

## Types and Shadows

## 3

# The Tabernacle of David

In the last lesson we studied the Tabernacle of Moses and saw how it provided numerous types of New Testament truth. But there are in fact *three* tabernacles described in the Bible:

- **The Pre-Tabernacle (Exodus 33:7-11)** – a pitched tent at Sinai that was a precursor to the true Tabernacle of Moses.
- **The Tabernacle of Moses Proper (Exodus 25-27,30-31,35-40)** – constructed according to the instructions Moses received on Mount Sinai.
- **The Tabernacle of David (Exodus 29:42,44)** – erected on Mount Zion during the reign of King David.

In this lesson, we are going to look at this third tabernacle and the rich significance it holds for New Testament believers.

## A Prophecy Fulfilled

Standing before the apostles and elders of the early Church, James makes a remarkable statement in **Acts 15:16-17**:

“The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: ‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things.’”

What was it that the words of the prophets were in agreement with? What was it that was fulfilling the prophecy of Amos (see **Amos 9:11**), which described the rebuilding of “David’s fallen tent” (NIV) or “the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down” (NKJV)?

### A Tapestry of Types

The Tabernacle of Moses

▶ **The Tabernacle of David** ◀

The Sacrificial System

The Restoration of the Temple

The Gates of Jerusalem

The Feasts of Israel

Two Mountains

The High Priest

The Torn Veil

This declaration by James was in response to an absolutely amazing phenomenon. Thousands upon thousands of Gentiles were believing on Jesus and pouring into the Church (see **Acts 11:19-24; 15:12**). James saw this as a direct fulfillment of the prophecy that resulted in “the rest of mankind” seeking the Lord and “even all the Gentiles who are called by My name.”

But look at the focal point of that prophecy. It concerned the restoration of David’s fallen tent. This is obviously drawing on the rich imagery of the Old Testament. But what exactly was David’s tabernacle?

In the context of Amos’ prophecy, “David’s fallen tent” had two complementary meanings:

- **The civic meaning** – David’s fallen tent can refer to the “house of David” – his kingdom, which had been split in two and fallen into ruin.
- **The spiritual meaning** – David’s fallen tent can refer to the nationwide revival associated with the setting up of David’s Tabernacle on Mount Zion.

While both can apply to the fulfillment of this prophecy in **Acts 15:16-17**, it is the spiritual meaning of the term “David’s Tabernacle” that applies best, as we shall see, to the phenomenon of a massive influx of Gentiles into the Church.

## Historical Background

The setting up of David’s Tabernacle on Mount Zion, and the events which led up to it, are highly significant for us. For as James proclaimed in **Acts 15:16-17**, the Tabernacle of David is a type that finds its fulfillment in the experience of the Church.

Let’s take a look, then, at the events that led up to David setting up his tabernacle on Mount Zion.

When David came to power, the Tabernacle of Moses was still in existence. All the rituals prescribed by the Law of Moses were still carried out:

- The priests would offer the prescribed sacrifices on the brazen altar inside the Outer Court.
- The priests would wash themselves at the laver before entering through the veiled door into the Holy Place.
- The table of shewbread was maintained as commanded in the Law and the priests would eat of the shewbread each Sabbath, replacing it with new cakes of unleavened bread (note **1 Samuel 21:1-6**).
- The seven-branched lampstand was kept oiled and alight, shedding its flickering light upon the other furniture in the Holy Place.
- Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would fill a golden censor with coals from the altar of incense and enter into the Most Holy

Place on behalf of the people.

On the surface, everything was operating as it should be. But there was something very unusual about this scene. For all the articles of tabernacle furniture were there *except one* – the most important one! When the High Priest passed through the veil into the Most Holy Place, he entered an empty room! The Ark of the Covenant was no longer in the Tabernacle of Moses!

## The Age of Ichabod

About one hundred years earlier, an event had happened in Israel that would affect the nation for a century. Israel was fighting against the Philistines at that time, and not faring well, when someone had the bright idea that they should carry the Ark of the Covenant into battle. After all, according to **Numbers 10:35**, every time Israel broke camp and set out with the Ark of the Covenant, Moses would proclaim:

“Rise up, O Lord! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you.”

Maybe, they thought, the Ark of the Covenant could help turn the tide of the war.

### Read 1 Samuel 4:1-22

What transpired, instead, was the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines and the total routing of Israel’s armies. The daughter-in-law of Eli the priest, dying in childbirth, called her son Ichabod, which means “the glory has departed,” then uttered a cry that was to define three generations:

“The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.”

From that time onward, right through the ministry of Samuel, right through the reign of Saul (David’s predecessor), the Ark of the Covenant was missing from the Tabernacle of Moses. But what had happened to it? Well that, in itself, is an interesting story – a story that has great relevance to the setting up of David’s Tabernacle.

### Read 1 Samuel 5:1-7:1

Here are the events as they transpired:

- The Philistines transport the Ark of the Covenant back to Ashdod, one of their principal cities. Believing it to be the idol of the Israelites, they do what any ancient conqueror would have done – they bring the Ark into the temple of their chief god, Dagon (which was half-human and half-fish), and place it before his idol as proof that Dagon was more powerful than Yahweh, the “god” of the Israelites.
- When they return in the morning, however, they find the idol of Dagon on its face before the Ark of the Covenant. They quickly set up the idol again, thinking it had accidentally toppled, but the next morning the same thing

has happened. This time the head and hands of the idol have broken off.

- A plague of rats and tumors (most likely hemorrhoids) breaks out in Ashdod and the surrounding countryside. The crisis becomes so severe that the men of Ashdod declare: “The ark of the god of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy upon us and upon Dagon our god.” They call a leadership council to decide how to resolve this crisis.
- They decide that the simplest thing to do is “pass the buck,” so they send the Ark first to Gath, another Philistine city, and then to Ekron. But in both these cities, plagues break out against the Philistines.
- Upon the advice of their “priests and diviners,” the Philistines decide to send the Ark back to Israel. But as they do so they offer a “guilt offering” to God – an offering of five gold hemorrhoids and five gold rats, representing the five cities of the Philistines. And note the admonition of priests and diviners: “Why do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? When [the god of Israel] treated them harshly, did they not send the Israelites out so they could go on their way?” The news of the plagues sent upon Egypt was well known in Canaan (see also **Joshua 2:8-11**).
- They put the Ark of the Covenant on a new cart, hitched to two cows that had just calved and had never been yoked. They took the calves away, knowing that if the cows proceeded off on their own accord, that this was the doing of the God of Israel.
- The cows pull the cart across the border of Israel, into the city of Beth Shemesh. There is great rejoicing upon the arrival of the Ark, and sacrifices and burnt offerings are made to the Lord.\*
- Seventy men† decide they want a peek into the Ark, however, and as a result are struck dead. The response of the men of Beth Shemesh is: “Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?”
- The Ark is finally moved to Kiriath Jearim, possibly because it had a pagan high place, which the people thought might offer protection from what they considered the capricious attack of God. It is put into the house of Abinidab, who was probably a Levite and therefore permitted by Law to look after the Ark of the Covenant (note **Numbers 1:50-51**). His son, Eleazar, is consecrated to stand guard over the Ark, probably to avoid another incident like that in Beth Shemesh.

The Ark of the Covenant was to stay in Kiriath Jearim for about 100 years. When David became king over all Israel, one of the first things he did was to bring back the Ark of the Covenant.

\* According to **Joshua 21:16**, Beth Shemesh was a priestly city. The presence of the Ark of the Covenant legitimized the sacrifices and offerings, and priests were probably there to present them before the Lord.

† The number 50,070 is most likely a corruption of the original text. Some ancient manuscripts omit the 50,000, and 70 is widely regarded by scholars as the correct number.

## The First Attempt

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### Read 1 Chronicles 13:1-11

David had one great desire – to live in the continual presence of God (**Psalm 27:4**). This was his motivation for organizing to have the Ark returned to its rightful place in the center of Israel’s worship.

But something went terribly wrong. During the transport of the Ark, the oxen stumble and Uzzah does the natural thing. He puts out his hand to steady the Ark and its immediately struck dead. **1 Chronicles 13:11** tells us:

“Then David was angry because the Lord’s wrath had broken out against Uzzah...”

The Hebrew expression used here literally means “his nose was out of joint.” He was not simply angry; he was upset with God and offended by God’s wrath. For this was a repeat of what had happened previously in Beth Shemesh and David’s reaction was probably similar that of the men of Beth Shemesh:

“Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this holy God? To whom will the ark go up from here?”

What had gone wrong, of course, was not simply that Uzzah had touched the Ark. The whole method of the transportation of the Ark had not been done according to the stipulations of the Law of Moses. The Ark was supposed to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites, using poles inserted through its corner rings (see **Exodus 25:13-14**). In this way, the Ark itself was never touched.

Uzzah and Ahio were sons (or more correctly descendants) of Abinadab, and therefore probably Levites. But in transporting the Ark on a new cart, they had used the methodology of the Philistines, not the prescribed way of God.

The death of Uzzah caused an immediate cessation to the procession and the Ark was placed in the nearest residence, the home of a man called Obed-Edom.

## The Second Attempt

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### Read 2 Samuel 6:12-23

### Read 1 Chronicles 15-16

Some three months later, David hears that the household of Obed-Edom is experiencing great blessing from God, and his heart is again stirred to see the Ark returned to the center of Israel’s worship. But now he seeks the Lord for the prescribed way.

This time David transports the Ark in the way that the Law of Moses had stipulated – on the shoulders of the Levites (**1 Chronicles 15:2**). He offers the right sacrifices to the Lord and as the Ark enters Jerusalem, David dances in celebration before the Lord.

But then he does something unexpected. He doesn't take the Ark to Gibeon, where the Tabernacle of Moses was situated. Instead he pitches a tent for the Ark on Mount Zion (**1 Chronicles 15:1**). It is this tent that comes to be called the Tabernacle of David.

As we begin to explore the type of David's Tabernacle, however, it is first important to understand the principles of the transportation of the Ark to David's Tabernacle, for story of the Ark's arrival is essential to our understanding of the Tabernacle of David.

As far as James was concerned, the fulfillment of Amos' prophecy concerning the restoration of David's Tabernacle involved the manifested presence of God, which acts like a magnet to "the rest of mankind" and "all the Gentiles who are called by My name." He regarded the great influx of Gentiles into the kingdom of God as proof that Ark of God's presence had returned to David's Tabernacle.

In the same way, God desires for his manifested presence to be revealed in his Church. But for this to happen, we must understand God's prescribed way for the return of the Ark of his presence:

- **It is carried on the shoulders of the priesthood** – Under the New Covenant, *all* believers are now priests (**1 Peter 2:9**). The glory of the Lord does not come via worldly ways or man-made methods. The Lord's glory is manifest in its fullness upon a consecrated people.
- **It involves a new tent on a new mountain** – The Ark was taken to Mount Zion and the Tabernacle of David was pitched for the sole purpose of housing the Ark. In the same way, God is preparing his people as the place where he will reveal his glory (note **Hebrews 12:22**).
- **It requires sacrifice** – Everything God does now centers around the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. The Cross is the basis upon which God now reveals his glory.

## The Nature of David's Tabernacle

During the time of David's Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of Moses was not neglected. The sacrifices prescribed by the Law of Moses were all performed in every detail (**1 Chronicles 16:39-40**). But the whole dynamic of interaction with the presence of God had changed. The Ark of the Covenant, representing the holy presence of God, was no longer shut away behind the thick veil of the Most Holy Place. It was now in a tent sitting atop Mount Zion, with no veil closing it off.

Why did God allow this? Because it was a type of what was to come! Let's take a closer look at exactly what the Tabernacle of David represented to David, to the people of Israel and to us today.

You will remember from the last lesson that the Tabernacle of Moses had three divisions:

- The Outer Court
- The Holy Place
- The Most Holy Place

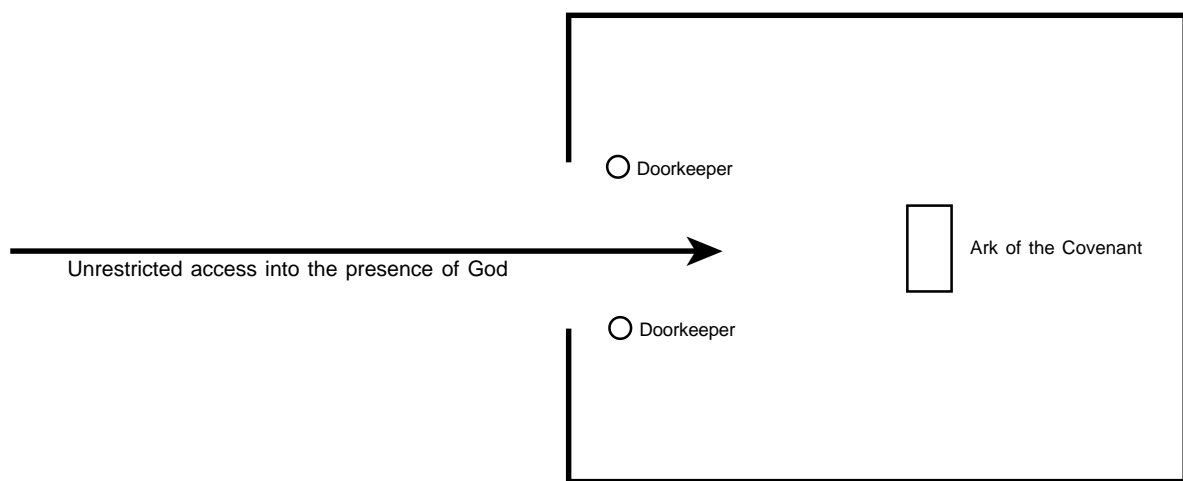
The purpose of these three divisions was to create a staggered access to the fullness of God's glory. At the door of each compartment, the qualifications for entry reduced the number of people who could enter the next compartment to *representatives of those in the previous compartment*.

- **The Outer Court** – the people of Israel only (representatives of the nations of the world)
- **The Holy Place** – the priests only (representatives of the Israelites in the Outer Court)
- **The Most Holy Place** – the high priest only (the representative of the priesthood in the Holy Place and of the entire nation of Israel)

Yet all this changed with the Tabernacle of David. In David's tent, ranks of Levites functioned as priests before the Ark of the Lord! Their priestly functions included the ministries of:

- Sacrifice
- Song
- Music
- Doorkeeping

The amazing thing about the Tabernacle of David is that it had only one compartment, and that one compartment corresponded to the Holiest of All in the Tabernacle of Moses! Yet there was no veil. People had daily access into the presence of God. There was a constant flow of people into the Tabernacle of David, bringing praise and worship before Ark of the Lord. Many of the psalms were written in the great revival that occurred in David's Tabernacle.



Schematic of the Tabernacle of David  
(Not drawn to scale)



This holds incredible significance for us in the New Covenant. Just like the Tabernacle of David, we experience:

- **Open access into the presence of God** – There is now no longer a veil barring our way to the throne of God’s presence (**Hebrews 4:16**).
- **Praise and worship** – Continual praise and worship now ascends before the throne of God.
- **Unity** – The Tabernacle of David was the experience of a united Israel. In the same way, our unity plays a significant role in attracting people into the kingdom of God (note **John 17:22-23**).
- **Great joy** – The expressions of joy included great abandon before the Lord in worship, dance (**2 Samuel 6:14**) and every kind of musical instrument (**Psalms 150**).

Just as the early Church experienced a massive influx of Gentiles, because the type of David’s Tabernacle had been fulfilled in their generation, so God’s plan is for our lives to be an antitype of the Tabernacle of David. People will be attracted by the manifest presence of God, revealed in the midst of a people who have open and joyous access into the very Holy of Holies!