

Study Notes - the Tabernacle

by Walter Beuttler

Walter Beuttler's sermon explores the significance of the Tabernacle as a typological representation of Christ and the means of restoring fellowship with God through sacrifice.

Scripture: Exodus 25:9, Exodus 27:9, Exodus 29:43, Exodus 30:34, Leviticus 1:4, John 6:35, Hebrews 7:25, Hebrews 8:5, Hebrews 9:4, Hebrews 10:1, 1 Peter 2:5, Revelation 1:6

Topics: "Tabernacle Typology", "Redemptive Plan"

Description

Walter Beuttler preaches on the purpose and typology of the tabernacle, highlighting how God used offerings and rituals to mend the broken fellowship with sinful man. The tabernacle symbolizes Christ, the Church, and the believer, showcasing God's desire to meet, accept, forgive, reveal, dwell, speak, and receive from sinners. The construction, names, and position of the tabernacle emphasize divine design, material, and location, reflecting God's redemptive plan and the believer's pilgrimage and access to God's presence.

Transcript

A. PURPOSE AND TYPOLOGY

1. Purpose

After the fall of man in the garden of Eden, God could not continue to fellowship with man because of man's sinfulness and God's holiness. Now, by means of the offerings and the ritual of the tabernacle, God moves to mend the broken fellowship on the basis of sacrifice for sins by which God is enabled to:

- (1) Meet the sinner, Ex. 29:43
- (2) Accept the sinner, Lev. 1:4
- (3) Forgive the sinner, Lev. 4:20
- (4) Reveal himself to the sinner, Ex. 29:46
- (5) Dwell with the sinner, Ex. 25:8
- (6) Speak with the sinner, Ex. 29:42

(7) Receive from the sinner, Ex. 28:38

2. Typology

The tabernacle as a whole speaks:

(1) Primarily of Christ, Heb. 10:1-18

(2) Secondly of the Church, Heb. 8:2

(3) Thirdly of the believer, 1 Pet. 2:5

B. NAMES OF THE TABERNACLE

1. "Tabernacle," Ex. 25:9

The word tabernacle means to settle down, to dwell. It describes, therefore, the tabernacle as the dwelling place of God

2. "Tent," Ex. 26:36

The name tent refers to the outer covering of the tabernacle and suggests pilgrimage. Israel was a pilgrim nation while moving toward the promised land

3. "Sanctuary," Ex. 25:8

The word sanctuary denotes holiness and describes the tabernacle as the holy place of God

4. "Tabernacle of the congregation," Ex. 33:7

This name describes the tabernacle as the place of meeting for the congregation of Israel, their common point of contact with God

5. "Tabernacle of testimony," Nunt. 1:50

It was so called because of the presence of the two tables of the law which were placed in the ark. These tables were called the "testimony," Ex. 31:18

C. CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABERNACLE

1. Its design

The tabernacle was designed by God, Ex. 25:9; Heb. 8:4-5. It was divine in its origin, explicit and definite in its revelation, full and complete in its details. There was no room left for man's own ideas, from the smallest to the greatest matters

2. Its material

The material also was specified by God, Ex. 25:3-7. God insisted on the quality and not merely on the correctness of its outward form. The costliness of this structure speaks of the price of our redemption

3. Source of supplies

The supplies came from God's own people on a free will offering basis, Ex. 25:2. There was no coercion, yet there was more than enough, Ex. 36:5-7. They were truly cheerful givers in the sense of 2 Cor. 9:7

4. The workmen

Moses was the overseer of the work and responsible for the complete execution of God's plans, Heb. 8:5. The work itself was done by volunteer workers, Ex. 36:1-2. These were to be taught by men who were divinely equipped for their work and able to teach others also, Ex. 35:30-35

D. POSITION OF THE TABERNACLE

1. As to location

The tabernacle had no permanently specified location. It was carried from place to place by the Levites under the leadership of the guiding cloud and erected on the bare desert ground which formed its floor.

This is a picture of:

- (1) The pilgrim state of God's people
- (2) The assurance of God's presence in all places
- (3) The condescension of God to the level of human need

2. As to position

The tabernacle stood in the center of the twelve tribes who had definitely appointed positions. Thus all the people had God as their focal point. This shows Christ as being in the midst of his people, Matt. 18:20; Rev. 1:10-18

3. As to direction

The tabernacle faced toward the east, toward the rising of the sun. This typifies the Israelite's anticipation of the full revelation of Christ, "the Sun of righteousness," Mai. 4:2, of whose coming all this was a prophesy.

THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE

A. CONSTRUCTION OF THE COURT, Ex. 27 :9-19

1. Description

The court of the tabernacle is the large open space surrounding the tabernacle proper, and fenced in by a wall of linen curtains, 100 cubits (1 cubit equals 18 inches) long and 50 cubits wide. This wall was supported by 60 pillars of which there were 20 on the sides and 10 on the ends with one gate, 20 cubits wide, at the eastern end of the court

2. Purpose

The court served two purposes, namely:

- (1) As an enclosure

The court was a precinct enclosing the sacred structure which was thus preserved from accidental or intentional profanation. The linen wall served as an enclosure and an excluder. It shut God in and man out

(2) As a place of sacrifice

The court was a place of sacrifice, expiation, cleansing, and dedication to the service of God as indicated by the presence of the brazen altar and the laver

3. The curtains, Ex. 27:9-18

(1) Purpose

The curtains were the principal part of the wall which formed the enclosure. They were 7½ feet high--too high for anyone to look over. They also reached to the ground--too low for anyone to look under. Thus the exclusion of man is complete, save for God's only means of access, namely, the gate

(2) Material

The curtains were made of "fine twined linen" which is a type of righteousness, Rev. 19:8, and speaks of the righteousness of God which shuts man out because man fails to attain to God's standard. Thus by his failure man excludes himself

4. The pillars, Ex. 27:10

The pillars were made of brass and provided a support for the entire wall of curtains. They rested on sockets of brass sunk into the ground for a footing to prevent their sinking or shifting. The pillars were placed 7½ feet apart, equal to the height of the wall. Chapters of silver were put upon the tops of the pillars for ornament and beauty

Typologically, the brass speaks of judgment, or the vindication of the holiness of God through judgment of sin, Num. 21:8-9; John 3:14-15. Since silver speaks of redemption, Zech. 11:12-13, the chapters speak of the beautifying virtues of redemption, e. g., I Peter 3:3-4

5. The pins and cords, Ex. 35:18

The "pins" referred to the stakes of a tent, Isa. 54:2. By means of the pins and cords the tabernacle proper and the court were securely fastened to the desert ground so that neither storm nor flood could sweep away this structure.

Typologically, the pins speak of Christ as a "nail (stake) in a sure place," Isa. 22:23, depicting him as being immovably firm in his wilderness experience and also as securely holding the tabernacle of God firmly in the midst of winds and storms by virtue of his own steadfastness

6. The gate, Ex. 27:16-19

The gate had four pillars resting in sockets from which hung a curtain of fine twined linen with colors of blue, purple, and scarlet. This gate compelled man to approach God in the divine order of access, or not at all.

The hanging of the curtain is a type of Christ in his humiliation as the son of man, climaxed in the shame of the cross, Matt. 27:35-36

THE FURNITURE OF THE COURT

A. THE BRAZEN ALTAR, Ex. 27:1-8

1. Position

The brazen altar stood just inside the gate as the Israelite entered. Its presence represented God's claim for sin and his invitation to men to come and settle the sin question. The altar was not ornamental, but ghastly looking, for it was a place of suffering and blood

Its presence inside the gate teaches us that Christ's sacrifice stands at the very entrance to our access and communion with God. The appearance of the altar with its aversion to human sentiments points to the constant mark of sin and to the shame of the cross

2. Construction

The altar was foursquare, 5 cubits long, 5 cubits wide, and 3 cubits

high. At each corner was a horn to which the victim was tied, Psa. 118:

27. It was made of shittim wood overlaid with brass

3. Typology

(1) The height of 3 cubits represents the triune Godhead,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as being active in the work

of redemption

(2) The four equal sides, representing the four points of the compass, speak of the universal salvation provided by God through Christ's sacrifice

(3) The number 5 of the four sides speaks of the grace of God which is extended to all the world

(4) The horns, symbolic of power, 2 Sam. 22:3, speak of the power of the eternal Spirit by which Christ offered himself to God, Heb. 9:14

B. THE LAVER, Ex. 30:17-21

1. Position

The laver consisted of a great circular basin made of brass, Ex. 38:8,

and filled with water. It was placed between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar," Ex. 30:18

2. Purpose

The purpose of the laver was "to wash withal," Ex. 40:30. This was

not a matter of opinion, but of necessity Aaron and his sons had to wash their hands and their feet whenever they went into the tabernacle of the congregation and when they came near to the altar

3. Typology

(1) As to the laver

The laver speaks of:

- a. The washing of regeneration, Titus 3:5
- b. Self-judgment by the word, James 1:22-25
- c. Cleansing through the word, Eph. 5:26-27

(2) As to the priests

The washing of the hands and the feet speaks of:

- a. Consecrated activity in the service of God
- b. A consecrated walk in the service of God

THE TABERNACLE

A. THE FRAMEWORK, Ex. 26:15-30

1. Construction

The tabernacle was an enclosure of 48 boards. Each was ten cubits high and a cubit and a half wide. They were made of shittim wood overlaid with gold, standing upright in sockets of silver and held together on three sides by five bars of shittim wood overlaid with gold. Twenty boards were employed for the south side, 20 for the north side, and 6 for the west side with two additional boards for the reinforcement of the corners at the west side. Over this structure a fourfold covering -was placed to form the roof. The structure itself was divided by a curtain, called the "vail," into two compartments differing in size and name.

2. Typology

(1) Of the boards

The boards have a threefold typological meaning in that they speak of:

a. Christ

The shittim wood portrays his humanity as the "son of man," Luke 9:58 and the gold portrays his deity as the "son of God," Eph. 4:13

b. The Church

The boards speak of the believers collectively in that they form the tabernacle of God, a "habitation of God through the Spirit," Eph. 2:21-22

c. The individual believer

The boards also speak of the individual believer as a child of the human race and of his position as a son of God through faith. The boards were once a part of the many trees rooted in the earth and sustained by

it. In order to be used for the tabernacle, they, like the believer, had to be

- (a) Selected and chosen for this purpose
- (b) Cut down, stripped, and removed
- (c) Trimmed by God's workman according to the specifications

of the word of God

- (d) Put into God's appointed place
- (e) Carried from place to place without personal choice (John 21:18)

(2) Of the bars

The bars speak of Christ holding together the individual believers and thus the tabernacle of God

(3) Of the sockets

Inasmuch as silver stands for redemption, the Church is here seen as resting upon redemption ground, the work of Christ, and not upon the earth, the work of man

B. THE CURTAINS, Ex. 26:1-14

1. Fine twined linen, Ex. 26:1-6

This was the innermost covering and formed the visible ceiling of the tabernacle. It was beautifully embroidered "with cherubims of cunning work" in colors of blue, purple, and scarlet. The character of Christ is here presented in four different ways, namely:

- (1) Linen - in his spotless purity
- (2) Blue - in his heavenly character as the Son of God
- (3) Purple - in his royal character as King
- (4) Scarlet - in his sacrificial character as the "Lamb of God

which taketh away the sin of the world," John 1:29

2. Goat's hair, Ex. 26:7-13

The covering of goats' hair was placed over the covering of linen and points to the scapegoat of Lev. 16:21-22. Typologically, it speaks of Christ as our scapegoat, Lev. 16:10, for "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," Isa. 53:6, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," 1 Pet. 2:24

3. Rams' skins, Ex. 26:14

These were dyed red and placed over the covering of goat's hair. It points to the ram of consecration, Lev. 8:22 and to the ram of burnt offering, Ex. 29:15-18

Typologically, the covering of rams' skins speaks of:

(1) Christ's complete consecration unto death

(2) Christ's sacrifice of himself on the cross

4. Badgers' skins, Ex. 26:14

This was the outermost and visible covering impervious to dust and rain, although rough and unattractive in appearance. It had to resist the elements in order to protect the interior. Typologically, the covering of badgers' skins speaks of Christ in his humiliation, Phil. 2:5-8

C. THE TWO COMPARTMENTS, Ex. 26:31-37

1. The Holy Place, Ex. 26:33

(1) Purpose

The Holy Place was the first and largest of the two compartments, two thirds of the whole. It contained the golden candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense. Within its precincts the sons of Aaron accomplished the daily service of God,

Heb. 9:6

(2) Appearance

The interior of the Holy Place was beautiful with the walls of gold on the two sides, the beautiful curtain at the entrance and the inner veil at the other end.

Above there was a canopy of fine twined linen with the figures of cherubims of blue, purple, and scarlet. Those who looked upon the tabernacle from without saw only the covering of badgers' skins and naturally saw in them no beauty to attract them. The beauty was seen only by those who were within

(3) Typology

The Holy Place speaks of the vast and unique blessing pertaining to the believers of the present age as "priests unto God," Rev. 1:6. These, like the priests of the tabernacle, have entered the one gate. Their sin offering (Christ) has been accepted; they are washed from their sins and are now worshipping and serving God

2. The Holy of Holies, Ex. 26:33

(1) Purpose

The compartment known as the Holy of Holies was in size one third of the whole and contained the ark with its mercy seat and the figures of cherubims

The Holy of Holies was separated from the rest of the sanctuary by the "veil" which none was to lift except the High Priest once a year on the day of atonement--Israel's annual cleansing from sin---when Aaron, the High Priest, entered with the blood of the sin offering

(2) Typology

The Holy of Holies speaks of the presence of God and represents the perfect state of the believer after he has entered the invisible world in heaven to which Christ, our High Priest and forerunner, has gone, Heb. 9:12

3. The inner veil, Ex. 26:31-33

(1) Description

The inner veil was made of fine twined linen, interwoven with blue, purple, scarlet, and ornamented with the figures of cherubims. It was upheld by four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold, which were set in sockets of silver. The veil itself was suspended by hooks of gold. It was also called the "covering veil," Num. 4:5, because:

- a. It covered the ark from sight when the tabernacle was erected, Ex. 40:3
- b. In journeying through the wilderness the veil was placed over the ark for a covering, Num. 4:5

(2) Purpose

Apart from forming a partition between the two compartments, the veil was to teach them that:

- a. There was a barrier preventing perfect fellowship with God
- b. Heaven was shut to them unless a way could be found whereby they might enter
- c. God was inaccessible because of his holiness and their sinfulness

(3) Typology

The veil represents the body of Christ, Heb. 10:20. When Christ was crucified the veil of the temple was rent, Matt. 27:45-51, typifying that the Old Covenant had been abolished and that a new and living way into the presence of God had been made through the broken body of Christ. It is significant that this veil:

- a. Was not rent from the bottom, showing that man had nothing to do with it
- b. Was rent from the top, showing that the work was of God
- c. Was rent to the bottom, showing that the work was complete

3. The door, Ex. 26:36-37

(1) Construction

The door leading into the Holy Place consisted of a hanging of blue, purple, and scarlet. It was supported by five pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold, and set in sockets of brass. It was only ten cubits wide, half the width of the gate of the court.

The gate of the court was wide, the door of the sanctuary was narrow. The gate was for all, the door was only for the priests

(2) Typology

The gospel of the grace of God (the court) is for the world, and the gate is wide enough for all to enter. But the privileges and blessings in Christ are only for the believers, and the door is therefore narrow. The believer-priest has entered the Holy Place and is walking in the light of the candlestick, deriving his sustenance from the shew bread, and worshipping at the altar of incense.

THE FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE

A. THE CANDLESTICK, Ex. 25:31-40; Lev. 24:1-4

1. Design

The candlestick (lit. lampstand) stood on the south side of the Holy Place and was made of pure gold. It consisted of a shaft, an upright center branch, and six other branches proceeding out of the shaft, three on each side. On the top-end of each branch was a lamp, seven lamps in all.

2. Purpose

The candlestick provided the light in the Holy Place so the lamps were to be kept continually burning. In that light the priests served and worshipped God.

3. General typology

The candlestick speaks of:

- (1) Christ - as the light of the world, John 1:4
- (2) The Church - as the reflector of that light, Rev. 1:20
- (3) The individual believer - as the dispenser of that light, Matt. 5:14-16

4. Detailed typology

(1) Its material

a. It was made of pure gold

Gold speaks of divine character and teaches here that the anti-types of the candlestick should possess likeness to God. b. It was made of beaten gold. The candlestick was shapen by hammering until it conformed to the divine pattern with its ornamentation of flowers, fruit, and blossoms. This speaks of perfection through suffering, Heb. 2:10.

(2) The lamps

a. They were filled with pure olive oil

Typifying the fullness of the Holy Spirit as the source of the believer's light.

b. They had to be refilled daily

As the oil was consumed it needed replenishing. This speaks of the necessity of the believer's renewing of the Holy Ghost.

c. They had to be trimmed periodically

Without this the light would become dim and cause more smoke than light. In like manner the believer needs occasional trimming by God to remove the things which dim his light

d. They had to burn continually

There should be no periods during which our light fails to shine

(3) The light

a. The light of the lamps was not their own

The lamps only contained the light. So we are merely vessels of the Holy Spirit who is the true source of light, 2 Cor. 4:7

b. The light was consecrated light

This light was only used for the service of God. So we are to use the light of the gospel only for the purpose and glory of God and not for selfish ends

B. THE TABLE OF SHEWBREAD, Ex. 25:23-30; Lev. 24:5-9

1. Design

The table of shewbread (lit. bread of presence) was made of shittim wood overlaid with gold, and a golden crown around the top. Rings were placed on the four legs through which staves were passed to carry it

2. Purpose

Twelve loaves, sprinkled with frankincense, lay upon the table in two rows. At the end of the week they were replaced and the priests received them as their food

3. Position

The table stood on the north side of the tabernacle in the Holy Place opposite the golden candlestick, Ex. 40:22-24

4. Typology

(1) Christ

The table of shewbread speaks primarily of Christ as the Bread of Life, John 6:35. The number twelve represents the twelve tribes of Israel in communion and fellowship with God. This suggests that all of God's covenant people are invited to partake of God's provision for their sustenance

(2) The Lord's Supper

The table of shewbread also foreshadows the communion table of the people of the New Covenant where Christians partake of bread and wine, emblems of the broken body and shed blood of Christ, Matt. 26:26-29

(3) The heavenly feast

The table of shewbread is also typical of the great feast which will be held in heaven, the marriage supper of the Lamb, Rev. 19:9

C. THE ALTAR OF INCENSE, Ex. 30:1-10

1. Description

The altar of incense was made of shittim wood overlaid with gold and foursquare. It had horns like the brazen altar projecting from its four corners and a crown of gold around it for beauty

The blood of the "sin offering of atonement" was put upon the horns of the altar once a year. Two staves were used for transport and were passed through rings at the four corners

It stood closest to the presence of God, just before the veil. On this altar was placed a golden censer containing burning coals from the altar of sacrifice

The fire in the censer called out the fragrance of the incense which was to be offered every morning when the lamps were dressed (7), and every evening when the lamps were lit (8)

2. General typology

(1) Christ - As our intercessor, Heb. 7:25

(2) Believers - The prayer and praise offered to God in worship, Rev. 8:3-4

3. Detailed typology

(1) The altar

The fact that this table is called an altar teaches us there is an element of sacrifice in prayer and worship

(2) The fire

The fire taken from the brazen altar of sacrifice shows that prayer and praise must be kindled by Christ's sacrifice on the cross

(3) Effect of the fire

The fragrance of the incense is only released by the heat of the fire and suggests the necessity of the fire of the Holy Spirit in our hearts to stimulate our devotions

(4) Shittim wood

Since wood speaks of humanity, the shittim wood here typifies the human side of prayer and worship

(5) Gold

Since gold speaks of deity, its use here typifies the divine side of prayer and worship

(6) The fragrance

The sweet smell of the incense testifies to the pleasure with which God receives our devotions (Contrast Isa. 1:10-16 with Rev. 8:3-4)

(7) Position

Its position before the veil, nearer to the presence of God than the other pieces of furniture, testifies to our nearness to God in devotions

(8) Rising of incense

This suggests the pouring out of our affections to God and their acceptableness before him

(9) Its shape

The foursquare shape of the altar speaks of the universal scope of prayer in which the whole world should be included

(10) The staves

The staves for transport show that devotions are not confined to one specific place only, but may, and should be, offered wherever we are, John 4:20-24

(11) The blood

The blood upon the horns teaches us that true prayer and praise can only be acceptable on the basis of the atonement of Christ

4. Composition of the incense, Ex. 30:34-38

The ingredients which composed the incense were carefully specified and were present in an equal amount by weight. This equal distribution shows that there should be a balance in devotions. The ingredients consisted of:

(1) Stacte

This was obtained from a tree on the mountains of Gilead and flowed freely without piercing. It speaks of the spontaneity of prayer

(2) Onycha

This was secured from a perfume crab living in the depths of the Red Sea. True devotions must spring from the depth of our heart

(3) Galbanum

This was secured from a shrub which, if broken, gave forth a thin liquid which was used for the making of Galbanum. It suggests that worship should spring from a contrite heart and a broken spirit

(4) Frankincense

This was secured from a small tree by an incision made in the evening from which frankincense oozed out during the night. It speaks of the element of loneliness and suffering as an ingredient of true devotion

5. Prohibitions

(1) Strange incense, Ex. 30:9

Strange incense speaks of simulated or purely formal worship, e. g., Isa. 29:13

(2) Strange fire, Lev. 10:1-3

Strange fire speaks of the use of any carnal means such as human sentimentality and musical rhythm to kindle the fire of devotions

(3) For personal enjoyment, Ex. 30:38

"They are not to make worship a mere pleasure to the natural man, whether sensuous, as in beautiful music to please the ear, or eloquence, merely to give delight to the natural mind" (Scofield)

D. THE ARK OF THE COVENANT, Ex. 25:10-22

1. Description

The ark stood in the Holy of Holies and was the only piece of furniture there. It consisted of an oblong chest made of shittim wood overlaid with gold within and without. It had a covering of pure gold, called the mercy seat, which was beaten and fitted as a covering for the ark

There were two cherubims beaten out of the solid gold at the ends of the lid with their wings extending over the mercy seat and their faces turned down upon it. Between these cherubims God manifested himself in a cloud, Lev. 16:2; Psa. 80:1

The mercy seat was sprinkled with blood once a year so that the holy eye of God could see, not the sins of the now repentent people, but the blood of reconciliation

2. Purpose

Without the presence of the ark, the whole ritual of the tabernacle would have been valueless and unmeaning, for all the ritual was furnished to provide access to, and communion with, God who dwelled between the cherubims.

3. Contents

The ark contained three things, namely, "the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant," Heb. 9:4

4. Typology

(1) As to its presence

The presence of the ark speaks of God dwelling with his people and communing with them

(2) As to its contents

a. The tables of the law - Christ the Truth, John 14:6

b. The pot of manna - Christ the Bread, John 6:58

c. Aaron's rod - Christ the life, John 11:25

(3) As to the mercy seat

This is a type of Christ our propitiation appeasing the wrath of God. It is a picture of grace covering sin, of mercy covering wrath, I John 2:2

Because of the atoning blood of Christ, God can forgive the sinner and yet honor his law. His mercy and his justice are reconciled

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