

# The Book of Exodus, Teacher's Guide

## Lesson 19: The Tabernacle and Its Courtyard

### Exodus 26:1–27:21

#### Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, these chapters teach the holiness of God and the seriousness of approaching Him, and they do so through architecture: a veil that shuts sinners out, an altar that must be passed, a single gate of entry, and a light that must never go dark. The student must grasp that under the old covenant access to God was restricted, mediated, and costly, because God is holy and people are sinful. This is not God being unkind; it is God being honest about the gulf that sin creates and gracious in providing any way at all.

The lesson must then move forward to Christ, for the New Testament insists these things were 'a copy and shadow of the heavenly things' (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23–24). The torn veil (Matthew 27:51) declares that the way into God's presence is now open through Christ's flesh (Hebrews 10:19–20). The altar points to His once-for-all sacrifice; the single gate and door point to Him as the only way to the Father (John 10:9; 14:6); the continual light points to Him as the light of the world and to the church's witness. Teach this typology with discipline: draw the connections Scripture authorizes or that are natural and accurate, and resist fanciful over-reading of every loop, clasp, and post. And be clear that we do not reinstitute the tabernacle; it is fulfilled and set aside in Christ (Hebrews 8–10).

The formation aim is twofold. First, that the student would feel afresh the holiness of God and the wonder that the veil is now torn, so that he draws near with both confidence and reverence (Hebrews 10:22; 12:28–29). Second, that he would rest in the one way God has provided, refusing the perennial human temptation to seek God on his own terms or to find peace apart from the cross. The single gate, the altar of blood, the open veil all preach one message: come, but come God's way, through Christ. Aim the student's heart at glad, reverent, exclusive trust in Jesus as altar, door, light, and living way.

#### Question 1

##### Student Question:

*Read 26:1–14. The tabernacle was made of layered curtains, from fine woven linen with cherubim down to coverings of skins. What does the careful, God-given design of the dwelling, built exactly as He specified, reveal about how God is to be approached?*

#### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 26 details the tabernacle proper: ten inner curtains of fine twined linen embroidered with cherubim (26:1), joined by loops and gold clasps into one structure; over these a tent of

goats' hair (26:7); then coverings of ram skins dyed red and goatskins (26:14). The structure was held up by upright acacia boards overlaid with gold, set in silver bases (26:15–30).

The repeated theme is precision. Measurements, materials, and arrangements are all specified by God. Israel did not improvise; they built 'according to the plan' (26:30). This continues the principle of 25:9, 40: God determines how He is approached.

The layered coverings, from beautiful embroidered linen on the inside to weather-proof skins on the outside, made the dwelling both glorious within and protected without. The cherubim woven into the inner curtains echo the cherubim over the ark and the cherubim guarding Eden (Genesis 3:24), associating the dwelling with the guarded holiness of God's presence.

Teach that the careful design reveals a God who is approached on His terms, in the way He specifies. The beauty within and the durability without together declare that this was a real, glorious, and holy dwelling for God among His people, not a casual structure.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- God specified every detail of His dwelling; Israel built by His plan (26:30).
- The precision continues the principle that God determines how He is approached.
- The woven cherubim associate the dwelling with God's guarded holiness.
- Beauty within and durability without befit a real dwelling for the holy God.
- The design teaches reverence, not casualness, in approaching God.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why does the precise design of the tabernacle matter theologically?
- What do the woven cherubim suggest about God's presence?
- How does this challenge a casual approach to God?

### **Question 2**

#### **Student Question:**

*Read 26:1–6. Israel built the dwelling precisely to God's pattern, not their own taste. Where in your walk with God are you tempted to serve Him by your own design rather than according to His revealed will, and what would submission look like?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This self-question carries the 'according to the plan' principle into the student's service of God. The temptation is perennial: to serve God in ways that suit our taste rather than ways He has revealed. Israel was not free to redesign the tabernacle, and we are not free to reinvent worship and discipleship by preference.

Apply this to new covenant realities. We are not bound to the tabernacle pattern, but the principle that God reveals how He is to be worshiped and served still stands. The New Testament gives the church its pattern: worship, the Lord's Supper, giving, teaching, the work and organization of the church, all according to apostolic instruction.

The heart issue is submission. Will I lay down 'I prefer' for 'God has shown'? This is not legalism; it is love and trust expressed as obedience (John 14:15). The God who designed every board knows best how He is to be approached.

Press for concreteness. Where specifically is the student substituting his own design (in worship, in service, in how he relates to the church) for God's revealed will? What would submission look like this week?

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- We are tempted to serve God by our taste rather than His revealed will.
- We are not bound to the tabernacle pattern, but God still reveals how He is served.
- Submission to God's will is love and trust, not legalism (John 14:15).
- The God who designed every detail knows best how He is approached.
- Submission must be concrete, not merely abstract.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where are you serving God by your own design rather than His will?
- How is glad submission different from cold legalism?
- What would yielding your preference to God's direction look like this week?

### **Question 3**

#### **Student Question:**

*Read 26:31–35. A veil separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, where the ark sat. What was this veil teaching Israel about the holiness of God and about humanity's access to His presence under the old covenant?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Verses 31–35 describe the veil, a curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, with cherubim worked into it, hung on four pillars. It separated the Holy Place (with the lampstand, table, and incense altar) from the Most Holy Place, where the ark stood (26:33–34).

The veil's message is profound. It barred the way into the Most Holy Place. Only the high priest could pass it, and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, and not without blood (Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9:7). The cherubim woven into it recall the cherubim who guarded Eden's entrance (Genesis 3:24): access to God's immediate presence is closed to sinful humanity.

So the veil teaches two truths at once: God is gloriously holy, dwelling in unapproachable splendor, and sinful people cannot simply stroll into His presence. The gulf created by sin is real. Under the old covenant, the way into the Most Holy Place 'was not yet opened as long as the first section was still standing' (Hebrews 9:8).

Hold this honestly before pointing to the cross (the next question does that). The veil is not arbitrary cruelty; it is the truthful architecture of holiness. It makes the tearing of the veil at Calvary all the more astonishing.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The veil separated sinners from the Most Holy Place, where God's presence dwelt.
- Only the high priest passed it, once a year, never without blood (Hebrews 9:7).
- The woven cherubim recall Eden's guarded entrance (Genesis 3:24).
- The veil declares both God's holiness and the real gulf created by sin.
- Under the old covenant the way in was not yet opened (Hebrews 9:8).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What did the veil teach Israel about God's holiness?
- Why could only the high priest pass the veil, and only with blood?
- How does the veil make the gulf created by sin visible?

### **Question 4**

#### **Student Question:**

*Read 26:33 with Hebrews 10:19–20. The veil shut the way in; the New Testament says Jesus opened 'a new and living way... through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.' What does it mean for your daily confidence before God that the way into His presence is now open through Christ?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This question moves from the closed veil (26:33) to the torn veil and the open way. Hebrews 10:19–20 declares that we now 'have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh.' Matthew 27:51 records that at Jesus' death the temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom, a tearing from heaven's side, by God Himself.

This is the great reversal. What the veil shut, Christ opened. His torn flesh on the cross is the way through. The barrier that declared 'no entry' is removed for those in Christ. We no longer stand outside; we draw near.

The application is to daily confidence. Many believers still live as though the veil were intact, approaching God timidly, unsure of their welcome. The gospel says otherwise: through Christ's

blood the way is open, and we may draw near 'with a true heart in full assurance of faith' (Hebrews 10:22).

Balance confidence with reverence. The veil torn does not make God less holy; it means a holy God has provided a way for sinners to come. We draw near boldly and reverently, with gratitude that the way was opened at the cost of Christ's flesh. The student should name where timidity or false guilt keeps him from the open access Christ purchased.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The torn veil (Matthew 27:51) declares the way into God's presence now open.
- Christ's torn flesh is the new and living way (Hebrews 10:19-20).
- What the veil shut, Christ opened for those in Him.
- We may draw near in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22).
- Open access does not lessen God's holiness; it magnifies His grace.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does the torn veil mean for your confidence before God?
- Where do you still approach God as though the veil were intact?
- How do you hold together bold access and reverent awe?

### **Question 5**

#### **Student Question:**

*Read 27:1-8. The bronze altar stood in the courtyard, the first thing encountered, where sacrifices were offered. Why must the altar of sacrifice come before any approach to God's dwelling, and what does this order (sacrifice first, then fellowship) reveal about coming to God?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Chapter 27 begins with the bronze altar (the altar of burnt offering), made of acacia overlaid with bronze, with horns at its corners and a bronze grating (27:1-8). It stood in the courtyard, the first major object encountered upon entering the gate, before one ever reached the dwelling itself.

The placement preaches. Before anyone could approach God's tent, the altar of sacrifice stood in the way. Blood had to be shed; sacrifice had to be made. The order is fixed: atonement first, then access; sacrifice first, then fellowship. No one came to God's dwelling without passing the place of blood.

This is the gospel logic written into the courtyard. Sinful people do not approach a holy God on the basis of their own merit. There must be a sacrifice. Under the old covenant it was bulls and goats, repeated endlessly. Hebrews 9-10 shows these could never finally take away sins; they pointed to the one sacrifice of Christ.

Teach the principle clearly: coming to God runs through the altar. For us, that altar is the cross. Christ is both our sacrifice and our altar (Hebrews 13:10). We do not bypass the cross to reach God; we come through it. Keep the typology grounded; the order of altar-then-dwelling is natural and the New Testament draws the sacrifice-fulfillment connection explicitly.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The bronze altar stood first, before any approach to God's dwelling.
- The order is fixed: atonement first, then access; sacrifice first, then fellowship.
- Sinful people approach God only through sacrifice, not their own merit.
- Old covenant sacrifices pointed to the one sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 9–10).
- We come to God through the cross, not around it (Hebrews 13:10).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Why must the altar come before approach to God's dwelling?
- What does the order (sacrifice, then fellowship) teach about coming to God?
- How is the cross the altar through which we now approach God?

### **Question 6**

#### **Student Question:**

*Read 27:1–8 again. No Israelite drew near to God's tent without passing the altar of blood. Where are you tempted to seek nearness to God or peace of conscience while bypassing the cross, and how does this chapter call you back to the only true ground of access?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This self-question applies the altar's priority (27:1–8) to the student's heart. The perennial temptation is to seek nearness to God, or peace of conscience, while bypassing the cross: through our own goodness, religious activity, sincerity, or self-improvement.

But just as no Israelite reached the tent without passing the altar, no one comes to God apart from the sacrifice of Christ. Peace with God is not earned by trying harder; it is received through the blood of Christ (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:13).

Examine the subtle forms of bypassing the cross: guilt that drives us to self-punishment rather than to Christ; a performance mindset that tries to earn God's favor; a vague spirituality that wants God without the cross. Each is an attempt to reach the dwelling without the altar.

The call is to return to the cross as the only ground of access and the only true source of a cleansed conscience (Hebrews 9:14; 10:22). The student should name where he has been trying to find peace apart from Christ's sacrifice and turn back to it.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- We are tempted to seek nearness to God while bypassing the cross.
- No one reaches God apart from the sacrifice of Christ (Ephesians 2:13).
- Peace with God is received, not earned (Romans 5:1).
- Guilt should drive us to Christ, not to self-punishment.
- The cleansed conscience comes through Christ's blood (Hebrews 9:14).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where do you try to find peace with God apart from the cross?
- What subtle forms of self-justification show up in your life?
- How does returning to the cross cleanse the conscience?

### **Question 7**

#### **Student Question:**

*Read 27:9–19. The courtyard was enclosed by linen hangings with a single gate for entry. What does the one gate, the one appointed entrance into the holy enclosure, teach us about how God provides access to Himself?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Verses 9–19 describe the courtyard, enclosed by hangings of fine twined linen on bronze-based posts, one hundred cubits long and fifty wide, with a single gate of twenty cubits on the east side, screened with blue, purple, and scarlet (27:16).

The enclosure marked off holy ground from the common camp. There was one way in, the single gate. People did not enter wherever they pleased; they came through the appointed entrance. This is the same principle seen throughout: access to God is real but on His terms, through the way He provides.

The single gate teaches the exclusivity and the graciousness of God's provision together. Exclusivity: there is one appointed way, not many. Graciousness: there is a way, a real open gate into the holy enclosure. God does not leave sinners shut out entirely; He provides an entrance.

This connects naturally to Jesus' words, 'I am the door' (John 10:9) and 'I am the way... no one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6). The one gate foreshadows the one Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). Keep the connection grounded in these explicit New Testament statements rather than over-reading the gate's dimensions or colors.

#### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The courtyard had one gate, one appointed way into the holy enclosure.
- Access to God is real but on His terms, through His provided way.
- The one gate shows both exclusivity (one way) and grace (a way is provided).
- Jesus is the one door and the one way to the Father (John 10:9; 14:6).

- There is one Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does the single gate teach about how God provides access?
- How does the one gate hold together exclusivity and grace?
- How does this foreshadow Christ as the one way to the Father?

### **Question 8**

#### **Student Question:**

*Read 27:16. There was one gate into the courtyard, not many. When you think about how a person comes to God, are you content with the one way He has appointed in Christ, or do you quietly wish for other paths? What does honest reflection reveal?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This self-question applies the one gate (27:16) to the student's heart in our pluralistic age. The cultural pressure is strong to imagine many paths to God, to find the claim of one way narrow or offensive. The single gate confronts that.

Jesus claimed to be the only way (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). The honest question is whether the student is content with this, or quietly wishes for other paths, perhaps to make faith easier to defend, or to spare loved ones, or to soften the offense of the cross.

Be pastoral here. The exclusivity of Christ is not narrow-mindedness; it is the costly grace of a God who provided a real and open way at the price of His Son. The one gate is open. The wonder is not that there is only one way, but that there is a way at all.

The application is honest reflection: do I truly rest in and proclaim the one way God has appointed, or do I hedge? Contentment with God's provision is itself a fruit of trust. The student should name where he wavers and ask God to settle his heart on Christ alone.

#### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Our age pressures us to imagine many paths to God.
- Jesus claimed to be the only way (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).
- Christ's exclusivity is costly grace, not narrow-mindedness.
- The wonder is that there is a way at all, opened at the price of God's Son.
- Contentment with God's one way is a fruit of trust.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Are you content with the one way God has appointed in Christ?
- Where are you tempted to wish for other paths to God, and why?

- How does seeing the cross as costly grace settle your heart on Christ alone?

## Question 9

### Student Question:

*Read 27:20–21 with Hebrews 8:5 and 9:23–24. The pure beaten oil kept the lamp burning continually before the LORD, in a sanctuary that Hebrews calls ‘a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.’ How do the tabernacle, the veil, the altar, and the continual light point forward as shadows to Christ and the heavenly realities, and why must we not bind this system on Christians today?*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest block. Verses 20–21 command pure beaten olive oil to keep the lamp burning ‘regularly,’ tended by Aaron and his sons ‘from evening to morning before the LORD,’ a statute forever for Israel. The chapter closes with continual light in God’s dwelling.

The doctrinal weight, however, lies in seeing the whole structure of chapters 26–27 rightly. Hebrews 8:5 says the priests served ‘a copy and shadow of the heavenly things,’ and Hebrews 9:23–24 calls them ‘copies of the heavenly things,’ adding that Christ entered ‘heaven itself’ rather than holy places made with hands. So the tabernacle, the veil, the altar, the courtyard, and the continual light are a God-designed shadow pointing forward to Christ and the heavenly realities.

Draw together the typology the chapters have built, keeping it disciplined. The veil points to the way into God’s presence, opened through Christ’s flesh (Hebrews 10:19–20). The altar points to His once-for-all sacrifice (Hebrews 9:11–14; 10:10–14). The single gate and door point to Him as the only way (John 10:9; 14:6). The continual light points to Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12) and to the church called to shine (Matthew 5:14–16; Philippians 2:15). These are connections the New Testament authorizes or that are natural and accurate. Resist assigning hidden meaning to every loop, clasp, post, and measurement.

Crucially, teach that we do not bind this system on Christians. Colossians 2:16–17 calls such things a shadow whose substance is Christ. Hebrews 8–10 argues that the whole tabernacle order, with its veil, altar, priesthood, and repeated sacrifices, has been fulfilled and set aside in Christ, who by one offering perfected for all time those who are being sanctified (Hebrews 10:14). We do not rebuild the tent, reinstate the altar, or restore a Levitical priesthood. Christ is our High Priest, His sacrifice once for all, and the church is now God’s dwelling (Ephesians 2:19–22).

So the chapter that ends with a continual light points to the unending light of Christ and the abiding presence of God with His people. The shadow has given way to the substance, and we worship not by copying the tent but by coming to the Christ it foreshadowed.

## Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The tabernacle and its parts are 'a copy and shadow of the heavenly things' (Hebrews 8:5).
- Christ entered heaven itself, not holy places made with hands (Hebrews 9:24).
- The veil, altar, gate, and light point forward to Christ (Hebrews 10:19-20; John 8:12).
- Typology must be disciplined: draw what Scripture warrants, not fanciful details.
- The substance belongs to Christ; the shadow is fulfilled and set aside (Colossians 2:17).
- We do not bind the tabernacle system on Christians (Hebrews 8-10).
- The church, not a tent, is now God's dwelling place (Ephesians 2:19-22).

## Discussion Prompts

- How do the veil, altar, gate, and light together point to Christ?
- How do we practice disciplined typology rather than over-reading details?
- Why must we not reinstitute the tabernacle system today?

## Question 10

### Student Question:

*Read 27:21 once more, the lamp tended 'from evening to morning before the LORD.' Looking back over the curtains, the veil, the altar, the gate, and the continual light, name one specific way the Lord Jesus is forming you, through these chapters, to live as one for whom He is the altar, the door, the light, and the open way to God.*

### Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone returns to the continual light of 27:21 and gathers the whole sweep of chapters 26-27. The lamp tended from evening to morning before the LORD pictures the unceasing presence of God with His people and, for us, the abiding light of Christ who never goes dark.

This question asks the student to look back across the curtains, the veil, the altar, the gate, and the continual light, and to name one concrete way Christ is forming him. The aim is for the student to see Christ as the substance of every shadow: the altar (His sacrifice), the door and gate (His exclusive mediation), the way through the veil (His opened access), and the light (His presence and our witness).

Press for specific formation, not vague appreciation. Perhaps the student needs to draw near with new confidence because the veil is torn. Perhaps he needs to stop bypassing the cross and rest in Christ as his altar. Perhaps he needs to settle his heart on Christ as the one way. Perhaps he needs to let his light shine, reflecting the Christ who is the light of the world.

End on worship and trust. These chapters of boards and posts and oil are finally about a God who provided a way to come home, and a Christ who is that way. The fitting response is glad, reverent, exclusive trust in Him, lived out in one concrete change this week.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- The continual light pictures God's abiding presence and Christ who never goes dark.
- Christ is the substance of every shadow: altar, door, light, and open way.
- Formation should be specific, not vague appreciation.
- Possible fruits: bolder access, resting in the cross, trusting the one way, shining as light.
- The fitting response is glad, reverent, exclusive trust in Christ.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Which shadow (altar, door, veil, light) speaks most to you right now, and why?
- How is Christ inviting you to draw near with new confidence?
- Name one specific way the Lord is forming you through these chapters.