantal-sacrifices, including the Atonement sacrifice for all the people; the meaning of the laver used before entering the Holy Place, and then the furniture within that place. Finally the Holy of Holies with its Ark of the Covenant, its Mercy Seat and the Cherubim who are essential to The Presence, are all indications of the way in which God dwells amongst His people, for their well-being, and His own glory.

(iv) The Unity of God is the Principle of the Tabernacle

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord,' is the covenant-principle. Israel must worship not only one God, but the God Who is One (cf. Exodus 3:14-16). That is, 'God is One'. He is true Unity. Hence Israel must not diversify its worship or loyalty with other gods, for these are not gods, and they will fragment Israel if worshipped. There must also be only place of communal worship - the Tabernacle. This is also a symbol of unity. Then the Tabernacle is designed so as to see God as King, reigning over His people, and keeping them as one. History certainly shows there have been altars apart from that of the Tabernacle, and even, at one time, two Tabernacles, but this was not in conformity with the true principle of unity, of oneness.

(v) The Tabernacle Embodies the Holiness of God

Whilst we have indicated this before, it is helpful to see that the structure of the Tabernacle provided for one only, once in the year, to enter into the Holy of Holies. Itself a perfect cube it represented the perfection of God. However, it is the whole priestly system, code and cultus which constantly teaches Israel the holiness of God. His covenant of grace is embodied in law, and then in sacrifices which release the worshipper from guilt, and keep him in fellowship with the Holy God. The ultimate is the mercy seat which is at once the place of God's (holy) dwelling, and of atonement through propitiation. Of course the theme of holiness runs through altar, laver, and lampstand as well as in the gradations of metals from the silver of the bases, through the furniture of the wood, thinly sheathed with gold to the only solid mass of gold, namely the mercy seat. We might even go further out to the pegs which held the walls of the Tabernacle and which were of a bronze alloy. Thus from bronze to pure gold the worshippers have

a graduated approach to God. From the altar to the mercy seat, the mediatorial priests, and finally the high priest represent the people before God.

(vi) Numerical and Architectural Significance

It has been pointed out that the Tabernacle has a beautiful symmetry about it. We saw for example that it represents a unity, and this unity is exemplified and embodied, for example, in the way the curtains are locked together. Indeed from one end to another there is unification. It has been said that the proportions of the Tabernacle are 'the most pleasing in the domain of architectural art', namely those 'of an exact cube or two cubes placed side by side.. .and the ratio of the base, perpendicular and hypotenuse of an eight-angled triangle, e.g. 3, 4 and 5 and their multiples.'² It is thus suggested that the place in which God dwells must be of perfect proportions, significant of His own peerless attributes and qualities.

This leads us to numerical symbolism, which, although often subjected to misuse, exaggeration and esoteric treatment, certainly has a place in Scripture. Here, in the symbolism of numbers the sacred numbers 3, 4, 7, 10, their parts (1.5, 2, 2.5, 5) and multiples (6, 9, 12, 20, 28, 30, 42, 48, 50, 60, 100) dominate every detail of the fabric and its furniture.

We have implied already that the aesthetics of the Tabernacle point to the perfection and character of God. It is good then to emphasise the beauty, texture, and placements of the various aesthetic adornments and colours. This brings us, also, to the actual significance of the pieces of furniture themselves.

(vii) The Significance of the Furniture

If we view each piece of furniture as an entity in itself, then we will view the whole function and meaning of the Tabernacle in a fragmented, even atomistic way, and so miss much of the meaning.

If we commence at the East end and see the Altar which was known either as the Bronze Altar or Altar of Burnt-Offering, then we see the symbolism relates to the full principle of sacrifice. This in itself constitutes a detailed study, for sacrifice commences with Abel and proceeds up until Christ, after which sacrifices were all to be bloodless, e.g. the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, i.e. 'the sacrifice of the lips' and the sacrifice of life (Romans 12:1-2). In the O.T., and especially in Israel, sacrifice covered many elements such as sin offerings, burnt-offerings, thank-offerings, fellowship-sacrifices, atonement, and so on. The altar was the place where man could keep fellowship with God through guilt- propitiation, and where he could worship in praise and thanksgiving.

The Laver was linked with the principle of cleansing and holiness. In Exodus 30:17ff every priest was required to wash his hands and feet before entering upon his official duties. This would underline the truth that God is holy and His people must be, especially when about the business of His dwelling place. Not to use the laver could bring death to the priests and Levites.

² Quoted by A. R. S. Kennedy in his article in 'Hastings Dictionary of the Bible' (5 vols.) (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1902) Vol. IV, p.667, from the British Encyclopaedia's article on 'Architecture

The Golden Candlestand was of course significant of the light, God being light, but here light for His people, and His people for light. The seven represents the perfect number, hence perfect light.

The Showbread spoke of God's providence for His people in both spiritual and physical bread. He was the source of their life. They acknowledged this with the twelve loaves which surely meant the twelve tribes, supported by God.

The Altar of Incense signified the offering of prayer to God, in this case being mediatorial as the priests offered it in this Holy Place. The incense itself was sweet incense, and made according to certain prescriptions (Exodus 25: 6, 30:34ff). Other incense was forbidden. The smoke of the incense would have filled the Holy Place, and its fragrance may have come through to the worshippers who would know it was the time of prayer, their prayers being expressed by it.

The Ark of the Covenant symbolised a number of things. The primary one was that God was dwelling with His people. In Exodus 25:21-22 God commanded them to make the mercy seat on top of the Ark and place the covenant within the Ark. He said, 'There will I meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.' There are many reasons for thinking that the people of Israel regarded God as dwelling with them, almost locationally in the Ark itself. Hence their use of it in battle against the Philistines. When David danced before the Ark it was accounted as dancing before the Lord. However it was primarily intended to encourage Israel that its unseen God was indeed present and would help and lead them.

At the same time the mercy seat or propitiatory was there to bring atonement to the people through forgiveness. Likewise the law within the Ark was the very image of Jehovah in His holiness and goodness, and that which bound the people in covenant, the grace of which was typified by the mercy seat.

We have barely touched on the significance of these pieces of furniture since they must be viewed holistically with the whole of the covenant and its outworking rituals, fasts, and festivals. Nevertheless we have seen enough to know how highly significant is the tabernacle, its courtyard and its furniture.

4. Tabernacle and Temple In The O.T.

The matter of the Tabernacle in the O.T. is not complete until and unless we see its passing into the Temple, first of Solomon, then of Zerubbabel, and finally, if that is truly the case, into the temple built by Herod. It will also be necessary to see the fact and principle of the Temple which Ezekiel envisioned.

There is no point in us dealing with the Temple in great detail, but rather simply we will seek to grasp the ongoing nature of the Tabernacle in the Temple, or with regard to the Temple. Since we have already covered the quasi-Tabernacle- Temple situations at Shiloh, Kiriath-jearim and Nob, we may move on to the actual Temple of Solomon.

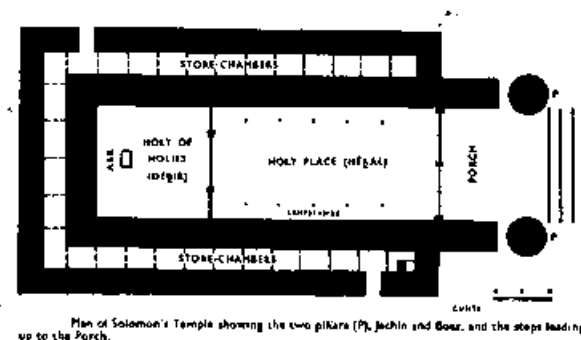
(i) The Temple of Solomon

This was built on the sacred site of Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac. Began in 976 B.C. it was completed some seven and a half years later in 960 B.C. (I Kings 6:1, 37f). Its building was occasioned by the fact that Israel had grown strong. Its neighbours had temples, but Israel only a tent. David said, 236.

(II Sam. 7:2). It was David who collected materials, gathered treasure, and bought the site (I Chron. 22:1-19). God had told David that because he was a man of war he could not build the temple. Solomon his son was charged to do this. The materials of timber and stone were prepared at a distance from the Temple site so that there would not be noise in the building of it. In II Chron. 3:1 commences the account of Solomon and his building of the Temple.

II Chron. 3:1 to 5:1 tells the story of the building of the Temple. The Tabernacle seems to be a slight thing beside this magnificent building which doubled the measurements of the Tent for the main sanctuary, and then added store chambers around the three sides North, South and West, leaving the East open, but with a great porch. The Figure below indicates the structure.

Plan of Solomon's Temple



The great porch led into the Holy Place which was 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high. There were five pairs of golden lampstands, and the table of showbread, and the golden incense-altar. The Holy of Holies was entered by great doors, although probably only once a year at the time of atonement. The Holy of Holies was a perfect cube of 30ft. In it was the Ark of the Covenant, and two cherubim made of wood, fifteen feet in height. Two of their wings met in the centre above the Ark of the Covenant and the other wing of each touched the north and south walls respectively (I Kings 6:3-28). Much more could be said regarding the use of varied timbers, gold and so on, as also the quality of the cut and sawn stone, but this is not relevant to our study. What interests us is whether this temple was acceptable to God.

In II Chronicles 5:2 to 7:22 is the account of the dedication of the Temple, the address of Solomon to the people, and to the Lord, and the description of the unison of praise which rose from the Levites and priests with their varied instruments, including the 120 trumpeters, all of whom joined to announce in song and music,

'For He is good, for His steadfast love endures for ever.'

At this the house of the Lord was filled with the Shekinah glory, and it was said, '...the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.' We are also told that at a certain point, '...fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the Temple.'

We conclude then that just as God had made His dwelling place amongst Israel, and this through the Tabernacle, so the Tabernacle and its significance has not passed away so much as it has taken on the form of the Temple. The beautiful passage of II Chron. 7:12-22 is both wonderful, awesome, and terrible in what God said to Solomon. He promised to dwell amongst Israel and to prosper His people, and heal them when they needed it, but Israel was not to think of the house as a surety from God that He would never judge and punish Israel if they entered into idolatry, apostasy and profanation of His Name. The temple would be no guarantee against such judgement.

Indeed the people of Israel misled themselves into believing they could escape the judgement of God simply because the Temple was in Jerusalem. It is in Jeremiah we read the people placed false hopes by crying, 'The Temple! The Temple! The Temple of the Lord are these!' It is in Ezekiel we see the glory depart from the Temple. For Ezekiel another Temple must come, one of strange and new quality to supersede, surpass and outmode the old.

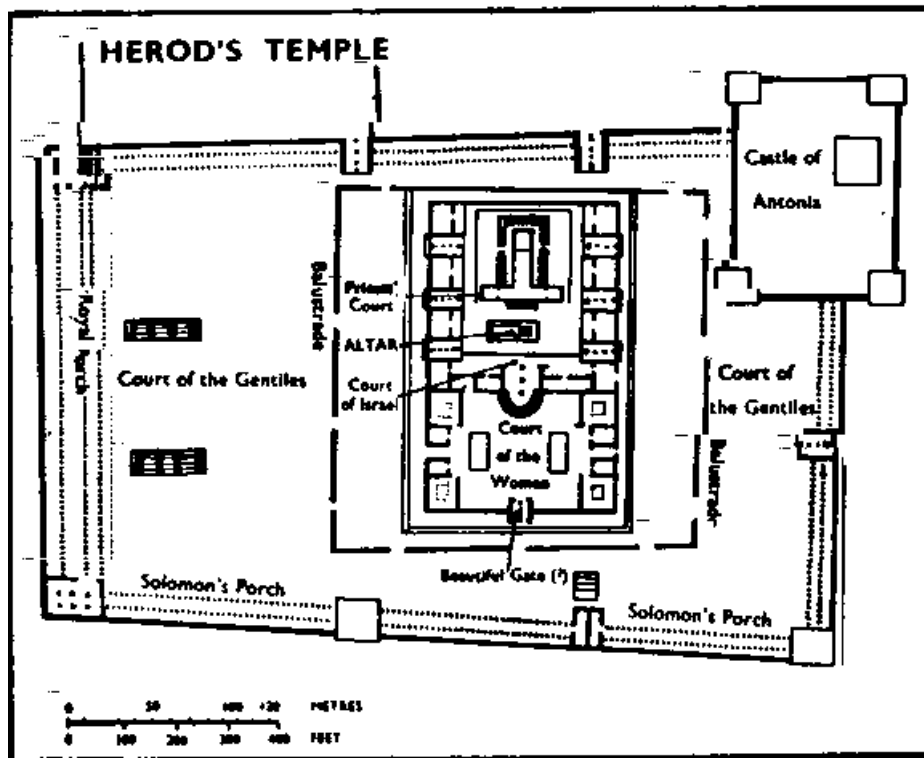
(ii) The Temple of Zerubbabel

This temple stood, so far as we know, for some 500 years, longer than either Solomon's or Herod's. Its foundation was laid in 535 B.C. in the second year of return from Babylon (Ezra 3:8-12), but the high priest Joshua and the leader Zerubbabel faced such hostility and hatred from the local inhabitants that they stopped the work. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah need to be read to understand the exhortation by which the work was again to begin. The Persian King, Darius, was apprised of a former edict of Cyrus which decreed the rebuilding of the Temple, and so in 520 B.C. building recommenced, and the Temple was completed in 516 B.C. (see Ezra 5-6). God had promised Haggai that the building of the latter house would be greater in splendour than the former (Haggai 2:9). He also promised that His Spirit would be among them. Zechariah reported the word of the Lord in regard to the building of the Temple, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit' (Zech. 4:6). This makes it evident that God was bent on building the Temple, and that His blessing would be upon it, and His presence amongst Israel. There are, however, some who do not see it this way.

It is pointed out that the beauty and magnificence of Solomon's Temple exceeded that of the Second Temple. The fact is that Israel never reached again the glory and power it had known, but then the Temple it now had survived for so long. This Temple was built on the same site, occupying the same area and having its plan much on the lines of the first Temple. However, within it there was no Ark of the Covenant, and in its place only a stone on which the Atonement blood was sprinkled. The priest had no Urim and Thummim. One lampstand stood as against the ten of Solomon. The table of showbread, and the altar of incense were also present. At its dedication no fire came from heaven, and no glory filled it. Eventually fortifications were added, and a water supply created. Suffering many attacks it was badly damaged in 54 B.C. and wholly in 37 B.C. At the latter date Herod stormed Jerusalem with the aid of the Roman general Sosius, from Syria.

(iii) Herod's Temple

The plan below will show the difference from the first Temple, the second as it was, and Herod's Temple. The last has three courts, one of Women, one of Israel, and one of the Priests. It can be seen that there was also the large court of the Gentiles. It was outside a breast-high balustrade which had a notice warning a stranger from entering the shrine proper, on pain of death. Structured from cream stone and gold it was a magnificent creation. It was built by Herod, and seems to have been an attempt by the Idumaeen king to reconcile the Jews to his reign. Herod had 1,000 priests trained as masons to build the shrine. Generally speaking it was finished in ten years, but in fact was not completed until 64 A.D., that is 45 years after its commencement in 19 B.C.



Ground plan of Herod's Temple.

The magnificence of this Temple is overwhelming. Its Holy of Holies was 30 feet, by 30 feet, by 90 feet high. In the Holy of Holies there was no furniture, but it was sacrosanct. Two heavy veils hung between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place, being eighteen inches apart, one on the North and one on the South side of the partition. The Holy Place was 60 feet long by 30 feet wide, and 90 feet high. It contained a lampstand, the table of showbread, and an altar of incense.

Its capacious nature made allowance for the people which thronged it, both Jews and Gentiles. The facilities for the purchase of sacrificial victims were well-provided. The New Testament, however, tells of the opportunities for commerce and its corruption. The Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 under the invasion of Titus. It was used at that time for a fortress against the invaders. In A.D. 136 the emperor Hadrian caused a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus to be erected on the site. In A.D. 691 the Muslims built the Dome of the Rock. Built by Caliph Omar, it now occupies the site of the former Temples.

5. The Tabernacle In The N.T.

We now come to the crux of our study. All that has gone before is material which traces the concept and operation of the Tabernacle in the Old Testament. Now we have to examine a number of points we did not previously discuss, and to see what is the principle behind the development of tabernacle and temple. Most of all we have to understand (a) Where and how God dwells in regard to His people, and (b) Where His people now are in regard to God. It is not simple to examine and draw together the threads of the N.T. which give us the answers to these two questions.

(i) Christ and the Temple

Some writers have suggested that Herod's Temple cannot be accepted as being the true Temple, and the dwelling place of God. This claim is to be doubted, if only for the fact that Jesus twice cleansed it. In John 2:13-22 we have the first cleansing. Some say it came later in his ministry, as is seen in Matt. 21:12-13 (cf. Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46). There is no great reason to believe it could not have happened on two occasions, each at both ends of the ministry. In John he says, 'Take away these things: you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade.' In Matthew he says, 'It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer', but you have made it a den of thieves.' In both cases he calls it his Father's house (cf. Luke 2:49). In John 2:13-22 when he speaks of the temple, he is primarily referring to his own body, that being put to death it will rise in three days, and his disciples later remembered this statement. Nevertheless he was virtually claiming that his body outmoded the temple, his body being the real Temple. Whilst this does not appear at first sight, the Jews guessed correctly that what he stood for would outmode the current system. Their accusation against him was that, 'This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to raise it in three days.' At the Cross they said, 'You who would destroy the temple in three days and build it in three days, save yourself!' (Matt. 26:61, 27: 40). In Matthew 24:2 he predicts the destruction of Herod's Temple.

(a) Paul and Peter

Paul, of course, does refer to Christ's Body as being the people of God, and likens it to the temple (Ephes. 1:22-23, 2:19-22, cf. I Cor. 12:12ff). We may conclude that in one sense at least the Temple is abrogated and Christ takes its place, that is the people of God now constitute the true Temple of God, as they are in Christ. This is supported by I Peter 2:4-10 in which Peter speaks of the people of God being 'living stones built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' Peter then makes it very clear that the new Temple is the people of God when he adds, 'For it stands in Scripture: 'Behold I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes will not be put to shame.' To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner,' and 'A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall'; for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.'

This stunning passage leaves us in no doubt that the old Temple has been superseded by the new, the people of God. Petrine and Pauline though are here

very close. Paul says in Ephesians 2:19-21, 'So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.'

Paul has a similar principle in I Cor. 3:10ff, where a building is being built, this time by the people of God. This may well mean the church, building itself, witnessing to the truth as it goes. In II Cor. 6:16 Paul says, 'What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord God Almighty'. When we remember that these words from Hosea 1:10 were spoken to Israel who was to be renewed we see the continuity of the people of God, and realise that Gentiles are called into this new people, i.e. they too are part of the New Temple of God. It is probably the Temple in this verse to which Paul refers in II Thess. 2:4, where the 'son of perdition' seeks to be worshipped in the Temple of God.

In I Corinthians 10 Paul speaks of partaking of the Table of the Lord. He likens the 'table of demons' to participating in the table of the idol. The Christian partakes of the true altar. In verse 18 he says, 'Consider Israel and its practice; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners at the altar?' The new people then have an altar. They also have a laver. In Titus 3:5 Paul speaks of 'the laver of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit'. In Ephesians 5:2 he speaks of Christ as the sacrifice, 'Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.' In I Cor. 3:16, and 17 the Holy Spirit indwells each as a temple separately and indwells all as the true Temple of God. The glory that was in the Temple is in believers, and amongst them corporately in Christ and the Spirit (John 14:17, II Cor. 3:18, Col. 1:27). In many ways, then, the people of God constitute the Temple of God.

From another point of view the people of God have no need of the old Temple or Tabernacle. The word 'access' is a significant word in Paul. Instead of having to go through the high priest, and enter the Holy of Holies only representatively, they, each one, have access to the Father (Romans 5:2, Ephes. 2:18, 3:12). A propitiation which is once-for-all has also taken place (Romans 3:24), and thus they are discharged from law (Rom. 6:7, 7:4, etc.), that is to say from law as a system to justify. They are freed from its condemnation, although the law itself is fulfilled (Rom. 3:27-31, 10:4).

(b) John and the Tabernacle-Temple

John introduces us to a stunning concept. He speaks in John 1:1-4 of the Word being the Creator-Mediator of all things. He also speaks of him being the light that lightens every man. In him is life, and this life is the (illuminating, revealing) light of (and for) men. This wonderful One (Word) became flesh and dwells, i.e. 'tabernacles' amongst us. What does he mean? He means that God dwelt in His people, i.e. amongst them, by reason of the tabernacle. Now this tabernacle is the body of Christ. God tabernacles amongst His people through the enfleshed Word, His Son. This understanding of Christ as the indwelling of His people by God is shown in the oneness of the Son, and the Father. Hence John 1:18 says the Son declares the Father, and Jesus says, 'He that has seen me has seen the Father.'

John adds, '...the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth'. He means that 'like Son, like Father' the Son shows the Father to be full of grace and truth. 'The law came by Moses but grace and truth by Jesus Christ' then signifies that so much more of God is shown by the Word as he tabernacles amongst us. Man does not need the Temple in this sense, for this One brings us to the Father (John 14:6), giving us access to Him directly. Thus, when in John 2:13ff Jesus virtually claims to be the New Temple, the elements of the Old are contained within him. Paul also holds this thought in Colossians 1:19 when he says, 'For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell,' and in Col. 2:9, 'For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily.' John says, 'And of his fulness have we received, and grace upon grace,' i.e. the grace and truth constitute a present dwelling of God from which men can draw. Hence a Samaritan woman can drink and find a fountain flowing up within her, whilst the Feast of Tabernacles is virtually fulfilled and actuated in the person of the Son. When Jesus cries at the very Feast in the Temple for people to come and drink, to believe and to have rivers of living water flowing from them, then he has superseded the old Feast of Tabernacles. He is the Feast. He is the water of salvation referred to and celebrated from Isaiah 12.

These things being said it is to be doubted that the leaders of the Jews did not catch the gist of what Jesus was about. More than the commonality, they knew the threat to the Temple and its worship.

Other elements in John refer to the principles of the Tabernacle. Jesus is the true Light, the true Lampstand. When he says, 'I am the light of the world. He that follows me shall not walk in darkness but find the light of life,' then he was fulfilling the function of the Lampstand. When he cries, 'I am the bread of life,' then he meant he was the true and essential bread, and fulfilled the significance of the table of showbread. John in his first Epistle makes Jesus to be the true and essential propitiation for sins (I John 2:2, 4:10), as in fact does Paul in Romans 3:24. Thus Jesus is virtually both the victim and the mercy seat, e.g. 'My flesh which I will give for the life of the world.' In this way he is the true light which lightens every man. Also he is the true Intercessor. Many have seen that John 17 represents a true high-priestly prayer, covering as it does not only his close ones, but all men. In this sense he offers up the intercession of incense, and becomes that incense in his prayer. He makes it clear in John chs. 14-16 that true prayer is offered through him, and what they pray he will effect (e.g. John 14:12-14, 15:7, 16:24-27). Both Paul and the writer of Hebrews see this intercession as a present continuing reality and operation (Rom. 8:34, Heb. 7:25).

When it comes to the principle of cleansing Jesus claims that they are clean through the Word he has spoken to them (John 15:3), for in 13:10 he has laved their feet, as at the laver, they have been, so to speak, through the whole bath (laver) of regeneration. They only need a cleansing of that part which is temporarily, but not essentially, defiled.

The whole matter of worship was raised by the Samaritan woman. Her problem (John 4:19-26) was as to whether the Samaritan or Jewish temple was the correct one. It involved not only a where of worship but a how (a mode) of worship. Jesus made it clear that the Jews were on the right track - 'salvation is from the Jews' (i.e. not the Samaritans), but he was not interested in the where of worship, so much as the relationship between God and man which was the main matter. 'God is Spirit' should not be opposed to 'man is flesh', i.e. that which is immaterial against that which is material. Rather it is affinity of which Christ speaks. God can only be worshipped where there is truth ('full of grace and truth') and where the Spirit enables man. The affinity is that of Father with the children. Thus 'Deep calls unto deep: like unto like.'

This being so then it is clear that worship is no longer confined to the Temple. There the aids to approaching God in His holiness, and receiving from Him His mercy, are not so much bypassed as Christ represents the whole Tabernacle- temple principle. He conducts to the Father, and the Father may be worshipped directly. This must be why Jesus gives so much emphasis on 'the Name': In O.T. times God was known by only one Name - Yahweh. Here in John His name is 'Father'. In John 14-16 asking of the Father is in the name of the Son who is wholly allied with the Father. In John 17:6 Jesus says, 'I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest me out of the world'. In v.26, 'I made known to them Thy name, and I will make it known...' He requests (v.11), 'Keep them in Thy name', and adds, 'I kept them in Thy name.' Hence now that man comes to God he comes by Christ. Christ has taken the place of altar, laver, lampstand, table of show- bread, and altar of incense. He has become the mercy seat. He has given access to the Father. John of course does not put it this way explicitly, and may not even implicitly infer such, but it cannot be otherwise.

(c) The Gospels and the Tabernacle-Temple Principle

Doubt less much of the Gospels can be shaped up to support many of the matters mentioned in John. In Matt. 5:14-16 the principle of light is mentioned. Here the people of God are the light. In the Gospels the Temple is cleansed, showing that its current worship is deficient. Such cleansing would be seen as eschatological from Malachi 3:1-4, when the Lord will suddenly come to His temple and purge it, and especially the sons of Levi 'till they present right offerings to the Lord'. Christ therefore shows himself as 'greater than the Temple' in that it is his Father's house. The inference is that the offerings at the temple are not as 'pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years

Doubtless John's three-fold message of Kingdom, forgiveness and Spirit- baptism is linked with the renewal of Israel, and the coming of the Kingdom. He is really telling Israel to repent, and this is a message that the priests and elders resent. It infers present deficiency in the Temple, its worship and sacrifice. These are the things they both fear and oppose in Jesus' message. The three synoptic evangelists report the splitting of the veil, evidently putting great score by this. At the same time Jesus sees the Cross-time as the making of the New Covenant - a reference back to Jer. 31:31-34 and connate passages in the O.T. Jer. 31:31-34 virtually abrogates the Old (Mosaic) Covenant, a point which the writer of Hebrews is quick to grasp. The fact Jesus has told his disciples that the Temple is virtually finished must have added to a later understanding of the covenant made in the blood of Jesus.

There is one incident in which tabernacles are mentioned, namely that of the Transfiguration, reported by the three Synoptic evangelists. It may be reading much into the event to say that Peter wanted three Tabernacles in which Moses, Elijah and Jesus could have their abode, as in the Tabernacle of the Lord. Whatever Peter's thought he did mean to have some reverence of these three for all shone with glory. However, when the glory came upon them, as it had in both Tabernacle and Temple, it is at least a sign that such glory is not limited to Tabernacle or Temple. Neither Zerubbabel's nor Herod's temple had known this glory, yet these men are in the midst of it!

(d) The Revelation and the Tabernacle-Temple

Just as an observation it is interesting to see what elements of the tabernacle-temple are in the Revelation of John the Divine. To begin with the term temple is used many times, and the comprehensive and conflative term in Revelation 15:5, 'and the temple of the tent of witness in heaven', i.e. 'the temple of the tabernacle of witness in heaven' References to the temple in heaven are some

fourteen in number with a reference to the temple on earth in 11:1-3. Much can be learned from the various references.

Revelation 3:12 speaks of conquerors being made pillars in the Temple of God, meaning that the Temple is a spiritual one, and the saints constitute integral parts of it. In Revelation 7:9-14 those who have come through tribulation serve God in His temple. Throughout Revelation the temple is really the shrine or inner sanctuary, the Greek word **naos** being used as against the more comprehensive word **hieron** which includes the whole temple. In 11:19 when the Temple is opened, the ark of the covenant is seen, probably depicting the fact that grace still obtains and is dynamic for flashes of lightning, peals of thunder, noise of earthquakes and heavy hail are present and indicate the action of God. In 14:14-15 angels emerge for reaping and the harvest of judgement, thus making the temple the source of judgement. This principle is enlarged in 15:5-8 where one of the living creatures gives bowls of wrath to seven angels, and the temple is filled with the brilliant shekinah glory so that none can enter the temple until the judgements be completed. In chapter 16 the angels are directed from the temple as to what they are to do and when they complete this a great voice comes from the temple saying, 'It is done!' After this judgement is completed, especially upon Babylon.

Finally in Revelation 21:1-4 the city of God, the New Jerusalem, descends from heaven, and the cry is, 'Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them.' In verses 22 a great principle is stated, 'And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.' The stunning truth here is that man needed a Tabernacle-Temple through which to approach God, and by which He could dwell amongst them. Now God is the sanctuary of man - He and His Son. In them men may dwell. They need no graduated access or propitiatory sacrifice. The Lamb is forever that (cf. I John 2:2). They need no lampstand, for God is Himself their light, and the Lamb shines upon them. Similarly they need no bread in symbolism for the Bread of Life is theirs. God is Himself the true Naos and His mercy is everlastingly present.

Revelation 22:3-5 closes off this magnificent thought, 'There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall worship Him; they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.'

(ii) The Book of Hebrews and the Tabernacle-Temple

We come now to the very rich element of the whole theme of the Tabernacle by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews. In order to understand fully his thesis the whole Epistle needs to be read carefully. His basic thesis is that Christ is better than all that is in the old Jewish economy. Nothing equals Christ or what he has wrought. Christ himself is greater than angels - he is the Son and has created all things. He is greater than Moses - Moses was a servant in the house, the Son over it because he built it. Jesus is the true high priest, great than the Aaronic line since he is after the order of Melchizedek, who was bowed down to by Abraham, and so Levi (in Abraham's loins). This great high priest is superior also because he has mediated a better covenant than that of Moses. The old covenant, good as it was, with all its Tabernacle and rituals, was only a shadow of things to come. Christ is the reality who has come. His sacrifice is better than the sacrifices of the old covenant. Moreover he takes the blood not into an earthly sanctuary but into the eternal sanctuary of heaven. Access has now been made for us, into the heavenly sanctuary, into the presence of very God

Himself. The earthly laver cleansed bodies, but this laver of Christ's blood cleanses deeply and eternally.

In the light of this the writer demands of the Christian Hebrews (some of them who were wavering) that they despise not the new and superior, and only true way, the living way of Christ. We must then trace what the writer says about the sanctuary in the light of this powerful thesis. He commences this portion of his theme at 8:1 and proceeds on it to 10:22, after which he offers exhortations and admonitions upon the basis of what he has expounded.

The thrust of his argument in the two chapters, briefly stated, is as follows : -

‘The nature of Jesus' high-priestly ministry which is the true order is superior to that of a person in an earthly sanctuary. The earthly is a copy of the heavenly. Earthly (Jewish) priests minister in a copy, not the reality. Moses had to fashion the Tabernacle (and furniture) according to what was shown him on Mt. Sinai.³

‘The earthly sanctuary was to do with the old (Mosaic) Covenant. It could only pertain to such an arrangement. The New Covenant (prophesied by Jeremiah 31:31-34) bespeaks an old and outmoded covenant. The first covenant had Tabernacle and worship arrangements commensurate with its limitations and objects. The priests needed the blood also which they took into the inner sanctuary (once a year). They were not perfect, nor were their sacrifices eternally efficacious. The Holy Spirit indicated all the time that whilst the Tabernacle (or Temple) was still standing then the perfect had not come, i.e. entrance (for all) into the heavenly sanctuary. When Christ appeared he took the true blood into the true sanctuary, sealing it with the death which realised the true testament. This blood was efficacious to ‘purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

‘The earthly sanctuary required purificatory rites, but the heavenly has the better purification, namely the offering of the true High Priest who has gone into the heavenly sanctuary, and his offering has put away sin for all times. Under the old arrangement sacrifices gave momentary relief from guilt of sin, but because they had to be continuously repeated reminded the worshippers that they needed again and again to be offered. By contrast Christ's once-for-all offering has perfected those who are sanctified. There needs then to be no more offerings for sins.

‘As a result of Jesus going before as High-Priest and offering his blood we may now (and we are urged to) enter into the sanctuary, by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way he has opened to us through the curtain (veil), that is through his flesh. This High Priest (Jesus) is over the house of God, so let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.’

³ It is debated whether Moses was shown a model on Mt. Sinai or was permitted to look into heaven and see the reality. It does not matter which, for it does not alter the writer's thesis. The earthly sanctuary is a copy and not the reality itself. It is in the reality Christ ministers.

What then is the essence of all this? It means that the earthly Tabernacle was a copy and a type of that which was to come and be effective for man. Only a priest could enter the Holy Place⁴, but only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies. This meant that any person entered only representatively, and not personally. Moreover he was kept from direct access to God. The writer of Hebrews is saying that because of Christ's high-priestly ministry we may now, all, come into the Presence. If for the reader 'heavenly' means 'up there, away from here, eternal and supernatural', then the writer is not primarily indicating that idea at all. He is saying we can now enter into the presence of God, for the way has been made open through Christ. We now have access to the Father. The earthly sanctuary was a symbol of the actual. We may now (and must) enter the actual.

This argument of course outmodes the earthly Tabernacle and Temple. It in- modes Christ and his High-Priesthood. It is the current way of access to God.

(iii) Christ and the New and Living Way

We can observe some important truths. (a) If Christ is the true High Priest then no other religion can be correct. (b) If Christ is the new and living way then all old and other ways are invalid. (c) He being the new and the living way, access to God is open. No human being, much less a Christian, may say that he does not have immediate access to God. Whilst he must honour and revere this way, and not take it for granted presumptuously, he has no right to withdraw from that access, or seek to earn the right to use it.

What then is meant by 'the new and living way which he opened for us through the veil, that is his flesh'? First the new and living way is the fact that he has accomplished acceptance by God of his eternal sacrifice and that it is efficacious to cleanse away sin for all time, and present the cleansed person to God. It is much the same as John 14:6. 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father, but by me.' Christ is the way to the Father, the truth of the Father, the life of the Father ('He that hath seen me hath seen the Father'), and no one can come to the Father but through him, i.e. through what he has been and done, including the Cross and Resurrection.

'Through the veil' we understand to be that which prevented us coming to God. He dwelt in the Holy of Holies and we could not come. Now we can, because we are cleansed and Christ's High-Priesthood has availed. What then is meant by 'that is his flesh'? His flesh, surely, cannot be the veil, and he break through that veil? Jesus spoke of his flesh which he was to give (and did give) for the life of the world. The simplest way to understand (in spite of the ambiguity of the Greek) is to see the flesh so that we may now enter into the sanctuary. Such entering is not difficult to understand when we remember the worship principle set down by Jesus in John 4:23-24, of worshipping the Father, and we remember Paul's statement, 'We are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit' (Phil. 3:3), and the statement of God in Isaiah 57:15, 'For thus saith the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit''

The implications of this 'new and living way' are many. We cannot but see that the old is finished, and all that pertains to it is outmoded and effete. We can see that Christ is all for the believer. Man may now come with boldness to

⁴ Note Hebrews 9:12. 'Holy Place' really means 'Holy of Holies', and should be read thus wherever indicated. The writer is combining the Holy Place and Holy of Holies, but his gaze is on the latter.

the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16, cf. 10:19-22). Man may now truly worship God, 'without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life', (Luke 1:73- 75). He is a member of the New Covenant, and the New Covenant people.

6. Conclusion On The Tabernacle and Worship

Worship, as such, is not a subject we have broached in this study, although it has been mentioned along the way. In Revelation 7:9-15 it is those who have been through tribulation and made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb who worship God, day and night in the Temple. In Hebrews 9:14 it is those whose consciences are cleansed from dead works who serve the living God. This worship or service (the same word) is the result of 'grace and truth' which God has exercised in His Son to bring us to Him, the same grace which has effected the 'new and living way'.

Worship then is man both seeing and giving to God the worth which is His, and relating to Him in His Person. As we saw, this worship had to be graduated and mediated in order to get to the God who dwelt amongst His people, but who seemed to stand afar off in His holiness. In the earthly Tabernacle He made provision for worship, and even for some approach to Himself, especially by propitiation and the mercy seat. Graduated as it was in and through the significance of sacrifices, and the offering of prayers in and through the altar of incense, God also symbolised Himself in light and sustenance by the Lampstand and the Table of Showbread.

Once the New Covenant has come, a change has been effected and believers may now approach Him through the effective mediatorial work of the Son who is the true High Priest. Entrance is now opened into the heavenly sanctuary, so that man, right where he is, may have true worship of the Father, and access into His presence.

Some elements remain to be seen and understood. What, for example, is the temple upon the earth, especially as mentioned in Revelation 11:1-3? How does it relate to the temple in heaven in Rev. 11:19? Why are there such things as incense-intercession in heaven, an altar and an ark of the covenant? Why at the end of these things is there no temple, God and the Lamb constituting that, and why no light other than God Almighty and the Lamb? What also of the prophetic Temple of Ezekiel and his vision? What of the first Tabernacle, Christ tabernac- ling amongst us, our bodies as tabernacles, and the heavenly tabernacle? Where do all these things fit together? Is the Holy City the ultimate in the personal dwelling of God with men? What of the pieces of furniture - did Moses see them in heaven, and are they eternal or are they now abrogated, being only temporary expedients, eventually to be relinquished?

These are all questions which need some answers, and we shall proceed to find, if possible, the answers which fit, or, failing that, hints and indications which at least point us to some solution which may one day appear. The truth is a wide vista, and not every man, or possibly any man can see it all, and see it whole. We will seek, nevertheless, to give specific answers to our questions.

(i) The Earthly and the Heavenly Temple

The temple described in Revelation 11:1-3 ought not to be taken literally. There was no temple when John wrote the book. It thus represents either Israel or the church. It may also be seen as the true people of God, including the holy

remnant of Israel ('all Israel shall be saved') and the church. Whatever, it is those persecuted by the beast. The time of prophesying (v.3) is the measure of time when evil dominates the woman (12:6, 14), the time of the oppression of the holy city (11:2), the time of the witness of the two witnesses (11:3), and the time during which the beast is allowed to exercise his authority (13:5). The heavenly temple described in Revelation 11:19 is opened. In 4:1 a door in heaven is opened and John enters and sees all heaven. Now the temple is opened. Concurrent with the temple on earth is the temple in heaven.

(ii) Temple Furniture in the Heavenly Temple

In Revelation 6:9 an altar is mentioned. 'Under the altar' means the place where blood is poured out, and in this case the martyrs are the victims. This corresponds to the altar of burnt-offerings. In 8:3-5 an angel stands before an altar and uses fire with incense. In 9:13 it is a golden altar. This then would be the altar of incense. Some see both altars as merged into one. In 14:18 an angel comes from the altar, and this may be the altar of incense since the martyrs prayers are about to be answered, as also the prayers of the saints. In 16:7 a voice comes from the altar (cf. 9:13) saying, 'Yea, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are Thy judgements!' This may come from the martyrs or for the martyrs, but it is to do with judgement and justice. No laver as such is mentioned, but then the multitude has washed in the blood of the Lamb (7:9-14). Nevertheless in 4:6 there is the great sea which had been symbolised by the laver. Whilst no lampstand is mentioned there are seven torches mentioned in 4:5, these being the seven (or sevenfold) spirit of God, i.e. Spirit of God. There is no showbread or table in the book, but then Christ is the true Bread. In 7:16 it is said of the redeemed, 'they shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore.' The Ark of the Covenant is present in 11:19 and the sight of it has been thought to signify that the Abrahamic promise has not lapsed. The promise of deliverance from the enemies, and the continuance of grace are here established. With this we are brought to see that the realities of the earthly symbolism are in heaven, and in particular in the Temple of God where He dwells as His true dwelling place.

(iii) No More Temple/s

We come now to denouement of history. In Rev. 20:11 we read, 'I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away and no place was found for them.' This introduces 21:1-8, in which the old heaven and earth pass away. In other words, all that John has seen is abrogated as it was. The first heaven and earth have passed away, and the sea is no more. In its place is the holy city, new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. God says, 'I make all things new'. The old has passed; the new has come. 21:9-22:5 then describes the new city, the people of God. It is the true dwelling place. A temple is no longer needed, for God is the temple in that He dwells with His people, and all the symbolism of altar, laver, showbread, lampstand, altar of incense and ark of covenant are fulfilled in Him. There is no more need of any temple. The purpose of tabernacle and temple is fulfilled, namely God dwelling wholly with His people, and they being able to come into His presence, know Him, see Him and worship and serve Him.

(iv) The Principles of Tabernacles

We know that the basic principle of the first Tabernacle was that God should dwell with His (covenant) people, for their good, and for His own glory. Such

dwelling was graduated, that is one could approach God but only mediatorially. It was at the same time the portrayal of the heavenly reality, the true Sanctuary. God promised He would ultimately dwell with His people without reference to a Tabernacle. Ezekiel 37:27 (cf. Rev. 21:1-3). When the Son came he tabernacled with men, which was God dwelling with them in this, but on leaving them, His Body, the church became 'an habitation of God through the Spirit' (Exodus 25:8, Ephes. 2:19-22). At the same time each person is a temple or tabernacle of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19, cf. II Cor. 6:16). Christ by his high-priestly ministry and the gift of his blood has opened the way into the presence of God, and men may now enter into it. Heaven, until the passing away of the old heaven and old earth, has within a temple, and within its own confines the principle of the Tabernacle, especially the Holy of Holies which is where Christ has gone. The activity of God issues from the Temple, including all judgements. Ultimately God Himself and the Lamb will constitute the true dwelling place, and the city of God will know the Presence for ever. In this sense the Tabernacle will have fulfilled its work. God will dwell, directly, with redeemed man.

(v) The Temple of Ezekiel

This prophetic view of the Temple must be understood in the light of all that has been said concerning Tabernacle and Temple. The Temple itself, as seen by Ezekiel (Chs. 40-44), may be taken as the actual Temple yet to be built or to be the ideal principle on which Temple and people should exist. It may be only visionary, never to be actually built, or it may have reference to the truly spiritual, the typical relationship of God to His people. Certain who hold the millennial position believe it will be built by the Jews in the millennium when the Gentiles will flow to Israel as suggested in Isaiah 56:6-7. In that day, it is said, Israel will have a new heart (Ezek. 36:26) because God has delivered the nation from captivity again (Isaiah 11:11). Those who read Ezekiel's vision in captivity would have been encouraged with regard to a temple being built on return from exile. However, there are visionary elements about the Temple. It is not built upon Zion but on 'a very high mountain' (40:2), occupying, indeed the place of Zion, but entirely altered in regard to elevation, configuration and general character, and set in a transformed land with the 12 tribes occupying parallel tracts partitioned out to them - a principle rather than a practical allotment. Water flowing from the temple (ch.47) seems to be metaphorical of some reality rather than the reality itself. Although the Temple was conceived on the lines which are much the same as those of Solomon's Temple, and indeed Herod's, yet the idea of building another Temple at Jerusalem has to be considered thoughtfully in the light of the new Temple being the Church. This poses a number of very real problems.

Our general conclusion we have already reached, that the earthly tabernacle was a copy of the heavenly, and most useful for man in his sinful condition, and especially for Israel as the covenant people. However the ultimate, that there should be no Temple where God's people dwell, but that God should dwell with them, this is the point to which the long story and saga of Tabernacle-Temple brings us, and it is for this end that the true Israel looks continually.

'There shall be no more anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it (the Holy City), and His servants shall worship Him; they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.'

-BIBLIOGRAPHY -

References to this subject are:-

Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1978, Vol. 3, pp.811-816.

Dictionary of the Bible, Hastings, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh. One volume and 5 volume editions. Latter Vol. 4. Articles 'Tabernacle' and 'Temple'.

International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia¹ Eerdmans, Michigan, 1956, Col. 5, pp.2887-2898.

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Abingdon, Nashville, 1962, Vol. 4, pp.498-506.

pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible, Zondervan, Michigan, 1977, Vol. 5, pp.572-583.

Theological Dictionary of the N.T., Kittel, Eerdmans, Michigan 1971, Vol. 7, pp.368-383.

Wycliffe Bible Encyclopaedia, Moody Press, Chicago, pp.1650-1655, Vol. 2.

Also commentaries on Exodus, Hebrews, and relevant references in other books. Books on typology should be examined very closely.

... oo0oo...