

THE SANCTUARY IN THE WILDERNESS

In preparation for our understanding of the five Sanctuary Visions in Revelation we will undertake a brief overview of the Sanctuary in the Wilderness.

The Sanctuary in the Wilderness consisted of two parts:

- a. The Outer Courtyard
- b. The Tabernacle which was subdivided into two apartments
 - An outer compartment- The Holy Place
 - An inner compartment – The Holy of Holies, also known as The Most Holy Place.

I. THE COURTYARD OF THE SANCTUARY:

ITS DIMENSIONS:

The dimensions of the Court of the Tabernacle are given in the instructions for the CONSTRUCTION of the Tabernacle as well as in the record of its ERECTION. ***The south and north sides measure 100 cubits:***

Exodus 27:9, 11 (NKJV)

⁹“You shall also make the court of the tabernacle. For ***the south side*** there shall be hangings for the court *made of fine woven linen, one hundred cubits long for one side.* . . .¹¹ Likewise along ***the length of the north side*** there shall be ***hangings one hundred cubits long . . .***”

See also Exodus 38:9, 11.

The western and eastern ends measured 50 cubits:

Exodus 27:12-13 (NKJV)

¹²“And along ***the width of the court on the west side*** shall be hangings of ***fifty cubits***, with their ten pillars and their ten sockets. ¹³ ***The width of the court on the east side*** shall be ***fifty cubits***.”

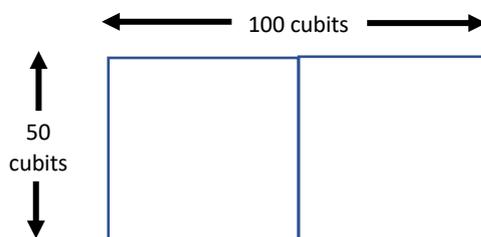
See also Exodus 38:12-13.

Thus the court in which the Tabernacle sat was one hundred cubits in length and 50 cubits in width:

Exodus 27:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸The ***length of the court*** shall be ***one hundred cubits, the width fifty*** throughout, and the height five cubits

The Courtyard in which the Tabernacle was located was twice as long as it was wide. It consisted of TWO SQUARES, each 50 cubits by 50 cubits.



ENTRY INTO THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE:

Entry into the Courtyard was via its eastern end:

Exodus 27:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴The hangings on **one side of the gate** shall be **fifteen cubits**, with their three pillars and their three sockets. ¹⁵And on **the other side** shall be hangings of **fifteen cubits**, with their three pillars and their three sockets. . .

Therefore, **the gate** itself, **in the midst of the east side**, was **20 cubits wide**. The Tabernacle lay at the western end of the Courtyard. This gave the Sanctuary an EAST-WEST orientation.

II. THE TABERNACLE:

The Tabernacle was located at the Western End of the Courtyard. This was the FOCAL POINT of the Sanctuary for the Tabernacle was the house in which God dwelt:

Exodus 25:8 (NKJV)

⁸And let them make Me a sanctuary,^[c] **that I may dwell among them**. ⁹According to all that I show you, **that is**, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make **it**.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABERNACLE:

It was constructed of a series of boards of shittim (acacia) wood overlaid with gold:

Exodus 36:20, 34 (NKJV)

²⁰For **the tabernacle** he made **boards of acacia wood**, standing upright. .
³⁴He **overlaid** the boards **with gold**, made their rings of gold **to be** holders for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold.

The boards were placed “upright” in sockets of silver:

Exodus 36:24 (NKJV)

²⁴Forty **sockets of silver** he made to go **under the twenty boards: two sockets under each of the boards** for its two tenons.

The upright boards were firmly fastened together by 5 “bars”. The “middle bar” passed “through” the boards:

Exodus 36:31-33 (NKJV)

³¹And he made **bars of acacia wood**: five for the boards on one side of the tabernacle, ³²five bars for the boards on the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle on the far side westward. ³³And he made **the middle bar to pass through the boards from one end to the other**.

The other four bars were passed through “rings of gold” to give further stability to the upright boards:

Exodus 36:34 (NKJV)

³⁴ He overlaid the boards with gold, made their rings of gold *to be* holders for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold.

So the vertical planks that formed the walls of the Tabernacle were securely held in place by the sockets and the bars.

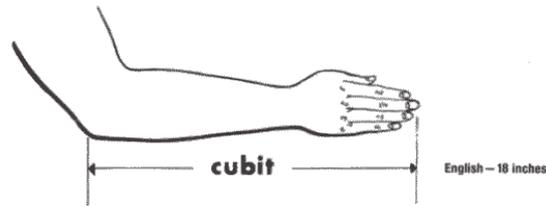
ITS DIMENSIONS:

The dimensions of the Tabernacle itself were calculated from the number of boards that were used for its construction, each board being “a cubit and a half” in width:

Exodus 26:15, 16 (NKJV)

¹⁵ “And for the tabernacle you shall make the boards of acacia wood, standing upright. ¹⁶ Ten cubits *shall be* the length of a board, and ***a cubit and a half shall be the width of each board.***

The “cubit” was the distance between the elbow and the tip of the fore-finger:



It was approximately 18 inches.

Both the North and the south sides of the Tabernacle consisted of 20 boards, each with a width of 1½ cubits.

Exodus 26:18, 20, (NKJV)

¹⁸ And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle, ***twenty boards for the south side.*** . . . ²⁰ And for the second side of the tabernacle, ***the north side, there shall be twenty boards.*** . . .

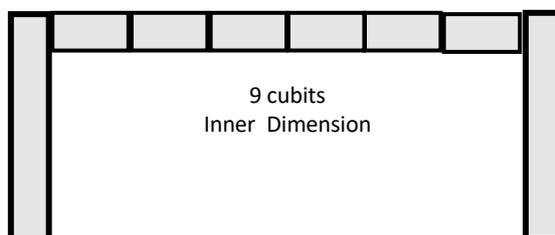
So the north and south sides measured 30 cubits in length.

The west side consisted of six boards, each with the same width as those to the south and north. These presumably spanned the interior width between the two side walls.

Exodus 26:22 (NKJV)

²² For ***the far side*** of the tabernacle, ***westward***, you shall make ***six boards.***

This would give an inner width of 9 cubits.



The dimensions of the Tabernacle constructed by Solomon were double those of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness:

1 Kings 6:2 (NKJV)

² Now the house which King Solomon built for the LORD, ***its length was sixty cubits, its width twenty***, and its height thirty cubits.

Whereas the length of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness was 30 cubits, in Solomon's Temple it was twice the length at 60 cubits. So the width of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness would be half that of Solomon's Tabernacle which was 20 cubits.

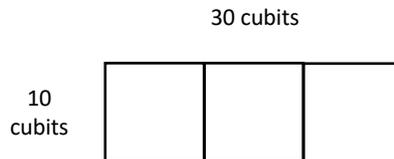
If the thickness of the boards was 0.5 cubits then the outer dimension of the width of the Tabernacle would be 10 cubits. So the length of the western end of the Tabernacle would be 10 cubits.

Where the end of the north and south walls joined the western wall boards were added to strengthen the corners:

Exodus 26:22 (NKJV)

²³ And you shall ***also*** make ***two boards for the two back corners*** of the tabernacle. . . ²⁵ So there shall be ***eight boards*** . . .

Thus, the outer dimensions of the Tabernacle were 30 by 10 cubits. The Tabernacle was effectively composed of three cubes, each measuring 10 cubits by ten cubits.



ITS SUBDIVISION:

The Tabernacle was to be subdivided into an inner and outer compartment by a veil supported by four pillars:

Exodus 26:31, 32-33 (NKJV)

³¹ "You shall make ***a veil*** woven of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim. ³² You shall ***hang it upon the four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold***. . . ³³ . . . ***The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy.***

The names of the two compartments are given:

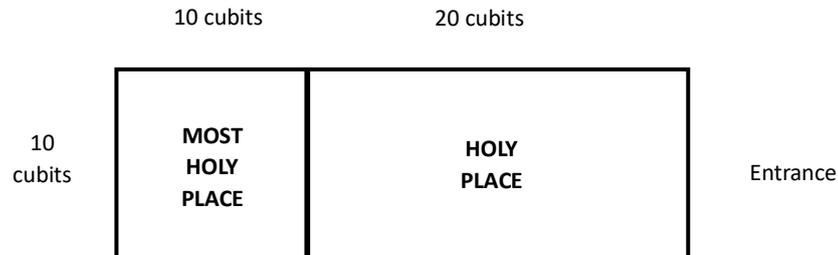
- The OUTER – "the holy place"
- The INNER – "the most holy place"

A further important detail is also given in Solomon's Temple the LENGTH and BREADTH and HEIGHT of the Holy of Holies were the same. In other words, the Holy of Holies was a CUBE.

1 Kings 6:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ And he prepared the ^[a]*inner sanctuary* inside the temple, to set the ark of the covenant of the LORD there. ²⁰ The *inner sanctuary* was **twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high**. He overlaid it with pure gold, and overlaid the altar of cedar.

So the dimensions of the Sanctuary in the Wilderness would have been 10 cubits square and the Holy Place would have been 10 cubits wide by 20 cubits long.



The ENTRY into the Tabernacle was at the eastern end which was closed by a curtain hung on FIVE PILLARS:

Exodus 26:36-37 (NKJV)

³⁶ “You shall make **a screen for the door of the tabernacle**, woven of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver. ³⁷ And you shall make for the screen **five pillars of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold**; their hooks *shall be* gold, and you shall cast five sockets of bronze for them.

ITS FURNITURE:

One piece of furniture was placed in the Most Holy Place: “the Ark of the Testimony” upon which was placed “the Mercy Seat”:

Exodus 26:33-34 (NKJV)

³³ . . . Then you shall bring **the ark of the Testimony** in there, **behind the veil**. . . ³⁴ You shall put **the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony** in **the Most Holy**.

See also Exodus 40:3, 20-21

Three pieces of furniture were placed in the Holy place:

Exodus 40:1-5 (NKJV)

¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²“On the first day of the first month **you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting**.

³You shall put in it **the ark of the Testimony**, and ^[a]**partition off the ark with the veil**.

⁴You shall bring in **the table** and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it; and you shall bring in **the lampstand** and ^[b]light its lamps.

⁵You shall also **set the altar of gold for the incense** before the ark of the Testimony, and **put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle**.

Once the ark was positioned in the Most Holy Place the Veil that separated it was hung. Then the lampstand, the Table of Shewbread, and the Golden Altar were placed in the Holy Place. Then the “screen for the door of the Tabernacle” was hung. This closed the Holy Place. The actual positions of the furniture is given:

Exodus 40:22-27 (NKJV)

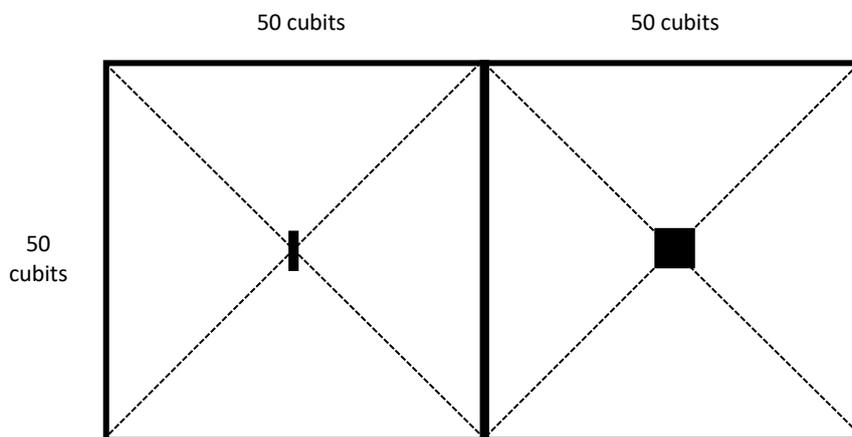
²² He put **the table** in the tabernacle of meeting, **on the north side** of the tabernacle, **outside the veil**; ²³ and he set the bread in order upon it before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁴ He put **the lampstand** in the tabernacle of meeting, **across from the table, on the south side** of the tabernacle; ²⁵ and he lit the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁶ He put **the gold altar** in the tabernacle of meeting **in front of the veil**; ²⁷ and he burned sweet incense on it, as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁸ He hung up the screen **at the door** of the tabernacle

III. ERECTION OF THE COURTYARD, TABERNACLE and THE PLACEMENT OF ITS FURNITURE.

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness was a PORTABLE Sanctuary. It was designed to be disassembled and transported by the Levites from one site to another. As the Tribes arrived at the new site for their next encampment the Sanctuary would be re-assembled.

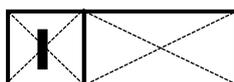
The Courtyard can be visualized as TWO ADJACENT SQUARES, each measuring 50 cubits by 50 cubits. The central point of each can be established by two diagonals between opposite corners.

The intersection of the two diagonals is the midpoint of each square:



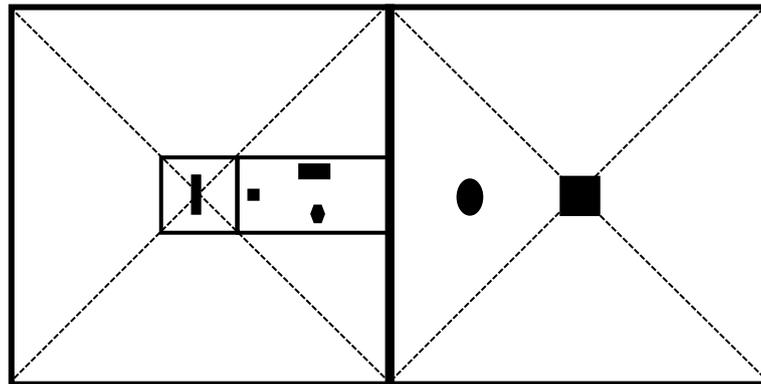
The ARK with the MERCY SEAT was placed at the midpoint of the western square while the ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING was located at the midpoint of the eastern square.

The TABERNACLE had a footprint equivalent to three squares, each measuring 10 cubits by 10 cubits. The westernmost square was the Holy of Holies. The two squares at the eastern end formed the Holy Place:



On the SOUTHERN wall of the HOLY PLACE at its midpoint the LAMPSTAND was placed. Opposite it against the NORTHERN wall the TABLE OF SHEWBREAD was located. At the WESTERN end at the midpoint in front of the VEIL the GOLDEN ALTAR OF INCENSE was positioned.

In the Outer Courtyard at the midpoint between the Altar of Burnt Offerings and the Door of the Tabernacle the LAVAR was located



The distance between the WESTERN WALL (back) of the TABERNACLE and the WESTERN WALL of the COURTYARD was exactly 20 cubits as was the distance between the NORTHERN WALL of the TABERNACLE and the NORTHERN WALL of the COURTYARD. The same held true for The SOUTHERN WALL of the TABERNACLE and the SOUTHERN WALL of the COURTYARD.

The whole of the Sanctuary in the Wilderness was constructed with mathematical precision. God is indeed a God of Mathematics. The ERECTION of the Sanctuary on its EAST-WEST AXIS was simplified by an understanding of this.

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