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SG6 The Tabernacle of Moses SG6

Exodus 25-27; 35-40 Hebrews 8:1-7 9:23-28

> "Who serve a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the Tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "That you make all things according to the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain." Hebrews 8:5

> "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. And behold the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split." Matthew 27:50,51

To understand the Holy Temple in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus it is important to have knowledge of the Tabernacle of Moses, which became the prototype of the future Temple structures. After Moses led the children of Israel out of bondage from Egypt, the nation spent one year at Mt. Sinai. On the mountain, God gave him the Ten Commandments and very detailed instructions to construct the Tabernacle (which was to be the place where God was to dwell with His people) and offer us a 'blueprint' or 'pattern' that reveals God's love toward us through the life of Jesus Christ.

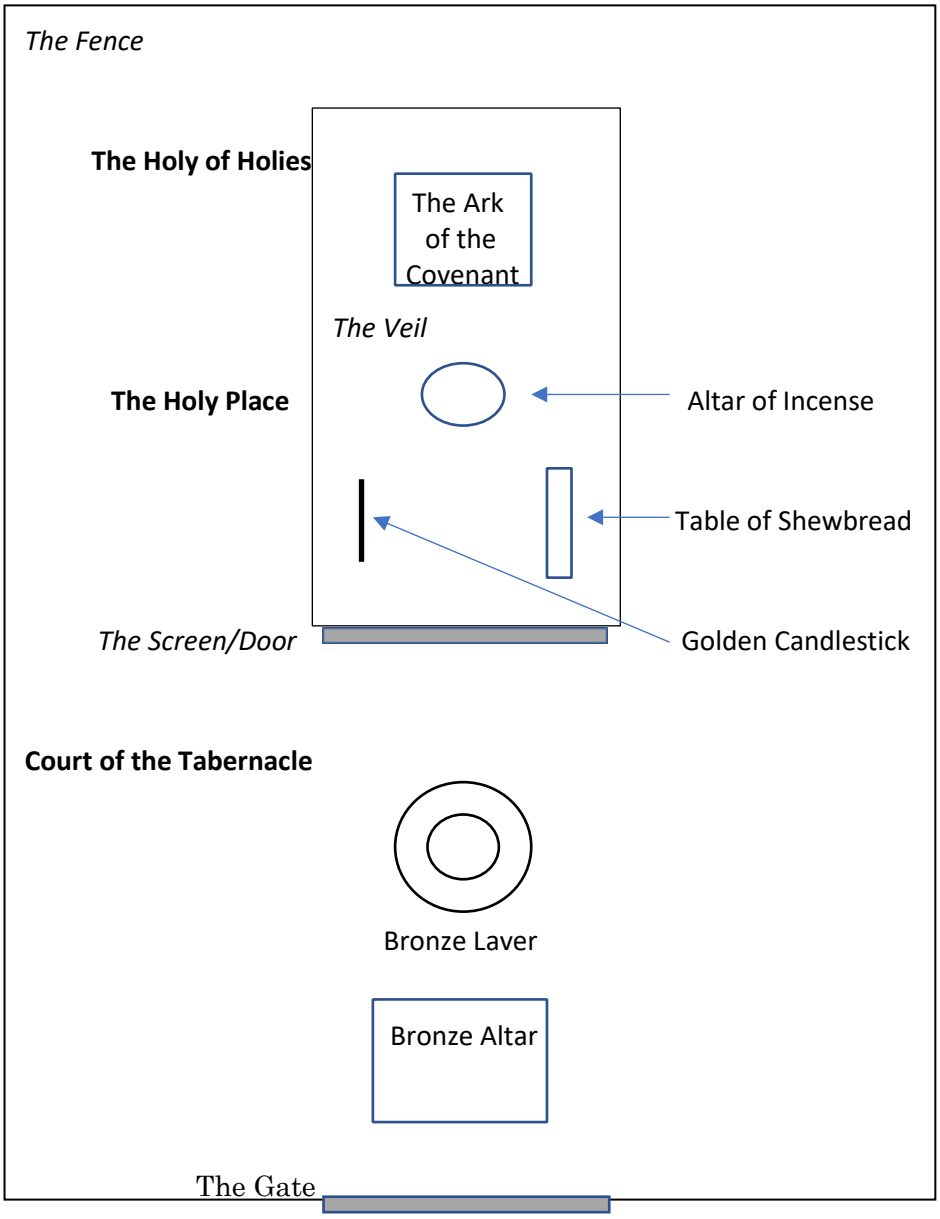
Everything about the Tabernacle revealed God's plan for salvation and how sinful man would be able to have an intimate relationship with a Holy God. Every minute detail had meaning and purpose. There were fourteen different kinds of material used to create and build it. The colors, numbers, measurements, materials, animal skins, furniture, precious metals, designs – everything God directed Moses to build and create had eternal significance.

For example, the 'fence' (100 cubits x 50 cubits) separated the Tabernacle from the outside Godless world. There was only one way into the Courtyard (through a series of curtains called the Gate – Jesus is the way); only one way into the Holy Place (a series of curtains called the Screen or Door – Jesus is the truth); and only one way into the Holy of Holies (a curtain called The Veil – Jesus is the life, John 14:6) It was in the Holy of Holies where humanity (High Priest) met and had fellowship with God.

<u>The Tabernacle:</u>

- The place where God was to dwell with His people
- Revealed that the holiness of God needed to be separated from the sinfulness of humanity
- The 'earthly' Tabernacle is but a 'shadow' of the one in Heaven
- Revealed a specific 'pattern' that needed to be followed to have an intimate personal relationship with God
- Illuminated prophetically the ministry and teachings of Jesus

The Tabernacle of Moses



The Colors

Gold – holiness, purity
Blue – heavenly, divine
Purple – royalty, suffering
Scarlet –sacrifice, blood
White – purity, righteousness

The Coverings

Badger's skin
Rams skin (dyed red)
Goats Hair
Fine woven cotton

The Materials

Gold – holiness, purity
Silver – redemption
Bronze – God's judgment and examination
Acacia wood – Jesus' humanity

The Furniture

Altar of Burnt Offering – acacia wood overlaid with bronze / the grating – pure bronze (*Exodus 27:1-8*)

Bronze Laver – completely made of bronze with mirrors holding spring water (*Exodus 30:17-21*)

Golden Lampstand – solid gold providing the only light in the Holy Place (*Exodus 25:31-40*)

Table of Shewbread – acacia wood overlaid with gold (*Exodus 25:23-30*)

Altar of Incense – acacia wood overlaid with gold (*Exodus 30:1-10*)

Ark of the Covenant – acacia wood overlaid with gold/ Mercy Seat and Cherubim – pure gold (*Exodus 25:10-22*)

Altar of Burnt Offering (Bronze Altar)

When someone first entered the courtyard of the Tabernacle, the very first object they saw was the Bronze Altar. This was the place where animal sacrifices were offered to God. The priests would sprinkle the blood of the sacrificed animal on the four bronze horns of the altar. The bronze itself symbolized God's judgment and His careful examination of the human heart.

This shows us an important truth: the first step toward having a close relationship with God is understanding that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin" (Hebrews 9:22). The animal on the altar became a substitute, taking the punishment that the people deserved. This pointed forward to Jesus Christ, who was crucified and became the final and perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Even later, when the Temple stood in Jerusalem, anyone who wanted to approach God still had to bring a sacrifice to the altar. It was a constant reminder that forgiveness is costly. Another important detail is that the fire on the altar was never allowed to go out. According to Leviticus 6:5–6, the very first fire was lit by God Himself, showing that the entire sacrificial system began with His power and His holiness.

Scripture nuggets:

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Galatians 2:20

"Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." Romans 12:1

Bronze Laver

Before the Levitical priests could enter the Holy Place, they had to wash their hands and feet at the Bronze Laver. If they skipped this step, they would die instantly when they entered. This showed how serious God was about purity and holiness. The washing was a symbolic act, reminding the priests that no one can come into God's presence without being cleansed.

The priests performed this washing every day. In the same way, we also need daily spiritual cleansing if we want to stay close to God. This is part of living a life of sanctification, which means being "set apart" for God. (GK: *hagiosmos* – 'being set apart').

Inside the basin of the laver were polished bronze mirrors. These mirrors helped the priests see themselves clearly as they washed. They were also instructed to use only fresh spring water, which symbolized purity and life. Inside the basin portion of the laver were mirrors and the priests were instructed to only use spring water.

Scripture nuggets:

"If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:8,9

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2

"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." Titus 3:5

The Tabernacle Structure

The Tabernacle itself was a simple but beautiful structure. Its walls were made of acacia wood boards covered in pure gold, and it was surrounded by layers of curtains and sacred furniture. The first room was called the Holy Place, and behind it was the Holy of Holies, separated by the Veil.

One important detail is that the Tabernacle did not have a solid roof. Instead, it was covered by four different layers, each with symbolic meaning:

- Outer layer: tough badger skins, plain and unattractive
- Second layer: rams' skins dyed red
- Third layer: woven goats' hair
- Innermost layer: ten fine linen curtains embroidered with colorful cherubim

From the outside, the Tabernacle looked dull and ordinary because of the badger skins. But once the priests stepped inside the Holy Place, they saw bright colors, beautiful designs, and furniture covered in pure gold. The inside was full of beauty, light, and meaning.

This contrast teaches a powerful spiritual truth. To the outside world, the Christian life may seem boring, restrictive, or unappealing. But those who follow Jesus discover an inner beauty, joy, and richness that the world cannot see or understand. What looks plain on the outside is filled with glory on the inside.

The Holy Place

The Holy Place was the first enclosed room inside the Tabernacle. It represented a life of worship, service, and daily living that is set apart from sin and dedicated to God. Before entering, the priests passed through five pillars of acacia wood covered in gold. This is the first time God told Moses to use gold in the structure, and it symbolized God's holiness and perfect righteousness. Anyone who entered this room was stepping into a space that reflected God's character.

Inside the Holy Place were three important pieces of furniture:

- The Golden Lampstand
- The Table of Showbread
- The Altar of Incense

Each of these items had deep spiritual meaning and showed what a life close to God looks like—one filled with His light, His provision, and His presence.

The Table of Shewbread

Every seven days—always on the Sabbath—the priests placed twelve fresh loaves of bread on the Table of Showbread. The twelve loaves represented the twelve tribes of Israel. After the new bread was set out, the priests who served inside the Holy Place were allowed to eat the old bread. No one else could eat it because it was considered holy.

For the people of Israel, this bread was a reminder to be thankful for God's daily provision. During their years in the wilderness, they depended completely on God for food. Every morning, God provided manna, sometimes called "the bread of angels" (Exodus 16), to keep them alive. The Table of Showbread reminded them that God was the One who sustained them.

For Christians today, this table points to something even greater. It represents our dependence on Jesus, who called Himself "the bread of life." Just as Israel needed daily manna, we need daily spiritual nourishment from Christ and from His Word. He is the One who feeds our souls and gives us strength to live for God.

Scripture nuggets:

"Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in me will never thirst." John 6:35

"But He answered and said, "It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4

Golden Candlestick (Lampstand)

The Golden Lampstand stood across from the Table of Showbread and was the only piece of furniture in the Holy Place made entirely of solid gold. It had seven lamps supported by six branches shaped like almond blossoms, each holding a bowl with a wick and oil for burning. This Lampstand was the only source of light inside the Holy Place.

But its meaning went far beyond physical light. The Lampstand symbolized spiritual enlightenment—the understanding and clarity that come from walking with God in holiness. Throughout Scripture, oil is often used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, who gives believers wisdom, guidance, and the light needed to follow God faithfully.

Just as the priests depended on the Lampstand to see inside the Holy Place, we depend on the Holy Spirit to help us understand God's truth and live in His light.

Scripture nuggets:

"Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

"This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." 1 John 1:5

"And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever." Revelation 22:5

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." John 14:6

Altar of Incense

The Altar of Incense was the third piece of furniture in the Holy Place, standing directly in front of the Veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This altar represented prayerful worship—the kind of constant praise and communion with God that rises like a sweet fragrance.

On top of the altar was a golden plate where the priests burned incense every morning and every evening. This happened continually, symbolizing the need for God's people to live in ongoing prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. A golden wreath around the top reminded them of the beauty and importance of worship.

To burn the incense, the priests took hot coals from the Bronze Altar outside. The incense created a sweet-smelling aroma, showing that true worship is pleasing to God. The location of this altar is also important: it stood right in front of the Veil, the closest object to the Holy of Holies. This teaches that sincere prayer brings us near to God's presence.

Another detail is that this altar had four horns made of gold, unlike the Bronze Altar in the courtyard, which had bronze horns. The gold horns emphasized holiness, purity, and the sacred nature of worship offered before God.

Scripture nuggets:

"And walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." Ephesians 5:2

"Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!" Psalms 150:6

"O magnify the LORD with me and let us exalt His name together." Psalms 34:3

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

The Veil

The Veil was the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, where God's presence rested. It hid the immediate presence of God from the priests who served in the Holy Place. The Veil was woven with blue, purple, and scarlet threads and decorated with white cherubim, showing the heavenly nature of the space behind it.

The curtain hung behind four golden pillars set in silver bases. This is different from the entrance to the Holy Place, which had five golden pillars with bronze bases. The change in materials showed increasing levels of holiness as one moved closer to God's presence.

In the wilderness Tabernacle, only Moses and Aaron the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies through the Veil. Later, in the Temples of Jerusalem, only the High Priest was allowed to enter—and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. This strict limit showed how sacred and dangerous God's presence was for sinful humanity.

The Veil reminded Israel that God is holy, and that access to Him is not casual. It also pointed forward to the day when God Himself would open the way into His presence through Christ.

The Holy of Holies – Ark of the Covenant

The Holy of Holies was the innermost room of the Tabernacle, and it was where the **presence of God** rested. Only the High Priest could enter this sacred space, and only **once a year** on the Day of Atonement. When he entered, he carried the blood of a sacrificed lamb and sprinkled it on top of the **Mercy Seat**, which was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. When God looked at the blood, His seat of judgment became a **seat of mercy**. By His grace, the sins of the people were covered.

There were no lamps or candles in this room. **God Himself was the Light.**

The Ark of the Covenant was basically a golden chest. Inside it were three important items:

- **The Ten Commandments** (Exodus 20:1–17) *Symbolizing obedience to God's laws*
- **Aaron's staff** (Numbers 17:1–12) *Symbolizing obedience to God's authority*
- **A jar of manna** (Exodus 16:32–34) *Symbolizing dependence on God and fellowship with Him*

The Mercy Seat and the Cherubim

The Mercy Seat was the golden cover placed on top of the Ark. At each end stood a golden cherub, their wings stretched forward and their faces turned downward toward the Mercy Seat. In heaven, real cherubim guard the throne of God. In the Tabernacle, these golden figures symbolized the same heavenly guardians.

Their posture teaches a profound truth:
Their eyes were fixed not on the High Priest, but on the blood.

When the High Priest sprinkled the sacrificial blood on the Mercy Seat, God looked upon the blood—not the sins of the people. This foreshadowed the work of Christ. Today, we can approach God because He sees the blood of Jesus, not our failures.

Christ Fulfilled the Ark and the Mercy Seat

The New Testament reveals that Jesus is:

- **Our High Priest** who intercedes for us
- **Our Sacrifice** whose blood atones for sin
- **Our Mercy Seat** where God meets humanity
- **Our Access** into the presence of God

Through His death, the Veil was torn and the way into the Holy of Holies was opened forever.

Scripture nuggets:

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrew 4:14-16

"Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, this is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Hebrews 10:19-22

Fill-in-the-Blank Worksheet: The Tabernacle of Moses

1. The first piece of furniture inside the Courtyard was the **Altar of** _____ **Offering**, where animal sacrifices were made.
2. The Bronze Altar was made of acacia wood overlaid with _____, symbolizing God's judgment.
3. The Bronze Laver taught that the priests had to wash their hands and feet daily, symbolizing ongoing _____ for those who serve God.
4. Inside the Laver were polished _____, reminding the priests to examine themselves before entering God's presence.
5. The Holy Place was entered through five pillars of acacia wood overlaid with _____, representing God's holiness and righteousness.
6. The Table of Showbread held twelve loaves that were replaced every _____, reminding Israel of God's daily provision.
7. The Golden Lampstand was made of solid _____ and was the only source of light inside the Holy Place.
8. The oil in the Lampstand symbolized the work and presence of the _____ _____.
9. The Altar of Incense stood directly in front of the _____, symbolizing continual prayer, praise, and worship.
10. The Veil was beautifully embroidered with _____, symbolizing heavenly guardians of God's holiness.
11. Inside the Ark of the Covenant were the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod that budded, and a golden pot of _____.
12. When the High Priest sprinkled blood on the Mercy Seat, God's seat of judgment became a seat of _____ for the people.

Answer Key

1. Burnt
2. bronze
3. cleansing (or *sanctification*)
4. mirrors
5. gold
6. Sabbath
7. gold
8. Holy Spirit
9. Veil
10. cherubim
11. manna
12. mercy