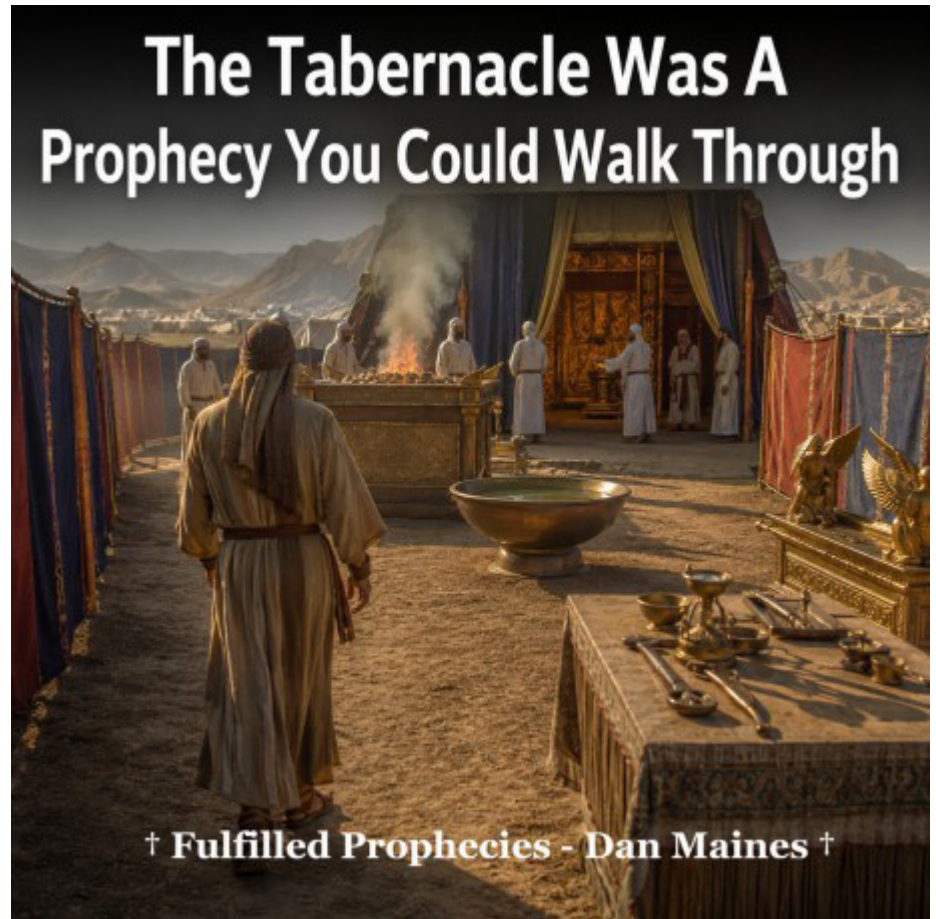


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**Covenant - The
Tabernacle Was A
Prophecy You
Could Walk
Through**



By Dan Maines

The Tabernacle Was A Prophecy You Could Walk Through

Introduction

† The tabernacle wasn't simply Israel's portable place of worship. It was a physical prophecy that Israel could enter, see, touch, and experience.

† From the gate to the altar, from the laver to the Holy Place, from the veil to the Most Holy Place, every movement taught that sinful humanity couldn't approach God's presence apart from sacrifice, cleansing, priesthood, and mediation.

† Hebrews gives us the inspired interpretation. The earthly

sanctuary, priesthood, sacrifices, and ordinances weren't the final reality. They were copies, shadows, and symbols pointing beyond themselves to Christ and the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:5; 9:9; 9:23-24; 10:1).

† The tabernacle was theology built with wood, linen, gold, bronze, blood, water, and priestly service. God turned His redemptive plan into something Israel could literally walk through.

† When Christ completed what those symbols anticipated, God's people weren't called back into the shadows. They were brought into the reality to which the shadows had always pointed (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 10:19-22).

Exodus 27:16

And for the gate of the courtyard there shall be a curtain of twenty cubits, of violet, purple, and scarlet material and fine twisted linen, the work of a weaver, with their four pillars and their four bases.

† The journey began at the gate. There wasn't an entrance wherever someone wanted one. Access to God's sanctuary was through the entrance God provided.

† The pattern pointed forward to Christ. Jesus identified Himself as the door and said that no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 10:9; 14:6).

† The tabernacle therefore began with a lesson that remained central in the New Covenant, access to God isn't created by human effort, religious systems, or personal merit. God provides the way of approach.

Exodus 27:1-2

Now you shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide; the altar shall be square, and its height shall be three cubits. You shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze.

† After entering the court, the worshiper encountered the altar. Before moving toward the sanctuary, there was sacrifice.

† This taught Israel that approach to a holy God involved the shedding of blood. Hebrews explains that the sacrificial system anticipated the greater sacrifice accomplished by Christ (Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:10-14).

† Jesus didn't merely become another sacrifice in an endless succession of sacrifices. He offered Himself once, accomplishing what the repeated animal sacrifices could never accomplish permanently.

† The altar pointed beyond itself. Once the perfect sacrifice came, the shadow didn't need to continue because the reality had arrived.

Exodus 30:18-20

You shall also make a basin of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it. Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it; when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, so that they do not die; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire sacrifice to the Lord.

† Beyond the altar stood the laver. Sacrifice and cleansing stood together on the path toward God's presence.

† The priests couldn't simply walk from the altar into sacred service without washing. The physical cleansing pictured the necessity of purification before God.

† Hebrews connects New Covenant access with hearts cleansed from an evil conscience and bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:19-22).

† The laver wasn't the destination. Like the other furnishings, it participated in a larger symbolic system that pointed toward the cleansing and access accomplished through Christ.

Exodus 26:33

You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall serve as a partition for you between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

† The veil preached one of the strongest messages in the entire tabernacle. There was a barrier between the people and the Most Holy Place.

† God's presence was there, but unrestricted access wasn't. Even the priests couldn't freely enter the Most Holy Place whenever they chose.

† Hebrews tells us exactly what this arrangement meant. The Holy Spirit was showing that the way into the holy place hadn't yet been manifested while the first tabernacle was still standing as the operative covenantal system (Hebrews 9:7-9).

† The veil therefore wasn't merely decoration. It testified that the Old Covenant arrangement hadn't brought God's people into the completed access that Christ would establish.

† When Jesus died, the temple veil was torn from top to bottom, dramatically announcing what His sacrifice was accomplishing (Matthew 27:50-51).

Leviticus 16:2

The Lord said to Moses: Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the atoning cover which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the atoning cover.

† The Most Holy Place represented God's presence, but under the Old Covenant that presence was approached under severe restrictions.

† Only the high priest entered beyond the veil, and he didn't enter whenever he wanted. He entered according to God's command and with sacrificial blood (Leviticus 16:14-17; Hebrews 9:7).

† This makes the message of Hebrews extraordinary. What was once restricted became the basis for New Covenant confidence because believers were invited to draw near through the work of Christ (Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:19-22).

† The goal of the tabernacle wasn't endless distance from God. Its entire structure anticipated the day when the true High Priest would accomplish genuine access to God's presence.

Hebrews 8:4-5

Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and 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 by the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain."

† Hebrews removes any doubt about how we're supposed to understand the tabernacle. The priests served a copy and shadow of heavenly things.

† A shadow isn't meaningless, but it isn't the substance either. Its importance comes from the reality to which it points.

† Moses had to follow God's pattern because the sanctuary was communicating something greater than architecture. The entire system had prophetic significance.

† This is why returning to the Old Covenant sanctuary system would be moving backward. Christ brought the better covenant, better priesthood, better sacrifice, and better access that the earthly pattern anticipated (Hebrews 7:22; 8:6).

Hebrews 9:6-9

Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship, but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience,

† Hebrews interprets the tabernacle as a figure belonging to that covenantal time. Its divisions, priestly movements, sacrifices, and restricted access were communicating a spiritual reality.

† The priests continually entered the first section, but the high priest alone entered the second, and only according to the

prescribed sacrificial arrangement.

† The Holy Spirit was teaching through the architecture itself. The restricted sanctuary demonstrated that the way into God's presence hadn't yet been fully manifested under that system.

† Those gifts and sacrifices couldn't perfect the conscience. They were temporary signs pointing toward something greater.

† Christ didn't come to renovate the shadow. He came to accomplish the reality the shadow had been announcing.

Hebrews 9:11-12

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things having come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made by hands, that is, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all time, having obtained eternal redemption.

† Here the prophecy embodied in the tabernacle reaches its fulfillment in Christ.

† Jesus is the greater High Priest. His sanctuary is greater. His blood is greater. His entrance is greater. His redemption is eternal.

† The contrast couldn't be stronger. The Old Covenant priest entered repeatedly with animal blood. Christ entered once for all through His own blood.

† The earthly tabernacle pointed beyond itself to a greater sanctuary not made with human hands. The physical structure was never God's final destination for His people.

† What Israel watched symbolically through generations of priestly service was accomplished decisively through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:23-24

Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these things, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made by hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence

of God for us;

† Hebrews explicitly calls the earthly holy places copies. The physical sanctuary was patterned after a greater reality.

† Christ didn't enter an earthly sanctuary to continue the Levitical system. He entered heaven itself and appeared before God for His people.

† The earthly priesthood dealt with patterns. Christ dealt with the reality.

† This is the interpretive key to the entire tabernacle. Gate, altar, laver, priesthood, sacrifice, veil, sanctuary, and divine presence all belonged to a prophetic pattern that found its meaning in Christ.

Hebrews 10:1

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the form of those things itself, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually every year, make those who approach perfect.

† The law had a shadow of the coming good things, not their final form.

† Repetition revealed incompleteness. Sacrifices continued because those sacrifices couldn't permanently accomplish what Christ's sacrifice accomplished.

† Once the substance arrived, God's people weren't supposed to build their theology around the continuation of the shadow.

† The tabernacle was magnificent because of what it predicted, but Christ is greater because He's the reality it predicted.

Hebrews 10:19-22

Therefore, brothers and sisters, 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, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let's approach God 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.

† The journey that began outside the tabernacle now reaches

its intended destination. God's people are told to draw near.

† The gate pointed toward access. The altar pointed toward sacrifice. The laver pictured cleansing. The priesthood pointed toward mediation. The veil demonstrated separation. The Most Holy Place represented God's presence.

† In Christ these themes come together. Through His blood there is a new and living way, and through the great High Priest God's people have access to His presence.

† The tabernacle was a prophecy you could walk through because every step moved the worshiper through a symbolic story of redemption.

† Hebrews announces that the story reached its reality in Christ and the New Covenant.

Historical References

† Josephus described the sanctuary, its priestly ministry, its veil, and its sacred furnishings as central features of Jewish worship, showing how visible and tangible this religious system remained in the first century.

† Philo of Alexandria wrote extensively about the tabernacle and priestly furnishings, recognizing that the sanctuary carried meaning beyond ordinary construction and decoration.

† The Epistle of Barnabas, an early Christian writing, demonstrates how early Christians interpreted Old Covenant institutions through the work of Christ rather than treating those institutions as God's final arrangement.

† These historical witnesses help us understand the world in which Hebrews was written, but Scripture itself gives us the authoritative interpretation, the sanctuary and its services were copies and shadows pointing toward the greater reality in Christ.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't need an earthly tabernacle to approach God. Our access isn't dependent upon a physical sanctuary, Levitical priesthood, animal sacrifice, or earthly Most Holy Place.

† We don't stand outside waiting for another priest to enter

God's presence for us. Jesus is our great High Priest, and through Him we draw near with confidence (Hebrews 4:14-16).

† We don't need the shadow restored because we have the substance. Christ accomplished what the tabernacle anticipated (Hebrews 9:11-12; 10:19-22).

† Every time we study the tabernacle, we should see more than ancient furniture and ceremonies. We should see God's carefully constructed preview of redemption.

† The tabernacle said there is a way to God. The altar said sacrifice is necessary. The laver said cleansing is necessary. The priesthood said a mediator is necessary. The veil said access isn't yet complete. The Most Holy Place said God's presence is the goal.

† Jesus Christ brought those pictures together in Himself. The prophecy that Israel could walk through became the New Covenant reality God's people now enjoy.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Was the tabernacle only a literal place of worship for ancient Israel?

A: No. It was certainly a real sanctuary, but Hebrews says its priestly service was a copy and shadow of heavenly things and that the tabernacle arrangement was symbolic for its time (Hebrews 8:5; 9:9).

Q: Why was there a veil separating the Most Holy Place?

A: The veil demonstrated restricted access to God's presence. Hebrews says the Holy Spirit was signifying through that arrangement that the way into the holy place hadn't yet been manifested while the first tabernacle system remained operative (Hebrews 9:7-9).

Q: Did Jesus simply become another priest within the Old Covenant system?

A: No. Jesus is the greater High Priest associated with a better covenant and a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made

with hands (Hebrews 8:6; 9:11-12).

Q: Why don't Christians need animal sacrifices today?

A: Because Christ offered the effective sacrifice once for all. The repeated sacrifices belonged to the shadow, but Jesus accomplished what those sacrifices couldn't accomplish permanently (Hebrews 10:1-14).

Q: What was the ultimate message of the tabernacle?

A: The ultimate message was access to God's presence through God's appointed sacrifice and priest. What appeared in symbolic form under the Old Covenant reached its reality through Jesus Christ in the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:11-12; 10:19-22).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Exodus 27:16; Exodus 27:1-2; Exodus 30:18-20; Exodus 26:33; Leviticus 16:2; Hebrews 8:4-5; Hebrews 9:6-9; Hebrews 9:11-12; Hebrews 9:23-24; Hebrews 10:1; Hebrews 10:19-22

† Historical writers: Josephus; Philo of Alexandria; Epistle of Barnabas

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