

# WHAT IS THE TABERNACLE?

The tabernacle was a moveable tent sanctuary made by the Israelites to a design given Moses by God. It was a sign of His presence with them and therefore the centre of their religious life. Its importance is enhanced by the act that it was a type or shadow of greater things to come according to the Scriptures.

The tabernacle was first erected for worship by the Jews while still in the wilderness during their journey from Egypt to the land of Canaan. This they did in keeping with an instruction which God gave to them through the prophet Moses to whom He said: "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, *after* the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make *it*." – Exodus 25:8, 9

It had two apartments – the Holy Place in which was kept the table of showbread and the golden candle stick, and the Most Holy Place which housed the golden censer and the Ark of the Covenant. There God spoke with Moses who in turn passed His instruction to the congregation. "And there I will meet with thee... of the testimony, of all *things* which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." – Exodus 25:22

St. Paul gave a graphic description of the tabernacle when he wrote: "For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; gold, had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant... Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service *of God*. But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people." – Hebrews 9:2-7

The tabernacle remained till the days of Solomon as the place where sacrifices were offered. It was then at Gibeon from where it was brought up after King Solomon had built the temple, and the ark was transferred to it. – 1 Kings 8:24; 1 Chronicles 16:39, 40; 2 Chronicles 1:3; 5:3-5

## Spiritual Tabernacle

Although the Jews often backslided and provoked God by forsaking. He suffered long with them, having foreseen a time of reconciliation with His people. Hence He foretold a time when He would enter into a new covenant with them and when He would again have His tabernacle among them. Said He: "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Ezekiel 37:26, 27

It is plainly shown in the Bible that the tabernacle which the Jews had as a sanctuary for the worship of God typified something of greater importance. In his epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul stated that the law had "...a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things..." (Hebrews 10:1) He also told the Christians in Corinth that what happened to the natural Jews "...happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." – 1 Corinthians 10:11; See also Romans 15:4

Thus we find that the tabernacle which, like the ancient temple, was a place where God communed with His people; foreshadowed Jesus Christ who is the spiritual Tabernacle or Temple of God. On an occasion when he went to Jerusalem just before the Feast of Passover, he saw the Jews commercializing in the temple which they believed to be the house of God and he was offended, He made a whip with which he drove them out of the temple. And when the Jews asked him for a sign or proof of his authority for his action, he replied: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:13-19) They not understanding his statement thought he was referring to their literal temple and wondered how he could rebuild in three days a structure which took them 46 years to put up. "But the temple he was speaking of was his body." (Verse 21, New English Bible) This shows clearly that Jesus Christ is the temple of God in a spiritual sense.

And with regard to the antitypical tabernacle, St. Paul who had the wonderful grace of having much of the mysteries of God revealed to him said: "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building." (Hebrews 9:11) He also described Christ as "A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Hebrews 8:2

### Christ's Apostles

The Bible further shows that all who are of the apostles' class and who are the anointed Christians are also collectively or individually the "house of God", "temple" or "tabernacle". They constitute the "Little Flock" who are distinct from the countless other disciples, the "Other Sheep". They are the first class of Christ's disciples and their selection began with the 12 apostles. – Luke 12:32; Revelation 14:1-5; John 10:16; Luke 6:13-16

Addressing his fellow anointed servants of God, Saint Paul said: "Surely you know that you are God's temple where the Spirit of God dwells." (1 Corinthians 3:16, New English Bible) He added: "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." (Verse 17, Authorised Version) He threw more light on this when he further said; "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle (human body) were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Corinthians 5:1, 2

St. Peter confirmed this when he spoke of his death which he foreknew would soon come. Said he: "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in

remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.” – 2 Peter 1:13, 14

Thus just as God spoke to the natural Jews through the medium of the ancient tabernacle (Exodus 25:22) He had since the dawn of Christian era been speaking to His people through His Son Jesus Christ and his anointed footstep followers with whom he communes in spirit. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,” said St. Paul, “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds...” – Hebrews 1:1-3

Since the first advent of Jesus Christ which brought about not only a change of the priesthood but also of the law, the age-long promise of God to set in the midst of His people His tabernacle under a new agreement (Ezekiel 37:26, 27) has been in course of fulfilment. And it is in these last days in which we are now living – the age of the second presence of Jesus Christ and of his Kingdom (the New Jerusalem) – God is fulfilling His promise in a greater measure.

This was revealed to John the apostle in a vision, and he declared: “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.” – Revelation 21:2, 3

That Jesus Christ, the Tabernacle of God, has come again to set up his kingdom and that he is now with men is a matter of great joy to true Christians of today who have the understanding. Like as he (Christ) promised, wherever in this age of the last days people assemble in his name in TRUTH (Psalm 145:18) there he is in their midst. (Matthew 18:20) In this the God’s Kingdom Society (GKS) like any other true Church reposes faith and confidence, and has great delight.