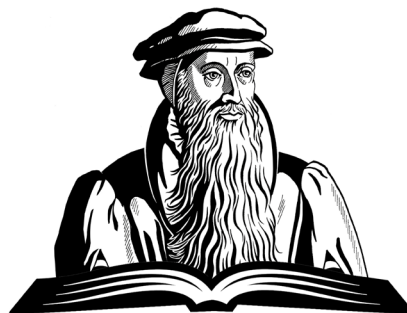


The Tabernacle of Moses

Video Lecture Series
by Rev. A. T. Vergunst

Lecture 5 ~ **THE COURTYARD GATE**



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

John Knox Institute of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

© 2022 by John Knox Institute of Higher Education

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means for profit, except in brief quotations for the purposes of review, comment, or scholarship, without written permission from the publisher, John Knox Institute, P.O. Box 19398, Kalamazoo, MI 49019-19398, USA.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

Visit our website: www.johnknoxinstitute.org

Rev. A. T. Vergunst is minister of the Gospel at the Reformed Congregation of Carterton, New Zealand, a congregation of the Reformed Congregations of New Zealand.

www.rcnz.org



The Tabernacle of Moses

Video Lecture Series

by Rev. A. T. Vergunst

1. Introduction
2. The Temple Theme
3. Setting and Organization
4. The Courtyard Fence
5. The Courtyard Gate
6. The Brazen Altar—part 1
7. The Brazen Altar—part 2
8. The Laver
9. The Tabernacle Building
10. The Lampstand
11. The Table of Shewbread
12. The Altar of Incense
13. The Ark of the Covenant

The Tabernacle of Moses

Video Lecture Series

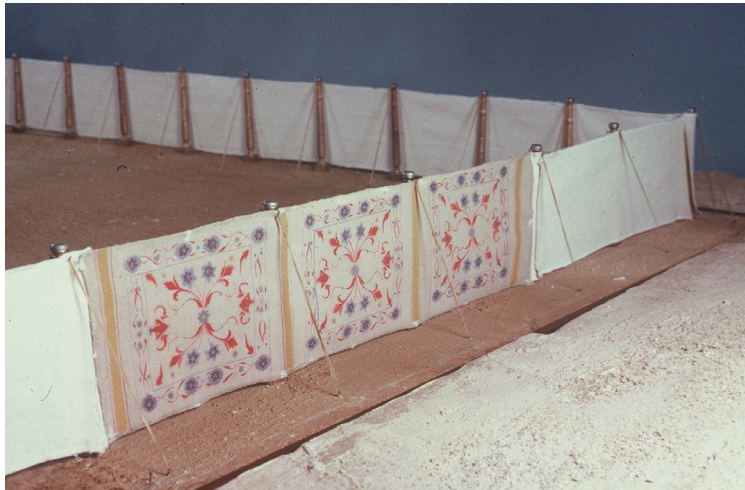
by Rev. A. T. Vergunst

Lecture 5 ~

THE COURTYARD GATE

Welcome to our fifth study of the Tabernacle of ancient Israel. The Scriptures to read along with this lesson you would find in Exodus 27, verses 8 through 19. We will again follow our Jewish boy, Shema. You know, he has a real eye for details. And especially a mind just like every child, he just wants to know why, for everything that he sees.

So in our previous study, we saw that Shema discovered this tall and this sturdy Fence that surrounded the Tabernacle building. And the pure white forced him to squint his eyes because of



the brightness of it, in stark contrast to the tents where he lived. And we saw that that revealed something—God is holy. As the Holy One, he maintained a clear boundary between himself and the people of Israel. That strong white Fence is there for a physical reminder to all of us, of God's holy law. And who of us does not need this daily reminder? Familiarity can breed contempt. We ought never to forget that when we come to God, and speak to God, we speak to a God who is holy

and exalted. We are to serve him with fear, with respect, and we are to rejoice in him with trembling—Psalm 2 exhorts us.

So, as Shema walked past the west side, rounded the corner, walked along the longer south side—he didn't see a door yet. In all of that fence, not a single door. But then as he rounded again the corner, there it is, on the east side, there is a gate. One of the panels is not completely white. It was obvious that is the door into this Tabernacle. And this door really stood out because of its beauty. As he came closer, he thought, Wow! This is an amazing door! These embroidered colors of blue mixed well with the scarlet and the purple, and it all stands out beautifully on this sparkling white background. Indeed, the stark contrast with the white fence on each side make the whole door a focal point when you stood at the east wall. You just couldn't miss it. Your eyes were drawn to it, it's so, so beautiful.

But something else struck him, as you look at the door. As a matter of fact, the longer that he looked, the more that he wondered about the details of the Gate of God's tent. First, he noticed

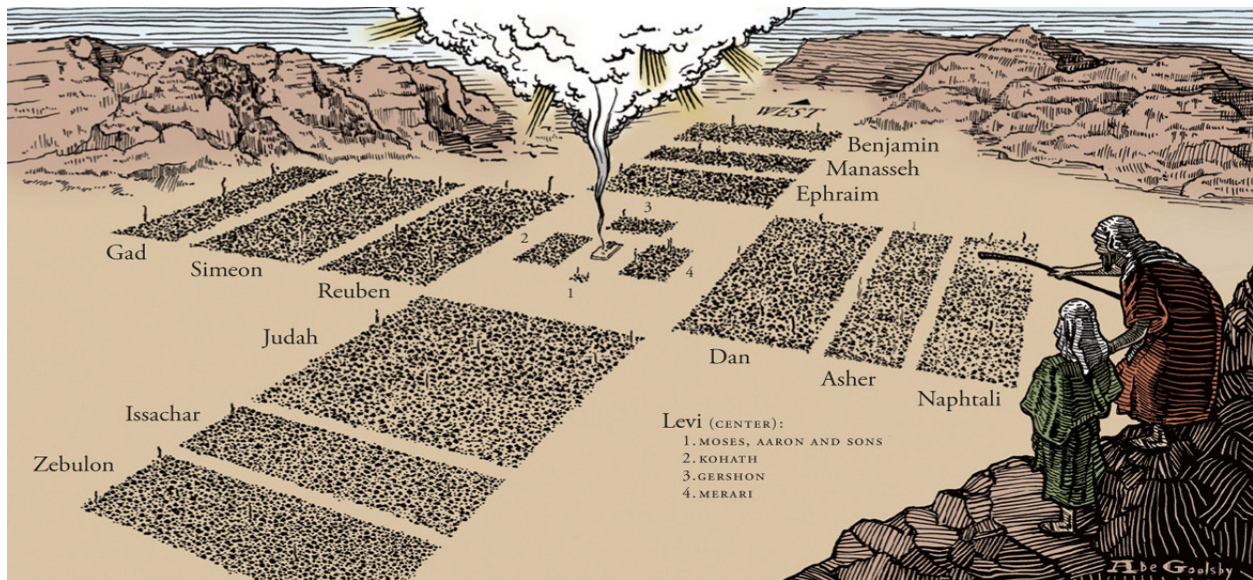
that the entire Tabernacle had but one Gate. There was nowhere a little small side door, or perhaps a back door that may be used for the servants. The only way everyone was to come in and out was through this one Gate. Shema stood still for a moment, and he saw people coming in and out through the Gate. A family was leading a sheep, and soon they disappeared behind the curtain. Well, looking at them, and looking at these people coming in and out, he made a second observation that really struck him—the door was huge! To be honest, it seemed unnecessarily big. Pacing the length, he found out this door was 10 meters wide. Ten meters, that's big enough for a few elephants next to each other walking through. Why? Why such a big gate, he wondered.

And then, he noticed a third thing about this Gate. It's very easy to enter. There was no heavy door to push open, and there was no handle like you couldn't reach if you were young in the door. There's none of that—no bars. And besides, look at this Gate—it's unguarded. When he heard about his father and family living back in Egypt, they talked about Pharaoh's palace, and they talked about the houses of the high government officials, and nobody could just walk in—nobody. Doors were either barred, or they were bolted, but at least they were guarded by soldiers. But in this house of God, no guard stood on duty. "What a relief," he thought, "for I really want to see inside this building. Gladly, it doesn't appear difficult to enter, and to check everything out that is in this building." But in that regards, Shema was wrong in his thinking. He would soon enough learn that though Jehovah God is approachable, he was only approachable in one way. And every detail of that way spelled holiness. Just like Hebrews 12:14 emphasizes that even for us today, dear friends, it says: "Follow...[after]...holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

So, having briefly reviewed the details of the Courtyard Gate through the eyes of Shema, let's now see what God is revealing in this beautiful Gate to us. I see in this Gate, six gospel truths. First, there's a Gate needed to go and enter into the presence of God. Now perhaps that seems so obvious, but nonetheless, let's think this through. Not long ago, all Israel, including Moses, felt it was impossible to even hear God speak from heaven, let alone draw nigh to this holy and majestic God, as he had shown himself on Mount Sinai. And back in Genesis 3, there was also no door back into Paradise. There were angels guarding the way back. So, friends, we need a door or a gate. Isn't that exactly what we begin to sense, when we discover that we have sinned against God, that we are guilty in his sight? Isn't that exactly what the poet felt in Psalm 130, when he said, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities...who shall stand?" (verse 3) But then, that same poet almost shouted out with joy and hope, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (verse 4). It's like him saying, "There is a Gate! There's a door back! There's a way to be back to God, and back into his communion." And what a hope that stirs in a convicted heart, when we hear, in the gospel message of Jesus Christ, there is a way with God.

Now secondly, we notice that the Gate is on the east side of the structure, and that location wasn't random. It actually preaches again a message. Recall from our previous studies that in Genesis 3:24, it is written, "So [God] drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." So, the way was barred. We as mankind are banished from God's presence. But at the same place—east—where we were banished, God provided a door. But now a door, without a Cherubim, and without a sword. It is even a welcoming door, not a threatening door, not a forbidding door, a heavy door. All this is gospel revelation, friends.

And one more thing about the location of this door. Right before this Gate on the east side of the Tabernacle, we find Moses' tent, and we find Aaron's tent, next to each other. This detail is also not random. I said earlier that Moses represents the law of God. Aaron represents the gospel—the



priestly work of Christ. And being side by side pictures a very important truth in God's dealings. It shows the close relationship that he maintains between the function of the law and the gospel, and both of them God uses to lead sinners to himself.

Paul teaches us the law is used for the knowledge of sin, for the conviction of sin is necessary. Why? To make us seek for salvation. But this salvation from our sins and of our judgments is revealed in the gospel, and would come through the priestly work of Jesus Christ. Then beyond the tents of Aaron and Moses, we find the tribe of Judah camped at the East Gate. And also that again is a revelation, a silhouette, for the Messiah was born of Judah, as the patriarch, Jacob, already prophesied in Genesis 49, verses 8 to 10. Here are his words: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: . . . The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh"—the Rescuer—"come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

And thirdly, the number of the gates is a sermon in itself. Shema saw that there was no back door through the white fence into the sanctuary. And there were no additional doors for the servants to use besides this only Gate. It's not hard to see the connection, is it, with this one Gate, and with Jesus' own words in John 10, verse 9, where the Lord expounded this single Gate himself. He says, "I am the door: by me if any many enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." In John 14:6, the Lord reinforces that teaching when he says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Friends, Jesus teaches us that only he, and none else, is the way back to God, and all of the Scripture confirms this. Paul wrote, in 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God, and [there is] one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." As Peter stands before the religious assembly in Jerusalem, he propounds the same thing again, in Acts 4, verse 12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." So God made it clear—very clear in these passages—there are not many ways to God; there is but one way, one Gate. Jesus preached himself, friends, as the exclusive way of salvation. I pray that God will enlighten our minds more and more in this very important fact of the gospel message—Christ alone.

Now one more observation about this one Gate. Everyone has to use this Gate—there's only one. This Gate was not only for common people, or for children and for adults. No, it was for kings, it was for rulers, it was for the priests, it was for Levites, it was for the high priest. They all needed to use this same Gate. Isn't that an important lesson for us all? There is no separate way in

which we can come to God, that is perhaps based on our position, or our ranking, or our task, or our wealth. No! Before God, we are all equal—all need the same Savior. None is righteous in himself. All can only draw near to God through the same person—his Son, Jesus Christ.

So that brings me to the fourth aspect of the Gate—the colors. Shema saw that the Gate stood out as a beautifully, artfully embroidered Gate, with various colors that were put on the white linen. Nothing was left to Moses' imagination, or the artistic skill of Bezaleel and Aholiab, and the team of workers. So even the colors were according to God's pattern shown, and what the pattern was we don't know. Each color, however, is symbolic about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's begin with that white linen, the background cloth. White—the color of holiness, purity, cleanliness. It sets out before us the perfect beauty of Jesus Christ. It's his holiness, his righteousness. It pictures that truth that Mary heard from the angel in Luke 1, verse 35, when he spoke about

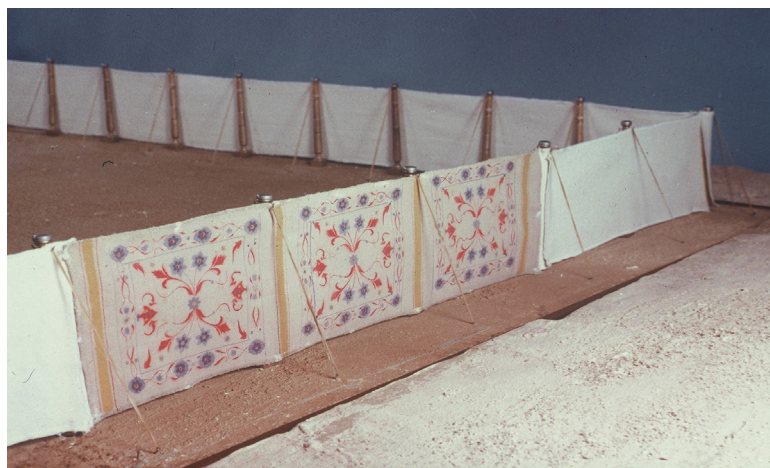
the fruit of her womb as: "Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Holy is God.

Now the blue color, as we all know, points to heaven. That's where he came from. That is his place of origin. How often did Jesus reaffirm and reveal that he was the Son of God? And friends, no doctrine for our salvation is more important than Jesus' divinity. It's because of his divinity, he could carry out the task as

Mediator for sinners. Who else could have borne the awful load of God's wrath? His divinity is not only important to give his work an infinite value, his work also had to be sufficient to save the innumerable multitude of sinners that would come through this Gate to God.

The next color—purple. Purple is the color that belongs to royalty. And there are many Scriptures that confirm that Jesus Christ has royal glory. He is the King—the King of the earth. Psalm 2, verse 6 declares, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." But in Psalm 47, it is rather that this royal glory of the descended Savior is over all the earth: "God is the King of all the earth"—and therefore—"sing ye praises with understanding." For "God reigneth over the heathen: [He] sitteth upon the throne of his holiness" (verses 7–8). So as we examine more details later on about the various articles of the Tabernacle, you will see this truth confirmed again and again.

The fourth basic color was scarlet. Scarlet resembles the color of blood. It therefore, of course, points to Christ's priestly work, as the sacrifice for sin, he shed his own blood for the atonement. And what's really



interesting to know is how this scarlet color was produced. To obtain the scarlet dye, small worms had to be crushed to obtain the dye that was used to color the cloth. Now that graphically portrays the Lord Jesus Christ in his suffering on the cross. In Psalm 22, we hear him cry out as he suffers on the cross, “But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” So as he endured this judgment of God, and he was crushed, but in enduring this, he removed the obstacle of sin and guilt as the great Sin-bearer. It makes reconciliation possible on the ground of justice satisfied.

Now you see what glories are revealed, even in this one Gate that we are considering in this lesson. And all these colors, as it were, they flow together in the praises of the bride about the bridegroom, in the Song of Solomon, chapter 5, verse 10. She says this: “My beloved is white”—think about the linen fabric—“and ruddy”—which is a different word for scarlet—“[he is] the chiefest among ten thousand”—the royal purple—“[and] he is altogether lovely”—think about the heavenly blue. Now this is the inviting curtain, sitting there at the Gate of the Tabernacle. Not a heavy door, no thick locks, no heavy bars.

And friends, that is the picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is so amiable. He is described by God himself, in Isaiah 42, verse 3, when God says, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.” He is tender. In Matthew 11, the Lord Jesus describes himself as “meek and lowly in heart.” He’s not an imposing figure, with a grim look on his face, and a harsh tone in his voice. No, children didn’t fear him. The lepers were drawn to him. Sinners were drawn to him. Violated, disgraced, and deeply ashamed women were never shamed by him, but were received with kindness, and understanding, and dignity. He was approachable by the fathers, and he labored to make everyone feel welcome. He didn’t stand with his finger in judgment, but with his arms in invitation.

Is that glory of Jesus Christ drawing you to him? So let’s move to the fifth aspect of the Tabernacle Gate. Shema noticed that the Gate was a mere curtain. It was not difficult to enter. Even if you were a child, you could push that curtain to the side. You did not need to show a ticket, or a personal invitation letter, or money. This whole Gate preached the “Welcome to Jesus Christ,” for poor and needy. This is preaching the simplicity of salvation. This is preaching Jesus so richly. “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). Friends, salvation does not require your heavy labor, in order to satisfy the penalty of God’s broken law. You and I do not need, and we actually cannot gain access to God through our own doing. No, God opened the access to himself in the doing and in the dying of Jesus Christ. And all of you are invited to make use of this only and suitable Gate to God. You don’t need to pacify him with your doing—this is impossible. How can we satisfy, as a human, his divine-sized demand? No, friends, God’s method of salvation is through Jesus Christ giving a divine-sized salvation. It is through Jesus you and I may be received of God in mercy. Maybe hearing that, and thinking, you’re thinking or you’re saying, “Me? Am I welcome? Is the door open for me?” Let me bring you back to my last observation about this door. Remember what Shema was amazed about? Shema saw this door was unusually big, and when he paced it, he found it was 10 meters wide.

Why so wide? Nobody is that big. What’s God’s message? Encouragement. This Gate is big enough to allow the biggest sinner to enter into God’s presence. It’s as it were that the wide Gate is a forerunner of 1 Timothy 1:15—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” Often Satan successfully wedges a big lie in our heart, and that lie is, “The more you have sinned, the less hope there is for you.” Now if you’re tempted with that thought, let me direct you to that Gate again. I like the pic-

ture that Jesus makes in the parable of Luke, chapter 15. That parable is not about a younger and older son who both acted very wickedly—it's not about that. It's about that seeking, that waiting, that welcoming father, who proclaims to us himself in his wide Gate, when he says, "Come, everyone of you that's thirsty. Come, you that have wandered off. Come. No money? Come. Come. Don't need money. Come buy the best of me without money, without price. I have paid the price."

So as we conclude, be reminded that admiring, studying all the details of this Gate doesn't bring us any closer to him. You need to enter this Gate if you want to be reconciled with God. To enter that Gate, that is what believing or trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ is. When that sinner came to God, in the parable of Luke 18, he entered through the Gate, when he cried out in conviction, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (verse 13). Peter entered this Gate, when he confessed Jesus, "Lord, to whom [else] shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68–69). If we believe and we are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

So as Shema looked again at the Gate, he wondered what it was like inside the Tabernacle Court and what exactly was happening there. Now that's where we will go in our next lesson on the Tabernacle. Thank you.