

“The Courtyard”  
Exodus 27:9-19  
(Preached at Trinity, November 2, 2008)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we’ve seen, the Book of Exodus is an account of God’s continuing faithfulness to His covenant. He remembered His covenant with Abraham and delivered His people from their bondage.
2. **Chapters 20-23** record the giving of the Mosaic Law. God was dealing with them from the standpoint of His covenant.  
**Exodus 19:4-6** – “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: <sup>6</sup> And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”
3. As we entered **Chapter 24** we read of God calling His people to Mount Sinai where the Mosaic Covenant was ratified.  
After the institution and ratification of the Mosaic Covenant God established the Tabernacle. We’ve looked at God’s purposes for this structure.
  - A. It served to unify God’s people as the seed of Abraham until true promised seed should come. They were the people through whom God would bring forth His promised seed. It would be the center of sacrificial worship for the tribes in the wilderness.
  - B. It served as a manifestation of God’s presence among His covenant people.
  - C. It served to point them to Christ, continually reminding them of their sin and their need for an atoning sacrifice and their ultimate Mediator, Jesus Christ.
4. Beginning with **Chapter 25** we find the detailed description of the Tabernacle and its furnishings.
  - A. We’ve looked at the Holy of holies with the Ark of the Covenant.
  - B. We’ve looked at the Holy place with the Table of Shewbread, the Golden Lampstand, and the Altar of Incense.
  - C. Both of these inner rooms were adorned with costly gold and beautiful tapestries.
5. As we come to **Chapter 27** we find the continuing description of the Tabernacle. Here our attention is focused upon the outer courtyard of the Tabernacle with the bronze altar of sacrifice.  
As we look at these two elements of the Tabernacle I want to reverse the order. We’ll look first at the Courtyard and then we’ll look at the Brazen Altar.  
Tonight I want to direct your attention to the outer court or courtyard.
  - I. First, the Courtyard was a place designed by God
    - A. As with the rest of the Tabernacle, God gave distinct orders for its construction
      1. The outer court was a fenced area measuring approximately 150x75 feet. Enclosing this court was a fence constructed of fine twisted linen.

2. Each of the long sides would have 150 feet of fine twisted linen held up by twenty pillars standing on twenty bases – **Verses 9-10**.
  3. The back of the Tabernacle was ½ the size of the sides - 75 feet of fine twisted linen held in place by 10 pillars standing on 10 bases.
  4. The east side or front contained the only entrance. It consisted of a curtain of linen like the rest 30 feet across. To each side was more linen 22 ½ feet wide.
  5. These linen “walls” were 7 ½ feet tall so that a man standing on the outside could not see inside.
- B. God designed the Tabernacle in order to teach His covenant people
1. Every element had something to say about the nature and character of God.
    - a. It was a physical symbol of God’s presence among His covenant people.
    - b. It was meant to unite them and hold them together as God’s people and provide the basis for sacrificial worship.
    - c. It was designed to point them to the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant of a promised seed.
  2. It should be noted the great contrast between the furnishings inside the tent and outside.
    - a. Everything on the inside of the Tabernacle tent was of gold, the Ark, the Table, the Candlestick, the utensils, everything. Gold is a universal symbol of royalty – this was the presence of God.
    - b. Everything on the outside of the Temple was of bronze – the altar, all of the utensils, the pillars. The floor was earth – the desert sand. This was to draw the distinction between heaven and earth.
- C. We might draw out other symbols, but we must be careful about attaching symbols to the Tabernacle.
1. Although it was designed to teach we must resist the temptation to draw more out of it than Scripture grants. Some have sought to find a symbol in every object of the Temple and it can become quiet arbitrary and imaginative. God has had to teach and correct me in the proper handling of OT symbols.
  2. As I’ve stated in a previous message, there are two basic principles to help us with our interpretation of the various elements of the Tabernacle
    - a. Do we find validation in the NT? For example in **Hebrews 9** the Tabernacle is described as a figure of that which was to come.
    - b. Does the original context of the OT passage place symbolic meaning upon a particular object? If it does then we should ask how the meaning relates to the person and work of Christ.
  3. Some have sought to find symbolism in the colors of the linen curtains forming the gate. It was made of white linen embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet thread.  
**Exodus 27:16** – “And for the gate of the court *shall be* an hanging of twenty cubits, *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework: *and* their pillars *shall be* four, and their sockets four.”
    - a. Blue could symbolize the heavens – the dwelling place of God and the origin of Christ.

- b. Purple is the color of royalty, pointing to the majesty of God and the kingship of Christ.
  - c. Scarlet or red is the color of blood – pointing to the necessity of the spilling of blood for atonement.
  - d. White is the symbol of purity.  
Red and white are sometimes used symbolically as contrast of our sin with the purity of holiness.  
**Isaiah 1:18** – “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”
4. But are we justified in applying these symbols here? Does the NT validate the colors of the Tabernacle? Does the context here give us justification? The colors here are given in combined form and no color stands out for particular attention.  
While we might look at them symbolically, they may have simply been chosen for their beauty.
- D. Just as the rest of the Tabernacle, God is teaching His people with the courtyard. There are other things we can see here.

## II. The Courtyard was a place of division from God.

- A. The Tabernacle was divided up into three sections separating three kinds of worshippers.
  - 1. We can see this same thing as God appeared on Mount Sinai.  
**Exodus 24:1-2** – “And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. **2** And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him.”
  - 2. In the Tabernacle there was the Holy of Holies where only the high priest could enter once each year as the mediator.
    - a. On Mount Sinai only Moses was allowed to go up to meet with God.
    - b. No one but the high priest could come into the presence of God. God was among them but also apart from them
  - 3. There was the Holy Place where the rest of the priests were allowed to enter just as only the elders were allowed part way up the mountain. There was still a great separation from God.
  - 4. The rest of the people were allowed into the courtyard.
  - 5. The Gentiles could not enter at all unless they converted to Judaism and were circumcised.
- B. In Solomon’s Temple there were two courtyards but by the time of Herod’s Temple there were four courtyards – one for the priests, one for the men of Israel, one for the women, and one for the Gentiles.  
The Tabernacle and later the Temple manifested great division – division from God and division among various groups

- C. In Christ all of the divisions have been removed.
1. We no longer need a human mediator – we are brought into the presence of God through our great Mediator, Jesus Christ  
We are now a kingdom of priests.
  2. Gentiles are now among the people of God – A great change.  
**Ephesians 2:12-14** – “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;”
  3. Christ has also removed distinctions between people  
**Galatians 3:28** – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”
- D. Now any sinner can approach God through faith in Jesus Christ.

## II. The Courtyard was a place of Delight in God

- A. The Tabernacle and the Ark had great significance for Israel
1. It separated them as God’s covenant people.
  2. It manifested God’s abiding presence with them.
  3. The continual rising up of the sacrificial smoke and the smell of the burning meat reminded them that their sins had been atoned for.
  4. They could enter into the courtyard to worship as God’s people
- B. Entering into the Courtyard was something most important.  
Entering into the Courtyard filled their hearts with overflowing joy and delight.  
**Psalms 84:2** – “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.”  
**Psalms 84:4** – “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee.”  
**Psalms 100:4-5** – “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. <sup>5</sup> For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”  
**Psalms 96:8-9** – “Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. <sup>9</sup> O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.”
- C. How much more should we delight in entering into the presence of God?
1. We too should savor the communion of the saints as we gather together before His throne.  
**Psalms 34:3** – “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.”  
**Psalms 95:1-3** – “O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. <sup>2</sup> Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. <sup>3</sup> For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.”

2. The Courtyard was a place of communion. It was a place where God's people would congregate.
3. Even after the resurrection Christians would gather in the courtyard  
**Acts 2:42-47** – “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. <sup>43</sup> And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all that believed were together, and had all things common; <sup>45</sup> And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. <sup>46</sup> And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, <sup>47</sup> Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”
4. They knew the importance of the community of saints. They understood their covenant relationship with each other. They were continually together – praying, fellowshiping, worshipping.
5. Is meeting in God's house with God's people your greatest delight?  
**Psalms 84:10** – “For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

#### Conclusion:

1. God designed the Tabernacle to point Israel to greater truths to be fulfilled in Christ.
2. In Christ the divisions of the Old Covenant have been removed. All of God's people today have access. Every barrier has been taken away.
3. Now we have glorious access at all times.  
 But there is something unique when God's people gather together. For many in our generation this has been lost.  
 They don't see the importance of a covenant community. For many professing Christians the church has lost its meaning or has become irrelevant. May God grant us to see the importance of the church and the importance of community.