

The Tabernacle¹

To help us with our study of the tabernacle, it is imperative, that we grasp something of the use of types in the Bible. It is also necessary to gain some understanding to the significance of numbers in scripture. In this lesson we will briefly try to cover these two vast areas of study, to help us appreciate the next few lessons on the tabernacle.

What Is A Type?

- **PSA 111:2** The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

The Lord's works are definitely awesome and one of the greatest pleasures anyone can experience is examining them closely. Man's work, the more we examine it, the more quickly we become bored of it. In time it can be figured out. God's work, the more we examine and look into it, will only attract us all the more. Anything in God's creation- the earth, air, the stars, the more we study it, the more we must admit that we know next to nothing.

The tiniest little things reveal God's handiwork. A small insect or a little snowflake reveal amazing artistry. And God's Word, to the very letter, is the handiwork of God. Totally inexhaustible. To look on the surface is one thing, to look into it is another. We can spend a lifetime studying it and just begin to learn of its riches and creativity. Even the most neglected parts reveal the same perfectness. The beauty of the whole Bible and the one great thought revealed through and through is the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the key to Scripture. He is the one great idea of the Bible. Know Christ, understand God's thoughts about Him, and you'll understand the Bible.

- **ROM 15:4** For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.
- **2TI 3:16-17** All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

The types are, in fact, a set of pictures, directly from the hand of God, by which He would teach His children incomprehensible things. If we know the reality, we can comprehend the representation, and the greater the acquaintance with the reality, the greater will be the ability to understand the picture. I heard it said, "We may explain a little about how an engine works, but the engineer, to whom every nut and bolt are familiar could point out exactly every detail." As we study the tabernacle we will be examining the types and shadows and their significance in relation to Christ and His work. Before we move on lets look at some theology.

The Tabernacle was a representation and a copy of the true Tabernacle in heaven and a type of Christ. This brings us to a very important and often misunderstood method of biblical interpretation known as 'typology'. The term is derived from the Greek word 'typos' meaning 'pattern' or 'figure'. Paul said:

- **ROM 5:14** Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Notice it says that Adam was a "figure" of Him who was to come. In the Greek, it is the word "typos", which means: a die, stamp, resemblance, model or type. A 'type' can be defined as: 'an event, person or object which by its very nature and significance prefigures or foreshadows some later event, person or object'.

Types always originate in the real and historical and they are prophetic in nature, pointing forward to some person or event that is to come. They are all directed towards "Mashiach" (Heb. for Messiah). The Jews knew that their Messiah was the "Haba" or "Coming One" and all their prophets spoke of Him. But now looking in hindsight we can see more clearly how each of the figurative types and shadows pointed to the Messiah.

To help us understand what a type is think of the lamb which the Israelite offered as a sacrifice for the sin he had committed:

- **LEV 4:32** And if he bring a lamb for a sin offering, he shall bring it a female without blemish.

Hundreds of years later that lamb could be recognized as being a 'type' of Jesus Christ for it pointed forward to the One whom John the Baptist distinctly identified as, 'the Lamb of God' :

- **JOH 1:29** The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

The significance of any type in the Old Testament might not be apparent until the 'antitype' or fulfillment had come. It is important to note that everything in the Old Testament is a type of which something in the New Testament is the antitype. An example of this is Jonah's experience, which Christ used as a 'type' of his own resurrection.

- **MATT 12:40** For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

In the case of the Tabernacle and its pattern of approach to God we are on firm ground and in no way reading into the text in regarding it as a type of what is to come. The New Testament book of Hebrews makes this very clear while dealing with the subject of sacrifice:

- **HEB 9:23-24** It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

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In this passage the Tabernacle is referred to as 'a copy' of that which came through Messiah. Therefore we have the Tabernacle referred to as 'a copy' (or type) of Jesus Christ, the true sacrifice. Again in Hebrews we are told about the service of the priests on earth:

- **HEB 8:4-6** For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

They serve at a sanctuary that is a example and shadow of what is in heaven. Note the expression, 'a example and a shadow.' These words speak about a type of the final reality. In Hebrews 9:9 the writer discusses the actions of the High Priest on the day of atonement in the tabernacle that had to be repeated year after year:

- **HEB 9:9** Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

So we have biblical authority for a typological interpretation of this subject which speaks of numerous 'examples, shadows and figures' of what is to come. It is also interesting to note that when John speaks of Christ in the introduction to his gospel he says:

- **JOH 1:14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

He uses a Greek verb corresponding to the noun 'tabernacle' so that his statement literally declares 'The Word became flesh and tabernacled (or pitched his tent) among us'.

Numbers And Scripture

In the Jewish mind the subject of numbers is very significant. Throughout the Scriptures there are obvious references to specific numbers that were undeniably placed there by the Holy Spirit because of some special significance. Patrick Fairbairn said: "If God has given all things their significance, and defined their bounds according to time, space, power, and number, and if He has appointed certain measurements to regulate things and times, Biblical numbers must be symbolical, and be worthy of our study; and if a fit subject for study, the laws by which this symbolism of numbers is controlled, require to be ascertained."

The precise symbolic intent of any of these numbers in a specific passage in the Bible can never be proved to the satisfaction of all interpreters, but some generalizations hold true in many cases.

The Number 3

The number 3 seems to represent triads of completeness in the Bible. Sometimes of good and sometimes of evil. For example:

- The Triune God- Father, son, and Holy Spirit.
- The trinity of evil- The dragon, antichrist, and false prophet.
- The trinity of blessing- grace, mercy, and peace.
- The trinity of wickedness- The world, the flesh, & the devil.
- Heaven, earth, and the underworld.
- Beginning, middle, and end.
- Notice in Thessalonians all the three-fold statements.
- The trinity of the Scriptures- The law, prophets, and writings.
- Jesus rose on the third day.
- Notice what Paul mentions about Salvation:

- **2Cor 1:10** Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;
Man is body, soul and spirit.
Time is past, present, and future.
Space is 3-dimensional: length, width, and height.
The universe is space, time, and matter.

Similarly in the Bible, many rituals are carried out in threes-daily prayers and yearly fasts. Three is also associated with sacrifices-animals often had to be three years old (Genesis 15:9); fruit was not to be harvested until three years after the tree was planted (Leviticus 19:23).

The Number 4

- The Number 4 is thought to represent Gods absolute control over the world.
- 4 Directions on the earth (north, south, east, and west).
- 4 Seasons (summer, autumn, winter, and spring).
- 4 Things that make up the universe (time, energy, space, and matter).
- 4 Major provisions for man (earth, air, fire, and water).
- 4 Divisions of the day (morning, noon, evening, and midnight).
- 4 Winds (Matt 24:31)

The Bible mentions the number 4 many times: (Heres just a few)

- **JOH 11:17** Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.
- **JOHN 19:23** Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.
- **REV 7:1** And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.
- **REV 9:13** And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,
- **REV 21:16** And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.
 - * Notice all the times 4 is used in Proverbs 30
 - * The fourth man in the fiery furnace
 - * The 4 generals who took over Alexanders kingdom (broken by God)
 - * The 4 world empires (beasts) of Daniel
 - * The 4 horns (gentile powers) of Zechariah

Four seems to represent order, as in the four phases of the moon, the four cardinal points of the earth, the four rivers of Paradise (Genesis 2:10), the four winds of heaven Jeremiah 49:36), the four guardians of the throne of God, and so forth. But the number four can also represent God bringing disorder for example, the Four Horsemen who bring calamity on the earth (Revelation 6:1-8) and the four acts of Judgment (sword, famine, evil beasts, and pestilence) with which God condemns the idolators of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 14:21).

The Number 5

Because man has 5 fingers, 5 toes, and 5 senses the number 5 is significant and thought to be the number of human weakness. He is considered weak and dependant. The number 5 may speak of man's weakness and inability or God's strength and ability. Some interesting examples:

- * The 5 loaves were not enough to feed the great multitude.
- * The 5 brothers in Lk 16 could not keep themselves out of hades.
- * The 5 husbands could not satisfy the woman at the well.

The Number 6

The number 6 is thought to represent man's weakness and inability to achieve perfection and sinlessness. Because of sin man must work for 6 days to remember his sin. 6 can also be seen as the number of evil and its full development. Rebellion will run its full course with the man of sin and the number of his name, 666.

The Number 7

The number 7 perhaps speaks of perfection or completeness. God's complete provision in His dealings with men. Some examples:

- 7 days make a complete week
- 7 colors make a perfect spectrum
- 7 great land masses form a complete earth
- 7 notes make a perfect scale
- 7 great bodies of water form a complete ocean

There were the 7 days of creation as well as many other examples throughout the Scriptures:

- **ZECH 3:9** For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

- **REV 1:4** John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

To the Jew every 7th day was a Sabbath.

Every 7th year was a Sabbatical year.

After the 7th Sabbatical year was the year of Jubilee.

Every 7th month was holy and had 3 feasts.

There were 7 weeks between Passover and Pentecost.

The Passover feast lasted 7 days.

The feast of Tabernacles lasted 7 days.

At Passover 14 lambs (7 twice) were offered daily.

At Tabernacles 14 lambs (7 twice) and 70 bullocks were offered.

At Pentecost 7 lambs were offered.

The time of mourning the dead was fixed to 7 days.

and so on...

Seven continues to have symbolic prominence in the New Testament, with Jesus telling Peter that it is not enough that he forgive the brother who had sinned against him seven times, but "seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22). Seven is also the number of Greek-speaking Christians appointed by the Twelve Apostles in Acts 6:3.

The New Testament concludes in a "great surge of sevens, with heptads, explicit and implicit, tumbling forth from many verses."

In the Book of Revelation there were:

The 7 letters to the 7 Churches.

The 7 Seal Judgements

The 7 Trumpet Judgements

The 7 Bowl Judgements

The 7 Golden Lampstands

The 7 Stars

The 7 Angels

The 7 Spirits of God

The Lamb with 7 Horns and 7 Eyes.

The 7 Lamps of Fire

The 7 Thunders

The Fiery Red Dragon with 7 heads and 7 Crowns.

The Leopard-Like Beast with 7 heads.

The Scarlet-Colored Beast with 7 heads.

The 7 Mountains

The 7 Kings

Jewish Tradition

According to Jewish tradition the creation of the first man was completed in 7 hours:

"How was Adam created? In the first hour his dust was collected; in the second his form was created; in the third he became a shapeless mass; in the fourth his members were joined; in the fifth his apertures were opened; in the sixth he received his soul; in the seventh he stood up on his feet . . ." [The Talmud]

The Number 8

The Number 8 is thought to represent the number of new beginnings. A male child was circumcised on the 8th day. The Sabbath lasted 7 days and the 8th day was the Lord's day, the new day. The number 8 speaks of Jesus and the New Covenant. The church met on the 8th day or the first day, the new day.

The Number 10

The number 10 is a very significant number in the Bible. In examining the uses of the number 10 in Scripture it seems to represent human failure and God's provision. For example:

- The 10 spies failed to see God's power and provision, so they brought back an evil report:

- **NUM 13:32** And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.

- The 10 tribes failed to walk with God and to do His will. Therefore, they established a separate kingdom given to idolatry:

- **IKI 11:31** And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:

- **II IKI 17:22-23** For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

- The magicians and astrologers were 10 times as weak and insufficient as Daniel:

- **DAN 1:20** And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

- The 10 lepers were unable to cure themselves, they needed Jesus:

- **LUK 17:12** And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

The Number 12

The number 12 has been thought to represent the number of God's government. The ancient people recognized 12 lunar cycles corresponding loosely to 12 months in the year, and they divided the day and the night into 12-hour periods.

The Bible tells that Jacob-Israel had 12 sons (Genesis 35:22-27) and that each of these became the founder of one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the people of God (Genesis 49:28). Jesus chose Twelve Apostles (Matthew 10:2-4) for the beginnings of the Church. There were 24 classes of priests and Levites (1 Chronicles 24:4) and 48 Levitical cities (Numbers 35:7).

And again in the Book of Revelation, the number 12 becomes very important when symbolizing the salvation of God's people. There are 24 elders around the throne of God and 144,000 of the saved (Revelation 4:4; 7:4). The perfection of the new Jerusalem is seen in its 12 gates, each "a single pearl," and 12 foundations, each adorned with jewels. Its circumference is 12,000 furlongs, and its walls are 144 cubits high (Revelation 21:10-21; Ezekiel 48:30-35).

The Number 40

The number 40 seems to be a round number in Scripture denoting a generation. Some of the judges judged for 40 years (Othniel, Deborah, Barak, and Gideon). Saul, David, and Solomon each reigned as king for 40 years.

The Scriptures speak of the number 40 often:

The flood rains lasted 40 days and 40 nights

Moses was in the Egypt 40 years, Midian 40 years, and on the mountain 40 days.

Israel wandered in the wilderness 40 years.

The spies were in Canaan for 40 days.

Elijah fasted 40 days.

40 days was given to Nineveh.

Jesus fasted 40 days

Jesus was with His disciples for 40 days after His resurrection (Acts 1:3).

The Tabernacle

In this lesson, we will look at: The position of the tabernacle, where the materials for it came from, and the outer court.

Where God chose to place the tabernacle in relationship to the 12 tribes of Israel when they were encamped is highly significant.

Position of the Tabernacle

It was placed in the center with three tribes camping on each side. The tribe of Levi, from which the priests and tabernacle servants came, camped on the east side near the entrance. The fact that the tabernacle was placed squarely in the center of the tribes reveals that God came to dwell not only among the people but also in the midst of them. With the tabernacle in the center of the camp, there was easy access to it as well as complete protection for all the tribes. The cloud over the tabernacle could spread out over the entire camp so the people would have shade by day and light by night.

God always provides access to Himself as well as protection for His own. Deuteronomy 23:14 says "For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."

The Psalms also emphasize that God dwells in the midst of His people. Psalm 46:5 says, "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early."

The New Testament also emphasizes this truth. Referring to the Lord Jesus Christ, Revelation 1:13 says, "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle."

Revelation 2:1 also speaks of God in the midst of His people: "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;"

These verses reveal that Jesus Christ dwells in the midst of His Church; He is accessible to all who know Him as Saviour.

After the Israelites had completed their wandering in the wilderness, they crossed the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua. Notice especially the function of the ark as the people were crossing. "And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." Josh. 3:17

When the priests had, by faith, stepped into the water, the river parted and allowed the people to pass over on dry ground. The priests stood in the riverbed of the Jordan until the people had crossed over. This reveals the protection God gave His people through the ark of the covenant, which was placed in the Holy of Holies when the tabernacle was built.

Christ is not only in the midst of His Church today, He also indwells every believer so that each Christian can say, "Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). And although we are engaged in spiritual warfare with Satan and his emissaries, we can claim the victory because of what I John 4:4 says: "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

The Lord Jesus Christ protects His own in every way.

What a wonderful God we have! He not only delivers us from condemnation when we believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour, but He also provides all we need for the daily, spiritual warfare. No wonder the Apostle Paul said, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Rom 8:31-34

Collecting the Materials

A significant amount of the materials were collected by the Israelites when they were in Egypt. Although the Israelites did not know it at the time, they would later need gold, silver and many other items for the tabernacle. But

where would they collect these materials in the wilderness? This was taken care of by God, who made sure they had the materials they needed for constructing the tabernacle.

Before the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, God gave instructions concerning their departure. God told Moses, "And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians." Exod 3:21-22

The Israelites had been serving as slaves to the Egyptians but had not been receiving their pay. What God instructed them to do was essentially to ask for their back wages.

On the night when God passed over the land and killed the firstborn of every family which had not applied blood to the door, the Israelites quickly fled the land. But they remembered to ask for these items as the Lord said they should "And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians." Exod 12:35-36

So Israel had most of the materials they needed for the tabernacle when God gave instructions to Moses on Mount Sinai concerning its construction. Even though they had these materials, the Israelites were not obligated to give them for the tabernacle, as indicated by the fact that God asked them for a voluntary offering. God told Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering." (25:2). God had made the Egyptians willing to give the goods to the Israelites, then God asked the Israelites to be willing to give them to Him. It was not that the Israelites were buying God's favor, for He had already displayed His manifold grace to them. Rather, they were to give willingly because of all that God had done for them.

Moses told the Israelites, This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, "And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass," (35:4,5). Verse 29 says, "The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses."

Each morning, Moses brought the voluntary offerings of the people to the workers (see 36:3). Finally, they told Moses, "And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make." (v. 5). Think of it! The people were so responsive to God that they gave much more than was needed.

Since the giving did not stop "And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much." (vv. 6,7).

Such unusual giving! How wonderful it would be to hear of such giving today. There are instances when more is given for a particular aspect of the Lord's work than is needed, but this is rare. God does not want us to give because we think we must give. We do not give of our substance to pay God back. We are to give out of love so that His work can be furthered (see II Cor. 5:14).

Lessons in Giving

The New Testament specifically instructs concerning giving. It points out that Jesus Christ gave His all: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. (II Cor. 8:9). Because we realize all that Christ did for us, we should gladly give out of love for Him.

Concerning giving, believers are told, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:" (9:6-8).

The Bible speaks of the responsibility of the one who has received spiritual help to give to the one who has helped him. Galatians 6:6 reveals this responsibility: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."

This is a God-given responsibility, and the passage goes on to say, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (7,8)

It is common for believers to be exceedingly concerned about daily provisions, but Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

A wonderful lesson in giving is also recorded in Proverbs 11:24,25: "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

An understanding of the scriptural teaching about giving eliminates many of today's methods of raising money. People are to voluntarily give as God lays a burden on their hearts. Above all, they need to first give their lives to the Lord in an unrestricted way.

The Scriptures state a principle that is basic to all giving, and unless it is heeded, the giving will not please God. Paul stated this principle when he urged the Corinthians to receive an offering for the poor people in Jerusalem. Paul told the Corinthians that the churches in Macedonia had given abundantly, even out of their deep poverty (II Cor. 8:1-5). Then Paul stated this basic principle for giving: "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." (v. 5). No giving is pleasing to the Lord until the persons involved have first given themselves.

The importance of a believer's giving himself to the Lord is seen in Romans 12:1: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Notice the word "therefore" in Romans 12:1. It refers to what has preceded. The three preceding chapters tell of God's relationship with Israel and the wonderful things He has planned for the nation. At the end of chapter 11, Paul broke into a doxology that every believer can identify with: "How fathomless the depths of God's resources, wisdom, and knowledge! How unsearchable His decisions, and how mysterious His methods! For who has ever understood the thoughts of the Lord, or has ever been His adviser? Or who has ever advanced God anything to have Him pay him back? For from Him everything comes, through Him everything lives, and for Him everything exists. Glory to Him forever! Amen" (vv. 33-36, Williams).

No wonder Paul followed these statements with: "I beseech you therefore, brethren" (12:1). Because we have such a great God, the least we can do is present our bodies-which involves all we are-to Him.

We who have trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour are to put ourselves at His disposal because we belong entirely to Him. This truth is emphasized in I Corinthians 6:19,20: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

God has bought us that He might indwell us, just as He indwelt the Old Testament tabernacle. The only way others have of seeing God today is to see Him revealed in believers. But what do they really see in us? Do they see Christ in us? Or do they see only a cantankerous Christian? Having presented our bodies to Him, we are to let Him reflect His own life through us. As Colossians 1: 27 says, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:"

The Gate And Outer Court

What is beyond that door? As a boy, I once almost joined a boys club. At the door to the initiating room, I heard screams and laughter beyond. I became frightened and retreated. Afterward I often wondered what I had missed, but I could never make up my mind to go through that door and pay the price to find out.

The Way of Introduction – The gate of the Outer court. Jesus said "Enter ye at the strait gate....because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life" (Matt 7:13-14)

Israelites approaching the tabernacle first saw the seven and-a-half-foot fence around it. They knew the tabernacle was the place to make things right with God, to worship Him, and to personally offer a sacrifice and have their sins forgiven; but to do so, they had to enter the door.

The tabernacle was enclosed by a white linen fence, five cubits, or seven and one half feet, high. Details for making and hanging the fence are given in Exodus 27:9-19. The material was to be fine twined white linen. Instructions were given that the south and north sides were to be 150 feet long. The curtains were to be hung from silver rods attached by silver hooks to twenty pillars or posts set in brass sockets on the ground. The east and west curtains were to be seventy five feet long and to be hung from ten pillars. Even the details for the east gate or door were given. On each side of the gate, fifteen-cubit curtains were to be hung from three pillars. The twenty-cubit-long gate was to be suspended from four pillars.

The "fine twined linen" tabernacle fence typified or pictured holiness or righteousness. God is surrounded by holiness; as we approach Him we are confronted with His holiness and made aware of our lack of holiness. When Isaiah saw ... the Lord... high and lifted up" in all His holiness (Is 6:1), he realized his own uncleanness and that of the people. He cried, "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (v.5). Any man approaching God must see the Lord's holiness and his own unworthiness. Only then will he recognize the need to enter the one door into God's presence.

Description of the Door

What a magnificent gate awaited the Israelite's entrance! "And for the gate of the court shall be an hanging of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework: and their pillars shall be four, and their sockets four" (Ex 27:16). This beautiful gate into the tabernacle is of course a shadow of Christ, for He said of Himself, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (Jn 10:9).

Colors in the Bible are always significant; even today they are quite symbolic and meaningful. This tabernacle door or gate was first of all described as blue, which speaks of Christ's heavenly character. Whatever one may think of Him,

he must recognize that He is "God ... manifest in the flesh" (I Ti 3:16). It is not enough to say Jesus Christ was godly, or more godly than anyone else; He was very God of very God, as John 1:1, 3 makes clear: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Furthermore, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (v. 14). In becoming flesh, Christ became a man; but He was a perfect man, without sin. This necessitated the supernatural conception and virgin birth. Unlike any other man, Jesus had no sin nature or taint of sin. Truly God and truly man, He is the only "mediator between God and men" (I Ti 2:5), thus becoming the door, the way to God. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6).

Purple was the second color used in making the door of the tabernacle. Purple still speaks of royalty. The Lord Jesus is royalty. He is first of all King of the Jews and the rightful Heir to the throne of David. His lineage as traced in the Gospel of Matthew goes back to David himself. He was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Ro 1:3). But the Jews declared, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Lk 19:14). They asked for the judgment they got: "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Mt 27:25). Oh, the terrible price they have paid for their rejection and foolish request! We can easily look back and ask, "How could they refuse such a King, who could have done so much for them?" But He is also King of kings and Lord of lords today! He wants to be Lord of the lives of all believers; it is just as foolish to refuse to let Him be King of our lives today.

The scarlet color represents the sacrificial suffering of the Saviour and the shedding of His blood for our sins. From the first shedding of an animal's blood in the Garden of Eden for Adam's and Eve's transgression, the offering of Abel, the altar of Noah, the blood on the doorposts in Egypt, the scarlet rope of Rahab, the thousands of sacrifices of Solomon's Temple, down to the last drop of the blood of Christ, God wants us to know, "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev 17:11). It is not enough to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ as the great Teacher, though He was that. If He had not suffered for our sins, He would not be the Saviour. We needed a Saviour who was willing to take our place in punishment, not just a good example to follow. People had the Law and knew the right way to live, but they failed to live that way. God wants us to know that the door, the way into heaven, is by way of the One who shed His blood to pay our sin debt.

In the fourth color, the white of the fine twined linen, we see Christ's righteousness. The white linen fence kept man out, for it was a reminder that, compared to God's righteousness, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Is 64:6), and that man is bankrupt. Now Christ has come with perfect righteousness which He offers freely to all who will receive Him. God tells us that His righteousness is "unto all and upon all them that believe" (Ro 3:22) and do not need to try to establish our own worth. If I deposited a million dollars in the bank to your account, you would be a millionaire with all the rights and privileges of a millionaire. God deposits the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ to our account with all His rights and privileges when we believe on Christ as our Saviour. This is why He is the door, the way to God! What a glorious Saviour! He not only takes away our sins by paying the penalty and punishment, but He provides us with His own goodness to get us into heaven. He suffered on the cross as though He actually had committed our sins Himself. Then He gives us His righteousness and we have the right to go to heaven, as though we actually had the righteousness ourselves. No wonder God calls this "so great salvation" (Heb 2:3).

Dimensions of the Door

A look at the dimensions of the door reveals much. It was twenty cubits, or about thirty feet wide (Ex 27:16). The width of the door would surely give the assurance that it was wide enough to accommodate all who wanted to enter. Today we can witness with confidence: "And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17). God is sovereign and has rightfully "chosen" some "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4), but a right understanding of election will cause us to testify with the same fervor and passion as Paul and Peter, who wrote about election. Unfortunately some teach and preach the sovereignty so strongly that they seem to give the impression that they want to stop people from witnessing. Any teaching on God's sovereignty and election that takes away our love for the lost and hinders our everyday witnessing to them is certainly not in line with the teaching and practice of the apostles in the book of Acts, and should be reexamined. The gate is wide! Our invitations should be wide enough to allow any and all sinners to enter. "The Lord is not ... willing that any should perish" (2 Pe 3:9). Stop speculating about the elect, and start preaching and witnessing "to every creature" (Mk 16:15), as the Scriptures command.

Now, there is an interesting comparison to be made between this gate and the door into the tabernacle building or tent in Exodus 26:36. Both were made of the same materials and coloring, for both represent Christ. One was twenty by five cubits, while the other was ten by ten cubits, which amounts to the same number of square feet. The outer door was wide and all were invited in, but the door into the tent, the place for worship and service, was narrow. Only the priests were allowed to enter. One door affords entrance into "life," and the other offers entrance into "life . . . more abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Too many have entered only the first door and offered the sacrifice for sins for salvation. They need to enter also into a life of offering the sacrifice of self for service.

Demands of the Door

Hear the demands of the door. It said, "This is the way. Enter here!" No one dared climb over or crawl under. Jesus said that anyone who tries to enter heaven any other way than by the door is a "thief and a robber" (Jn 10:1).

God warns us that "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pr 14:12). All ways other than the Lord Jesus lead to eternal death and separation from God. Some say the way to God is to live a good life, do the best you can, join a church, and be baptized or confirmed, but all these ways lead to death. A very foolish conclusion is that "we are all heading to the same place, we are just taking different roads." Why won't we believe God's Word that there is but one way? Jesus declared plainly, "I am the way [not one of many ways, but the only way to God].... no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6).

This gate must have been easily distinguished from the fence. It was easy to find, so anyone looking could have easily spotted it. No one will ever be able to say, "I wanted to be saved but God would not let me." The way is open to anyone who wants to enter. If he will come through the door, God says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (Jn 7:17).

Many ask, "What about those who haven't heard the Gospel?" That's easy, "because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Ro 1:19-20). Notice the plain, strong language of Scripture. God has made manifest unto them, has shown unto them; the things of God are clearly seen, they are understood. But the unbelievers have been foolish and changed the glory of God, which was manifest unto them, and made an image instead. If a child hasn't learned and accepted that two plus two equals four, you would never try to discuss algebra with him. Similarly, those who have rejected the ABC's of God will not hear the rest of the story! But if anyone accepts the ray of light God gives him, God says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (Jn 7:17).

A beautiful example of this is in Acts 8:26-38. The Ethiopian from Africa had not yet heard the Gospel, but he did respond to the light which he had. Because he had responded and was ready for more light, God miraculously took Philip out of a revival meeting and sent him to the Ethiopian. When he heard the Gospel, he received it and was saved. God will see to it that missionaries get to anyone who wants the truth. Missionaries from all over the world can tell of just such incidents, that when they went into a new territory, perhaps only one person at first, but someone, had responded to the light they already had and immediately responded to the Gospel when it came. We can be sure that God is good and just; no one will ever go to hell who should not be there!

It took just one step to be inside that gate to the tabernacle. Today it takes but a single step of faith to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, but you must take that step yourself. No one can force it on you. If you want to get to heaven, just enter the door through Christ; He will take you all the way to heaven.

The Tabernacle

Lesson 6: The Building

Whereas the outer court measured 150 feet in length and 75 feet in width, the tabernacle building itself measured only 45 feet in length, 15 feet in width and 15 feet in height.

The Two Rooms

The first room or compartment of the tabernacle was called the Holy Place. This room was 30 feet by 15 feet by 15 feet. It was the place of spiritual fellowship with God, and it contained three pieces of furniture. The golden candlestick symbolized Christ as the Light; the table of showbread symbolized Christ as the Bread of Life; and the altar of incense symbolized Christ as our intercessor and indicated our need to intercede for others.

The second room in the tabernacle building was known as the Holy of Holies. This room was a cube, 15 feet by 15 feet by 15 feet. It was the place of special worship, and in it was the Ark of the Covenant. On top of the ark was the mercy seat.

The Ark of the Covenant symbolized the righteous standards of God because it contained the tables of Law that God had given Moses. The standards were unattainable by man but were fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The mercy seat on top of the ark symbolized the mercy God extends toward man on the basis of the shed blood of a substitute. Through the sacrifice of Christ, He made it possible for everyone to enter the very presence of God (see Heb. 10:19,20).

The north, south and west sides of the tabernacle building were solid walls made of boards overlaid with pure gold. As such, they remind us of Christ in His humanity as well as His deity-He was the God-Man.

On the East Side of the tabernacle building was a curtain, or veil, which permitted entrance to the Holy Place. The veil reminds us of Christ, who is the entrance to fellowship and worship of God.

Dividing the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was another veil. When Jesus Christ was crucified, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom (see Matt. 27:51). This graphically displayed that Jesus had made access to God available to any who would come by His prescribed way. Jesus Himself was the entrance through His broken, or torn, body (see Heb. 10:19,20).

The curtains and covering of the north, south and west of the tabernacle building, as well as its top, were especially designed according to the instructions of God. The curtains and covering remind us of Christ's protection for all that are within.

The Foundation of Silver

The tabernacle building rested on a foundation of silver. This, too, speaks of Christ, who is the foundation in every believer's life. Paul said, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 3:11).

The tabernacle building had to be placed on a solid foundation, not on the sand of the desert floor. According to Exodus 30:11-16 the silver was secured from the men 20 years of age and older. It was ransom money paid at the time of the numbering. The numbering of the men was for the purpose of war, ministry and inheritance; thus, the money was often called redemption, or atonement, money.

The Silver that was collected and used came to 9,600 lbs. Throughout the Scriptures; silver figuratively speaks of redemption. It was always used as redemption money:

Ex 30:16 "And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls."

The tabernacle stood upon sockets of silver. Both Joseph and Jesus were sold for silver. Judas was paid off in silver as the Scriptures said. Silver is redemption money. Silver is symbolic of the redemption that comes through Jesus Christ and Him alone. It prefigures the preciousness of Christ as the ransom for sinners. Notice also that there is no silver mentioned in heaven. The people will already have been redeemed.

Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

There is some mystery surrounding this redemption money, however, inasmuch as it could not speak of redemption from the guilt and condemnation of sin. That was by blood only. Many Scripture passages reveal that salvation is only through the blood. Leviticus 17:11 clearly says, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

Hebrews 9:22 says, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

And I Peter 1:18,19 says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"

How then can the money taken during the census be considered ransom money? The answer, I think, lies in what God told Moses in Exodus 30:12: "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them."

Notice especially the words "that there be no plague among them." The money was to ransom them from a plague, not from the condemnation of sin.

This ransom money, or atonement money, was to be used for the tabernacle. God told Moses, "And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls." (v.16)

Whenever a census was taken, there was always the danger of pride. A numbering of the people would reveal their military strength, and the tendency would be to trust in numbers rather than in God. Second Samuel 24 and I Chronicles 21 reveal that David sinned in numbering the people. The Bible indicates that he depended on the strength of his people rather than on God's ability to deliver him from the enemy. Because of David's sin a plague came on Israel and 70,000 died from it.

Gideon was an example of one who learned to trust God rather than rely on any specific number of men (see Judges 7:1-6). Gideon began with an army of 32,000. But the Lord kept having him send men away until he was left with only 300 men. Then the Lord gave victory to Gideon and his army because they were forced to trust in Him rather, than in their own strength.

All this provides background to understanding why God caused a ransom to be paid at the time Israel was numbered. It served as a constant reminder to the men not to trust in their own strength. Money had to be given in order to keep a plague from coming on them because of their pride. It was God's way of reminding them that they were merely ransomed (redeemed) men and that without this redemption they were nothing.

This should serve as a reminder to us today that we are not to depend on our own strength. Having received Christ as Saviour, we are a redeemed people, for we have been bought with a price (see I Cor. 6:20).

Those in Israel's army were really in the army of God because they were redeemed for that purpose. We, too, are not to be serving ourselves but the Lord because we owe everything to Him.

Since the tabernacle stood on the silver foundation, it pointed to our redemption in Christ. We are redeemed from an evil world of corruption and are set aside to the sacred service of the Lord.

In ourselves we are nothing, but based on the redemptive work of Christ, we are empowered and enriched by Him. This is emphasized in what Jesus said: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (John 15:4)

The Apostle Paul made Jesus Christ the focal point of his life. This is why he told the Corinthians, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (I Cor. 2:2).

Having trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:2)

Our standing with God---concerning both redemption and service---is only because of what we are in Christ Jesus. It is never based on our own attainment.

The Boards

The boards of the Old Testament tabernacle also have rich significance for us today. God told Moses, "And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle tim wood standing up." (Exo. 26:15)

The acacia, or shittim, wood was from a tree that grew in the dry, barren desert. As such, it was a fitting symbol of the humanity of Christ, for He was spoken of "as a root out of a dry ground" (Isa. 53:2).

The Shittah tree grew in the deserts of Sinai, and the deserts around the Dead Sea. The wood is hard, very heavy, indestructible by insects, and has a fine, beautiful grain. It was remarkably luxuriant in dry places, sometimes attaining a height of twenty feet. It had lovely yellow flowers and its insect-resisting Acacia wood was used in making mummy cases. This Acacia wood undoubtedly speaks of the incorruptible humanity of Christ, for we are told that His humanity would never see corruption.

- Ps 16:10 "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

He was the truly human One, "the man Christ Jesus". The Bible calls Him, "the son of Mary", and the "son of man". A body was prepared for Him:

- Heb 10:5 "He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:"

And that body He still possesses in a glorified form. "This same Jesus" is in heaven right now and one day will return for us and glorify us also:

- 1 Jn 3:2 "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

- Rom 8:18-21 "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the of corruption into the glorious liberty of the ."

This wood was covered with gold, which typified the deity and glory of Christ. So two aspects of Christ were revealed in the boards: The acacia wood indicated Christ's humanity, and the gold overlay indicated His deity. Jesus Christ was with the Father from all eternity past, but He "was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

According to Ex 38 they gave 2,800 lbs. of gold. Pure Gold throughout the scriptures speaks of divinity, that which man cannot reproduce. Gold is made by God and comes down from God. Gold speaks of the deity of Jesus Christ. It typifies the divine glory of the Lord Jesus as "the Son of God" and "God the Son".

Jesus was none other than Jehovah in the flesh. He is "Malach Yaweh," Jehovah the King. When Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up as the King in all His glory John in the New Testament tell us that it was Jesus that he saw:

- John 12:41 "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."

The boards are also a picture of the individual believer's standing in Christ. Each person who trusts Christ as Saviour stands complete in Him. The boards of the tabernacle building stood upright on a solid base of silver and were connected with rods. Just as the boards were united in the tabernacle building, so the believer is united to Christ.

The night before His crucifixion, Christ specifically prayed concerning our being united to Him (see John 17:21-23). Ephesians 1:4-6 also tells of the relationship we have with Christ. How thankful we can be for the statement in verse 6: "Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

The boards of the tabernacle rested on a foundation of silver. This is a beautiful picture of the believer, who is in the world and yet not of it. Galatians 1:4 tells of Christ "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:"

Although we live in the world, Christ has delivered us from the evil world system.

Each board may also represent the individual believer in that once the board was part of the desert tree and became a part of the tabernacle of God. But a process was needed to get it from the tree to the tabernacle. The ax had to be applied, and then there was a drying process. Eventually the board was stripped of its natural beauty and covered with gold, representative of God's nature. Like the boards of the tabernacle, God has taken us from the world and has given us a new nature. We are united to Him and are fitted into the Body precisely as He has chosen (see I Cor. 12).

Exodus 26:26-28 reveals that the boards were held together by bars made of acacia wood. These, too, were overlaid with gold, so they also typified the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice especially that "the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end" (v. 28). All the boards were united into one.

What a beautiful picture this is of individual believers who are united in the Body of Christ. The New Testament tells us, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." (I Cor. 12:12-14)

The Book of Ephesians uses the analogy of a building in showing how believers fit together: "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. 2:21-22)

The Covering of Badgers' Skins

Because of the sandstorms and occasional rain that could occur in the desert, it was necessary for the tabernacle to be properly covered. God gave Moses specific instructions about the coverings. These instructions are recorded in Exodus 26:1-14.

There were four coverings, and they typified Christ as the protection both to God's perfect holiness and to man's perfect standing in Christ.

The outer covering was referred to as "a covering above of badgers' skins" (v. 14). This was the outer covering; it was on top of the others.

These were not badgers, as we know them in the western world; such animals were not found in the Middle East.

Rather, the animal was a porpoise---a marine animal plentiful in the Nile region. The porpoise skin was very durable and was used for such things as shoes. Thus, it provided perfect protection against the elements of the desert.

Only this outer covering was visible to the public. There was nothing beautiful about it. The sun and wind of the desert bleached it. This outer covering gave no indication of the beauty of the interior of the tabernacle.

Badger skins were the final covering, the outer covering that everyone saw. They were tough and course and very plain in their appearance. But how does this speak of Christ? It speaks of what Christ was to man. There was no outward beauty to the tabernacle proper, so it was with Christ when He came to earth when He pitched His tabernacle among men. As the prophet foretold:

Is 53:1-2 "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."

What was Jesus to the Jews? Nothing but a course, hard badger skin. What is Jesus to the world today? Nothing but a course, hard badger skin. But to those of us who have opened up our hearts to Him He is much, much more. He is the "altogether lovely One", He is the "Rose of Sharon", the "Lily of the Valley", and the "Fairest among 10,000" to our souls. If anyone desired to look beyond the outer flesh covering they would see the transfiguration of Christ's glory. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Jesus says, "Come and see".

Jn 1:10-14 "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

As such, the outer covering was a perfect picture of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. As viewed by the unbeliever, there was nothing attractive in Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophesied of Him, "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

(Isa. 53:2,3).

Just as a person had to come to the inside of the tabernacle to see its beauty, a person needs to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and thus enter into fellowship with Him, in order to fully appreciate the beauty of His holiness.

Now that Jesus has ascended to the Heavenly Father after finishing His work of redemption, He has chosen to reveal Himself through believers. The only way for the world to see Him now is to see Him in us. Jesus revealed the Father to believers so they in turn may be able to reveal Him to the world (see John 17:6).

In so much as unbelievers fail to appreciate the beauty of Christ, it is understandable if they fail to appreciate our testimony for Him. However, we should live consistent, upright lives so others will desire to know our Lord and Master.

In prophesying the rejection that Jesus would experience from the world that could not see His beauty, Psalm 22:6,7 says, "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head."

Isaiah prophesied concerning Christ, "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:" (Isa. 52:14).

So today the world sees no beauty in Jesus Christ; He is blasphemed, and His name is used in vain. But praise God there are those who recognize their sinful condition and realize that their only hope is to trust in Christ as personal Saviour. These who come to the "inside" are those who truly behold His beauty.

The outer covering provided a protection to all within the tabernacle. Thus, it was typical of Christ, who is our protection.

The exposed portion is a fitting picture of the Lord's body as He bore our sins. They placed a crown of thorns on His head, spit on Him, struck Him and scourged Him. They Pierced His side when He was hanging on the cross, and they exposed Him to humiliating shame. All of this caused the onlookers to be further convinced of His unattractiveness, which in itself was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

The Covering of Rams' Skins

The second cover, the one under the top covering, was of rams' skins dyed red" (Ex. 26:14). This covering was not visible to the public, yet it was needed for the further protection of the tabernacle. Since there were four coverings in all, this covering could not be seen from the outside or the inside.

The ram was an animal used for a substitutionary sacrifice. Such a sacrifice took the place of a person destined to die because of his sin.

A ram is a grown male sheep and the head of the flock. A shepherd may have one or two rams in a flock of ewes to promote uniformity. The ram is forever in the eyes of the Jew as the substitute animal, faithful unto death. This is of course because God provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac on that day when Abraham's faith was revealed.

Gen 22:12-13 "And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."

The ram's skins were dyed red to represent the sacrifice of a substitute. So Jesus as the head of the human race, the last Adam, sacrificed His own life as a substitute for all who would put their trust in Him.

Heb 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

Heb 2:17 "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Jn 1:29 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

In the New Testament, Mark's Gospel presents Christ as the suffering substitute. Man was under condemnation, but Jesus Christ died in his place so that any that receive Christ as Saviour are delivered from condemnation.

For the covering, the rams' skins were tanned and dyed a deep crimson. The skins were joined together in such a way that they provided a complete covering of protection for all that was underneath it.

The red skins spoke of sacrifice and pointed to Jesus Christ, who is the sacrifice for sin. The first mention in the Bible of skins for a covering is Genesis 3:21. Because Adam had sinned and had broken his relationship with God, he noticed that he and Eve were naked. Their sin had exposed them to shame. Although they tried to cover their shame with aprons made of fig leaves, they were unable to cover their sin by their own efforts.

After confronting them with their sin, God provided a covering for them. He could not accept their manmade coverings, so He provided coverings made from the skins of animals. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21). The covering God provided was an evidence of His grace and love. God would have been completely righteous in showing no mercy at all, but instead He provided a covering.

In order for a covering of skins to be made for Adam and Eve, there had to be a substitute. An animal had to die so the coverings could be made. This became the standard for all substitutionary sacrifices thereafter; there was to be no deviation. A sacrificial animal had to be brought before God as a substitute for the individual's sin.

Cain tried to deviate from this requirement, but God would not accept his offering of the fruit of the ground (see 4:3-5). Abel, on the other hand, brought "of the firstlings of his flock" (v. 4), and God accepted his offering because it was a blood sacrifice.

A key incident in Abraham's life revealed the significance of the ram as a substitutionary sacrifice. God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, and as Abraham was in the process of doing so the Lord said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." (22:12).

Then notice the significant statement that follows: "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son" (v. 13).

Earlier, when Isaac had asked, "Where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" (v. 7), Abraham had said, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering" (v. 8). At that time Abraham did not know how, but later he saw it with his own eyes.

Abraham was full of praise to God, and he called the place "Jehovah-jireh" (v. 14), meaning, "the Lord will provide." In this case, the Lord provided a substitute for Isaac.

This incident took place on Mount Moriah where the temple was later located. In the same general area Christ was crucified on Calvary. Therefore, the ram was a significant picture of Jesus Christ, who was the substitute for sinners.

This covering of rams' skins dyed red on the tabernacle provided a safe and protected place for the priest to minister in behalf of the people who had offered a sacrifice. Only as we are in Christ are we truly protected.

The Covering of Goats' Hair

The covering underneath the rams' skin was made of goats' hair (see Ex. 26:7). In the Bible, a goat is frequently used as a symbol of sin. This covering was immediately on top of the beautiful linen covering that could be seen from within the tabernacle.

The covering made of goats' hair represents Christ as the sin offering. It is significant to understand how Christ was represented in each of the coverings. The outer covering of badgers', or porpoises', skins represented Christ as the despised One. The second covering of rams' skins represented Christ as the substitute through death. The third covering of goats' hair represented Christ as the sin offering. And the fourth, or inner, covering represented the beauty of Christ's perfect life seen in all of His positional functions as king, servant, perfect man and perfect God. Later, the inner covering will be discussed in detail.

In considering the third covering of goats' hair, we are reminded that Christ is our sin-bearer, even as two goats were used on the Day of Atonement to reveal this.

Goats were common in those days for their milk, their meat, their skin which was used for many things such as water bottles, etc., and their hair, which was very long, dark and coarse, was spun and woven into cloth. The goat was a sacrificial animal. The Goat's Hair covering was the first above the tabernacle curtain. This drab color tells us of Jesus in His humility and poverty. Goatskins were worn by the poor and throughout the Bible represented extreme poverty.

Heb 11:37 "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;"

Lk 9:58 "And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

And the hair speaks of Christ as the separated One, just as the hair must be separated from the goat, so Christ had to sacrifice His own covering in order to provide a covering for others.

Another interesting point about the goat is that it was used on the Day of Atonement. After the high priest completed the blood sprinkling in the holy of holies he would go into the court of the tabernacle and lay his hands on the head of the scapegoat, confessing over it all the sins of the people. The goat was then led away, by a man standing ready, into the wilderness, and there let free, to signify the carrying away of Israel's sins, which God had forgiven. This reminds us of Jesus, humble and poor, becoming a curse for us, that we might have our sins carried away into the land of forgetfulness.

2 Cor 5:21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Leviticus 16 tells us of the use of two goats on the Day of Atonement. One goat was slain at the altar, and his blood was poured out there (v. 15). This goat symbolized the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Then the priest placed his hands on the living goat and confessed over it the sins of Israel. He then sent it into the wilderness, never to return. This goat symbolized the fact that Jesus Christ has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. When a person trusts Christ as his Saviour, the penalty of his sins is paid forever, and he is delivered from condemnation.

We must never forget that Jesus Christ is the One who has borne all our sin. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:6).

Although some teach that even Satan has a part in bearing the sin of mankind, there is no scriptural support for this view. Satan will bear his own sin and will someday be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever, but he in no way bears the sin of others (see Rev. 20:10).

The sin of mankind was placed on Jesus Christ when He was upon the cross; as we read in II Cor. 5:21. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). What cup was Jesus referring to? Since He feared nothing but sin, it is likely that Christ was referring to the cup of sin, not death itself. Christ willingly laid down His life for us, as John 10:17,18 indicates: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

In His purity, the Lord Jesus Christ shrank from sin. He saw this cup and prayed three times that it might be removed from Him. But He did not pray that death be removed from Him. Jesus knew that He would be spiritually separated from the Father when He hung on the cross with our sins upon Him. Because He had all the sin of mankind upon Him, God forsook Christ, and this is why He called out from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Because He is holy and cannot look on sin, God had to turn His back on His only begotten Son while He died on the cross in our place. But in His mercy, God brought darkness on the world so people could not view Christ's awful agony during these hours.

On the cross, Christ paid the price for sin, just as the slain goat did on the Day of Atonement. And as the live goat, He carried away forever the sin of those who have trusted Him as Saviour.

When Christ's work of redemption was finished on the cross, light again broke upon the world, and the veil of the temple was torn in two (see Heb. 10:19,20). Access into the very presence of God had been made available to all that would come the prescribed way. Although God Himself had made salvation possible, only those who personally accept, or appropriate, Christ as their substitute will be delivered from their sins. Those who refuse to accept Him as their substitute remain in their sins and under a state of condemnation (see John 3:18).

Confession and repentance are absolutely necessary; as well as personally appropriating what Christ has done for us. Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

The Covering of Linen

The fourth, or inner, covering of the tabernacle was made of "fine twined linen" (Ex. 26:1). As this passage indicates, there were to be various colors woven into it-blue, purple and scarlet.

When the tabernacle was erected, this was the first covering placed over the tabernacle building, and then the other coverings were placed on top. This covering was the only one seen from within the tabernacle. Although the exterior covering was unattractive, this interior covering was beautiful, emphasizing again that only when we are on the inside with Christ can we realize His true beauty.

The linen was most interesting. Made from Egyptian flax, it was finely woven, brilliantly white, and bore a special name, "byssus". This material was used for garments for royalty and persons of rank and has been found in the tombs of the Pharaohs. Linen in one tomb was found to have 152 threads per inch in the warp and 72 threads per inch in the woof. White linen always speaks of purity and righteousness:

Rev 15:6 "And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles."

Rev 3:5 "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

Rev 19:14 "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

The fine-twined, white linen speaks of righteousness and typifies Jesus, the Son of Man, spotless, pure, and sinless.

I Jn 3:3-5 "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."

The fine linen was embroidered with figures of cherubim in blue, purple and scarlet. Thus, this linen represented Christ in all of His glory and perfect righteousness. The white linen represents the sinless, righteous Christ. Blue, the heavenly color, represents His heavenly origin or nature. Scarlet represents His sacrificial death. Purple-a combination of blue and scarlet-represents His royal character; that is, His kingly and sovereign nature and stately splendor.

The design of cherubim with outstretched wings was woven into the linen. Thus, they hovered over the priests who were ministering to the Lord in the tabernacle.

In the Bible, cherubim are seen as guardians of the holiness of God. Here, the cherubim represented protection given to those in the tabernacle. Cherubim are first mentioned in Genesis 3:24. They appeared on the East Side of the Garden of Eden to guard "the way of the tree of life." In this sense, they guarded the holiness of God in His mercy for man.

As the priests ministered in the tabernacle and looked upward, they saw the cherubim and were reminded that God was watching and protecting them. The psalmist recognized that the Lord watches over His own. He wrote: "Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine." (Ps.33:18-19)

The world on the outside saw none of this beauty or the symbolism of the protecting hand of God. This is another reminder that the natural man does not understand the things of God because he is spiritually blind (see I Cor. 2:14; 11 Cor. 4:3,4). Only those who have been born again can spiritually see the glories of God. After Paul believed in Christ on the road to Damascus, his greatest desire was to know more of the glory of Christ. He counted everything in the past as worthless in comparison to knowing Jesus Christ as Saviour and being found in Him without blame (see Phil. 3:7-9). Paul's desire to know more about the Lord is clearly expressed in Philippians 3:10: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." We will be different individuals when we truly see the glory of God. When Job saw God's glory, he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:5-6)

Just to be satisfied with salvation (to stop at the brazen altar) is lamentable. The more time we spend on the inside of the sanctuary at the table of showbread, the altar of incense and the golden candlestick, the more we will behold and appreciate His beauty.

The Tabernacle
Lesson 4

The Acceptance at the Altar

Have you ever come home late, and remembered the roast that you started cooking before you left home. As you come through the door the smell of burning roast overwhelms you, the minute you walked through the door. You had left it for too long and it was all burned up, gone to waste. You are heartbroken. It was such a beautiful roast and would have tasted so good.

Solomon killed and burned 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep when the Temple was finished. Probably Israel sacrificed millions of animals over the years. Why all this killing and burning of animals? Were they wasted? Could they have been better used to feed the poor? To some, such burning would be considered a waste, but it is not when we see it is God's plan whereby we are made acceptable to Him.

The minute an Israelite walked through the door of the tabernacle, he smelled burning roast beef. But what a difference! Nothing was wasted, for it was the sacrifice of the offering to God being made at the brazen altar.

The brazen altar was foursquare-seven and one half feet square, and four and one half feet high. It was made of acacia wood and covered with brass. At each corner, horns protruded from the top. In the middle, halfway up inside the altar, was a grate to hold the sacrifice. On the outside, rings were attached; staves or poles, also of acacia wood covered with brass, were inserted into the rings so that the altar could be carried by the priests.

The Prescription of the Altar

The first thing to meet the eye of one entering the courtyard gate of the tabernacle was the huge brass or copper altar. Notice first of all that God prescribed it. In Exodus 27 is the record of the brazen altar, as it is commonly known. God said, "Thou shalt make an altar tim wood" (v. 1). The word "altar" comes from a Hebrew word meaning to slay or slaughter. On the brazen altar, all the animals were slain and sacrificed. This sacrifice pictures Calvary and the cross upon which the Lord Jesus was slain and sacrificed for us. Every time we read about the Israelites offering an in the Old Testament we can remember that in some way it pictured the cross of Calvary.

It was an altar tim wood, or acacia wood, as it is more commonly known. This is a very enduring wood and foreshadows the humanity of Jesus, for He was to come as "a root out of a dry ground" (Is 53:2) and was called the "branch" (Zec 3:8; 6:12). He was "the man Christ Jesus" (I Ti 2:5). The way He became a man is unique. Though He was God, He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:7). He voluntarily laid aside (or "emptied himself," as the Greek indicates) the outward visible manifestation of His godhead and became a man through the virgin birth.

There was a specific reason for His becoming a man, which is indicated in the last of Exodus 27:2b, where Moses was told, "Thou shalt overlay it with brass." Brass in Scripture always indicates judgment. When the Israelites had sinned (Num 2 1), God sent judgment upon them in the form of fiery serpents. The Israelites cried out because of the judgment, confessed their sin, and sent Moses to intercede for them before God. God gave a remedy: Moses must put a brazen serpent upon a pole; if they looked on the serpent, they would live. Sure enough, everyone who looked did live. John 3:14-15 clearly says that this serpent was a type of the Lord Jesus, for God says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." How was all this to be? God illustrated by the picture of the brass serpent in the wilderness that another would be judged for Israel's sin. When they looked at this brass serpent, they realized this substitution, and God forgave them on the basis that another paid the penalty for what they had done. The Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up for us on the

cross as a sinless man, but He was covered over "with brass," or judged, for our sins. When we look at Calvary and the cross through faith in His Word, we understand that another was judged for us and we are forgiven and receive eternal life.

The Prominence of the Altar

Not only did God prescribe the altar; it was prominent. It was the first thing seen as one entered the door; he couldn't miss it. It was seven and a half feet square and four and a half feet high. Not knowing the precise size of two articles in the tabernacle (the sizes of the laver and the lampstand are not given), we cannot be sure, but it is possible that all the other furnishings could be put inside this brazen altar because it was so large.

In parallel to this in New Testament truth, God says that in Christ "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2:9). What a blessed truth this is for us! When we receive the Lord Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins, in Him we are "blessed ... with all spiritual blessings" (Eph 1:3). We only need to claim and possess them, even as Joshua was already given the land and was told, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses" (Jos 1:3).

Every promise given to the believer in the New Testament is ours for the asking. We need only to claim it by faith to see it become operative in our lives, whether it be the fact of being "crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20) and "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God" (Ro 6:11), or to be able to "do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil 4:13). How tragic to see a child of God go around defeated and wasting a life that could be filled with God's glory and blessing, simply because he does not realize all that he has through Christ. The riches of the truth of what is ours "in Christ" (Eph 1:3), as recorded in the book of Ephesians alone, will thrill your soul.

The brazen altar was also prominent in that it was by far the most often used of all the tabernacle furniture. The high priest went into the Holy of Holies only once a year. He went into the holy place morning and evening, but he was at the altar all through the day as the people came with their sacrifices. This should be true in our preaching today. Paul was "determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Co 2:2). In 1 Corinthians 1:11-25 great stress is put upon "preaching of the cross." Much that is called Gospel preaching today is a million miles from it, for not one word is mentioned about the cross or Christ's death for sinners. Occasionally a preacher has the audacity to stand and beg lost people to be saved when he has not told them a thing about how to be saved. If we leave the cross out of our witnessing, we have left out everything. There is no salvation apart from it.

In so many Gospel tracts today, there is not one word about Christ suffering for sins, but people are exhorted "to give their hearts to Christ" or "to ask Jesus to come into their heart." The Word of God clearly tells us to preach the Gospel, "how that Christ died for our sins ... was buried, and ... rose again" (I Co 15:3) and exhort sinners to "believe" this Good News for themselves. Most preachers would vow and declare they "preach the Gospel" and give the Gospel in their witnessing, but one who listens carefully will discern how little is mentioned of the cross, whether in public, private, or print. As Vance Havner has said, "They almost say it, and most will think they have said it, but they make a neat detour at the cross. "

The cross also ought to be prominent in our personal lives. As Paul says in Galatians 6:14, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The preaching of the cross is the dividing point among preachers and people today. It will keep our hearts warm toward the Lord Jesus. The more we "survey the wondrous cross," the more we will love Christ and the more our hearts will overflow with thankfulness for our salvation. Too often we forget what a great price was paid for us. And when we look to the cross, "the things of earth will grow strangely dim." How shallow and insignificant is the entire world when compared to the Lord Jesus and what He has done for us. Then, too, as Galatians 6:14 indicates, we will see that we are "crucified unto ... the world," and will love neither this world nor the things that are in the world. Yes, the altar was very prominent in the tabernacle. Is it prominent in your life today?

The Presentation at the Altar

The altar was the place of personal presentation of sacrifice and public profession of faith. Some of the details for offering a sacrifice as a whole burnt offering are in Leviticus 1:2-5.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock. If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. And he shall kill the bullock before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The offerer brought his offering personally and willingly. At the moment we are saved today, it must be just as real as if we reached out and extended a lamb in our hands to the Lord and that Lamb were the Lord Jesus, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). God looks at the offering we make just as He looked at the offering of Cain and Abel.

The sinner coming to the brazen altar was to put his hands upon the head of the animal, thus identifying the offering to be his. In the type of Christ as the scapegoat (Lev 16:2 1), they confessed their sins over the goat and, in type, laid

their sins on the goat, and the animal bore them away. This was fulfilled when God "laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is 53:6). Praise God, He said the offering "shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him" (Lev 1:4).

This offering was an open public profession or act. Today, too often when people make a public profession of faith in Christ, nothing is mentioned or thought of in connection with a personal acknowledgment of Christ as their sacrifice or Saviour from sin. They state too glibly that they believe in Christ, but often they simply mean they believe there was a person named Christ, and they know nothing about His atonement. Public profession should mean that we identify ourselves with Christ on the cross and say that He died for our sins, and therefore we believe we will go to heaven.

The Propitiation at the Altar

The altar was propitious. That is, the sacrifice made there was satisfying to God for man's sins. Exodus 27:2 mentions the horns of the altar, and horns in the Bible speak of power. We praise God that there is enough power to forgive the guiltiest and to cleanse the vilest sinner. The horns were used to hold the sacrifices: "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar" (Ps 118:27). The Lord Jesus was bound with cords of love and nails of hate to the cross, for He said of His life, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down" (Jn 10:18).

A grate of a network of brass was made and put into "the midst" of the altar (Ex 2 7:4 -5). This made it on the level with the Mercy Seat, where God had said, "I will meet with thee" (25:22). Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the shed blood was brought into God's presence and sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. The word for Mercy Seat in Greek is the word for "propitiation." God tells us Christ "is the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn 2:2). "Propitiation" means to be made satisfied. God is made satisfied when He sees the blood. Sin, then, is punished, justice is carried out, and God's holiness is propitiated, so that God can freely forgive us our sins.

The sacrifice was killed in plain view but burned in the pit halfway down inside the altar. When the Lord Jesus hung on the cross, it was in plain view; but when God "laid on him the iniquity of us all," darkness came over the earth so that no one saw Him suffering on the cross with our sins on Him from the sixth to the ninth hour (Mt 27:45-46). This was too sacred for sinful human eyes to behold. About the ninth hour the Lord Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (v. 46). The Lord Jesus "suffered for sins" (1 Pe 3:18) far more at the hand of God in being separated from Him than He did in physical agony caused by the nails of the cross. Have you ever realized that Christ not only died but also suffered for you?

The altar was propitiatory because God Himself sent fire from heaven and consumed the first sacrifice made on the altar. Right after the priests were consecrated for the tabernacle service and the first sacrifice was laid on the altar, "there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces" (Lev 9:24). God showed His acceptance of the sacrifice and said, "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out" (Lev 6:13). Why never go out? Because the people never would stop sinning, and the sacrifice was made only as an IOU for past sins. It was not enough to make one offering for past sins and to think that sincerity or a good life from then on would take care of or cover sins committed after the sacrifice. They had to offer a sacrifice for those sins, too.

When we accept Christ today as our personal Saviour, we do not accept Him only for past sins; He died for all our sins, past, present, and future. If we were to trust Him only for past sins and feel our works would keep us saved, we would have to be punished for the sins committed after we are saved, "for the wages of sin is death" (Ro 6:23), and nothing else will satisfy God.

Fire has always symbolized God's judgment from the fire of Sodom and Gomorrah until the final lake of fire for all eternity. We should be glad that the fire fell on the sacrifice on the brazen altar to show that God accepted it and that judgment need not fall on us. The altar is the place of acceptance. God, in accepting the sacrifice, showed that He would accept the sacrifice of another in our place. Will we accept this sacrifice for our sins and by faith offer Him to God as our own Saviour? When we do, we are told that we are "accepted in the beloved" (Eph 1:6). None of us dare stand in our own righteousness when God tells us plainly that they are "filthy rags" (Is 64:6). Remember, it is Christ, not the Church; the Saviour, not the sacraments; the work of Christ, not the work of His creatures; grace, not grit; which will get us to heaven, that all the glory might be to Him.

'The Bronze Laver' (Ex 30:17-21)

It was here at the bronze laver that the priests washed their hands and feet before entering into and coming out of the holy place. The laver was made from the bronze mirrors of the women and filled with water for the continual cleansing of the priests as they ministered in the work of the Lord.

Exodus 30:17-21 "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them-- to him and his descendants throughout their generations."

It's Name

The word "laver" means a bath or washbasin containing water for the purpose of washing. The Jewish priests were commanded to continually wash their hands and feet during tabernacle service.

It's Position

The laver was placed between the door of the Holy Place and the altar.

(1) It came after the altar (sacrifice first)

The appointed priest, as he entered the gate of the outer court, faced the altar, where he made a sacrifice for himself like any other Israelite. Once beyond the altar he was ready to act as a serving priest and so at the laver he prepared himself for the further service of God. He could then minister at the altar or in the Holy Place because he washed at the laver.

The altar always came first for the priest. Salvation comes before service. God was approached by way of the blood and the water.

(2) It came before the door (wash before entering)

Within the door of the Holy Place were vessels that represented God Himself. No priest dare enter with any trace of uncleanness. "Be holy as I am holy" was commanded to the priests.

(3) It came after leaving the Holy Place (wash before going out)

In the outer court everything was bronze. Inside the Holy Place everything was gold. As the priest came out of Gods Presence and back into service he washed at the laver.

Its size (Immeasurable)

No measurements or instructions are given as to the shape and size of the laver. The only thing mentioned is that it had a stand (Ex 31:9), which made it easier to wash, and it was made of solid bronze, no wood at all. Also it was made from mirrors:

Ex 38:8 He made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the bronze mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

(1) It had no staves

How the laver was carried we are not told. The altar and other vessels had staves and rings by which they were carried but nothing is mentioned about the laver. Maybe there was a lip around the top edge as in the illustration.

It was here that the priests washed their hands and feet

Its purpose

The laver served one great purpose, the washing and cleansing of the priest from all defilement.

(1) It was for priests only

No one in Israel or the rest of the world for that matter could wash from the laver. What a privilege for the Tribe of Levi.

(2) Moses washed Aaron and his sons only once:

Ex 40:11-16 "And you shall anoint the laver and its base, and consecrate it. "Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them with water. "You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister to me as priest. "And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with

tunics. "You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to me as priests; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations." Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

Here the word "wash" means to wash all over. This washing was done by Moses and it was once and final. Their bodies were washed first, then their clothing.

(3) The priests were to wash only their hands and feet.

Ex 30:19-20 "for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. "When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die.

Certainly the hands of the priests would immediately get dirty after washing and then ministering at the altar. And so also their feet (since they were barefoot) would immediately get dirty the moment they touched the ground after washing (since there was no carpeting). Then what was the significance of just the feet and hands being washed?

(a) The Hands

The hands speak of what they did, their service, their work, everything they put their hands to was important and so their hands needed to be cleansed always, and daily. The initial cleansing was done only once, the daily cleansing was done continuously.

(b) The Feet

The feet represented where they went, their lives and ways. Their walk had to be a holy walk, so their feet were washed always, everyday.

A Type of Christ

As the altar points to the death of Jesus, so the laver points to the life of Jesus. Blood speaks of a life taken and water speaks of life given. The water in the laver speaks of Jesus, the living Word of God that enters us and gives us eternal life. Jesus said that we are clean because of His Word and that the knowledge of God that comes through His Word is eternal life and is described with the exact same terminology in the Hebrew as the union of a man with his wife. As the priest would wash his hands and his feet while coming into the Presence of God (gold) and back out into the world (bronze) so we are continually being cleansed from the corruption of this world by the Word of God. When the Jewish leader named Nicodemus came to Jesus to inquire from Him about the kingdom of God Jesus replied, "unless one is born of the water and the Spirit (Hebrew idiom - "born from above") he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Water brings life to the physical world and so spiritual water (the Word of God) brings God's spiritual life to us. When Jesus met the woman at the well he said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." When Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst let him come to Me and drink," it was on the great day of the feast of tabernacles when the Jewish leaders were pouring the water from the pool of Siloam (Heb. Sent) onto the pavement of the temple symbolizing that someday God will pour out the real water from heaven on His people as promised through the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezek 36:25-27 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will keep my judgments and do them."

Eph 5:25-26 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

NOTE: The Greek word for "washing" here means a laver.

Jn 15:3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

Tit 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration (spiritual rebirth) and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

Heb 10:22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Jn 7:38 "He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

The Washing at the Laver

The Definition of the Laver

"Laver" is the same word from which we get our word "lavatory." It simply means "a place for washing." The priests were commanded to wash here before entering the holy place (Ex 30:18-21). It is a picture of the believer being cleansed from the sins he commits after he is saved. While the brazen altar is associated with a person receiving Christ and becoming saved, the laver is associated with cleansing for the sins he commits after salvation. We know nothing about the size or shape of the laver, for no dimensions or directions are given for making it; the priests were just told to wash in it.

The laver was made from the brass "looking glasses [polished brass mirrors] of the women ... which assembled at the door of the tabernacle" (Ex 38:8). A very suggestive parallel is here. Pride makes us look into a mirror, for tremendous importance is put on one's appearance. We are all concerned about how we look to others. Millions of dollars are spent on hairdos, makeup, and fine clothes. This concern is not wrong in itself unless it violates God's command to be dressed in modest apparel outwardly, but godliness inwardly (1 Ti 2: 9-10). To give up their mirrors and not worry about outward looks represented real sacrifice to the Israelite women. It would be difficult for us. God is not saying we should go about unkempt, but that we should be much more concerned about spiritual cleanliness and beauty before the Lord. "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things," and it godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Ti 4:8; 6:6-8).

If we gave up just a little of the time spent in washing and beautifying our skin, and spent that time washing and beautifying our souls, we could see lives transformed overnight.

The instructions for washing at the laver are in Exodus 30:17-21:

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: so they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.

In this lesson we consider four outstanding factors: the people, the place, the purpose, and the procedure of the washing.

The People at the Laver

The people who were told to wash were the priests coming into the tabernacle to minister before the Lord (see Ex 30:18-21). Only the priests were allowed inside the holy place to worship before the Lord. The priests were born of the tribe of Levi and ordained by the Lord for the tabernacle service. God's Word declares that now all who are born of God are His priests. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pe 2:9). We are also called a "kingdom, priests to His God" (Rev 1:6). What a glorious truth that each of us has the right to come before God! We are invited by God to come spiritually into the holy place for worship. Not just the select few can pray or worship before Him, but all who are born again into this royal "tribe" have the equal privilege to "come boldly unto the throne of grace" (Heb 4:16).

The Place of the Laver

The laver was "between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar" (Ex 30:18). This was the next piece of furniture located beyond the brazen altar on the way into the holy place. Everything in the court, or the open area of the tabernacle enclosed by the fence, was made or covered with brass. Brass, speaking of judgment, is also the picture of our earthly experiences. One of the first things a believer needs to learn is what to do when he sins after he is saved. What are the consequences and the cure? The laver answers these queries. At the brazen altar see Christ judged for our sins, which brings us into an eternal relationship with the Lord through salvation. At the brazen laver judge ourselves for our daily sins, and this restores the fellowship with the Lord broken by those sins.

When we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, we are born of God, with His kind of life, eternal life, and we will never perish (Jn 3:16; 5:24). When we sin after that, then it breaks our fellowship with the Lord but does not change our relationship. If my son does something wrong, he is still my son. He may not enjoy being my son when I spank him, but he is still my son by birth, and nothing can change that. So it is with God and His children. We are by birth, a relationship far more permanent than earthly ties. It is everlasting, for nothing can "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 8:39b). We are in the Father's hand and no one can pluck us out (Jn 10:28-29). If we claim to have been saved a while and then, because of some sin, say we are no longer saved nor have eternal life, then we never were saved to begin with. Christ alone is the Author of "eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9). But what about that sin committed after we were saved? Christ has already suffered for that sin, too, or we would have to suffer for it in hell; nothing else could satisfy God's justice. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life" (Ro 6:23).

Usually unbelievers accuse those who believe in eternal security-once saved always saved-of thinking they can be saved and then go out and live like the devil himself and still go to heaven. That is a very foolish and ed idea of a wonderful truth. A parallel would be to say you can get married and then have the privilege of treating your spouse any way you want; that is, mistreat your spouse, commit adultery, and generally live wildly just because he vowed to be married "until death do us part"! A rather absurd idea, isn't it? No more absurd than the false implications and applications some make of the wonderful truth that, when a person is saved or born again, he will "never perish" (Jn 10:28).

First, someone who "says" he is saved and then lives like the devil himself is just proving he still is the devil's child. God's Word says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (I Jn 2:19). This ed idea also fails to take into account that when one is born again or saved that "he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Co 5:17). He has a new nature (2 Pe 1:4) and won't want to live like the devil! Also, he now loves the Lord Jesus and certainly won't want to mistreat the Lord Jesus any more than he would want to mistreat his spouse!

The Purpose of the Laver

The purpose of the laver was for the priests to "wash their hands and their feet thereat" (Ex 30:19). The Christian life is referred to repeatedly as a "walk." Believers are told to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph 4:1); ((walk as children of light" (5:8)-, "walk in love" (5:2); and "to walk circumspectly" (5:15), to name just a few of the admonitions about their walk. In the book of Acts, the Christian life also is spoken of several times as the "way." In the short distance from the altar to the tabernacle, the priests would get their sandal-shod feet dirty and would need them washed before entering into the holy place to minister. In our walk we sin and get our feet dirty and need them cleansed, so we need the laver, which pictures Christ cleansing us from the world's defilement (I Jn 1:9).

A wonderful explanation of this principle is in John 13, about foot washing. When the Lord came to Peter to wash his feet, Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (v. 8). The word for "part" has the idea of fellowship or partnership in activity, nothing of relationship. Peter wanted fellowship; he already had a relationship with Jesus. Therefore he said "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head" (v. 9). Jesus answered, "He that is washed [or "bathed," as the Greek word louo means] needeth not save to wash [Greek, nipto] his feet, but is clean every whit" (v. 10). Greek scholars for years have pointed out that the first word for washed is louo, which means "to bathe all over." The second is nipto, which means, "to wash just a part of the body," such as the hands and feet. These words accurately fit the functions of the brazen altar and laver. He that has been bathed from his sins at the altar in salvation does not need to be bathed again, but simply needs to wash his feet at the laver from the defilement of sins before entering the holy place of worship and service. Jesus was showing Peter that He was going to forgive him for the denial even before he committed the act, as foretold in verse 38. Today we practice foot-washing as we "wash one another's feet" (Jn 13:14) when we forgive one another.

Today's message for us is that forgiveness for sins we commit after salvation is already assured and provided for in the laver. God does not want us to sin. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn 2:1-2). God would still say, "Go, and sin no more" (Jn 8:11). But, knowing that the spirit of man "indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41), and that man will sin, God says there is provision made for cleansing that sin. Jesus is our Lawyer or Advocate who pleads our case, because Satan, "the accuser of our brethren" (Rev 12:10), will certainly accuse us. How will our Lawyer plead our case? Hebrews 9:26 says He has gone into God's presence with His own blood which He shed once and for all. This is God's sole basis for our atonement and forgiveness, "for the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I Jn 1:7).

At their consecration the priests were washed by another. "And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water" (Lev 8:6). However, they were to wash themselves at the laver. When we are saved or born again, we are washed by Christ Himself, our High Priest. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). From then on we are responsible to come to the laver ourselves and wash our own feet, even as "Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat" (Ex 30:19).

The Procedure for Today

The procedure for us today is given in 1 Corinthians 11:31-32: "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." This confirms the fact that, when the believer sins, the result is not condemnation with those who have rejected the payment made by Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Ro 8:1). For the believer, the result of sin is chastening, a spanking, if you please, from the Lord. The unbeliever, the world, will be judged later at the great white throne, but he is "condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Jn 3:18). That will be his day of execution, and now he only dwells in the death cell, as it were. The believer is judged right away, either by himself or by the Lord. If the Lord has to judge him now, it will be via weakness, sickness, or death (1 Co 11:30).

Look at Hebrews 12:4-11 to understand something of the Lord's chastening: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (v. 6). God chastens us, His children, because He loves us and does not want us ruined by sin. God does not merely give out advice. His Word says, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son" (Pr 13:24). God "chasteneth ... every son whom he receiveth," for still "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Ro 3:10). If one who professes to be a believer goes on in sin and is not chastened of the Lord, it is because he is not really saved at all, not a child of God, according to Hebrews 12:8. God's chastening is always for our own good, and "it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (v. 11).

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (v. 9). Notice these two words at the end: "and live." God said Aaron and his sons were to wash at the laver "lest they die." It is repulsive for a child not to be in submission to his earthly father, but it is much worse for a child of God, who has been redeemed from his sins at such tremendous cost, not to submit to God's chastening. God will not stand for that. God's child can come to the point of hating God's reproof and thereby commit the "sin unto death," and God will take his life, for "he that hateth reproof shall die" (Pr 15:10). What other explanation can be given for these two words: "and live"? This "sin unto death" of 1 John 5:16 is that of a believer, and the death must be physical. Since God chastens through death, as shown in 1 Corinthians 11:30 and many other examples in the Bible, this must be the result and explanation of these verses. It is a serious thing to get out of fellowship with God and face His chastening.

The way to escape His chastening is to judge ourselves. We simply must examine our lives and our motives daily. When the Holy Spirit shows us sin, we must deal with it. First John 2 says we can judge ourselves when we "walk in the light" (1:7). We do this by feeding daily on God's Word and allowing the Holy Spirit to throw light on our actions and attitudes. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (v. 8), but when we become conscious of our sin and "we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (v. 9). This is washing at the laver. We are not to come as some do, saying, "We have not sinned," and thereby "make him a liar" (v. 10), but we are to name the sin to God and trust Him to forgive it that very moment.

Now, it is one thing to confess sin and another to ask God to forgive you all your sins. Many come saying glibly, "God, forgive us of our many sins." They have not confessed a thing and will not get the peace and forgiveness they desire. This is a deep truth and the reason many believers no longer have the joy of their salvation. We must keep good records with the Lord. Just as David acknowledged and confessed his sin and asked God to restore the joy of his salvation (Ps 51:12), so we must confess in order to get the joy we once knew.

The ultimate purpose of the laver was for the priests to cleanse themselves so they could go into the holy place. Inside the holy place were the food for the priests or the shewbread, the altar of incense or place of prayer, and the candlestick. These represent spiritual exercises and worship for the believer. The reason most people do not enjoy praying or worshipping the Lord is that they are on the outside, out of fellowship with Him. It is such a serious thing that God warned them twice that they should wash "that they die not" (Ex 30:20). We are under grace today, and God does not kill every believer who comes into His presence in an attempt to worship with unconfessed sins, but His mercy does not make it less wrong.

The Tabernacle Lesson 7

The Sustenance of the Shewbread

If you have ever had a baby, you will notice that they usually have no concern for their mother or their father, for at two o'clock in the morning he might cry until he has awakened them. He will not care how tired you might be or how much trouble it caused you: he wants his two-o'clock bottle. Needless to say, you get up and give it to him.

God says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pe 2:2). God's Word is the food that a Christian needs for growth. He should cry out for it with hunger pains if not fed, just as a baby cries for its milk. The shewbread in the holy place was the priest's food.

The table of shewbread was three feet long by one and one-sixth feet wide and two and one-third feet high,---a rather small table. It, too, was made of acacia wood, but it was covered with gold and not brass. Around the top was a rim to hold the bread from falling off. Also, it had rings of gold and staves of wood covered with gold by which the priests could carry it on their journey. Dishes, spoons, and bowls to be used in making the bread were also made of gold. Twelve small cakes or loaves of bread were made each Sabbath and put on the table for a memorial before the Lord.

The Purpose of the Shewbread

The purpose of the shewbread was to provide for the priests' food (see Lev. 24:9). The priests were given much other food to sustain their physical bodies, but this food was for them to eat as they officiated in the tabernacle in worship and service for God. This eating was done as an act of worship and spiritual fellowship with the Lord. No doubt this spiritual food was eaten in deep contemplation of the Lord's presence in the tabernacle.

The believer's spiritual food is God's Word, both the written Word and the living Word, the Lord Jesus, as revealed in the written Word. Milk is to be fed to the "babe," but "strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age" (Heb 5:14). Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer 15:16). Job declared, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12b). The more we behold "the glory of the Lord" in the Word of God "With open [unveiled] face," we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit" (2 Co 3:18). As we study God's Word, we need to look for the Lord Jesus on every page and, as we see Him, become more like Him. To dissect God's Word and become theologically correct in our doctrine is not enough. It should not be an end in itself, though we should leave no stone unturned to be correct in doctrine, for the Word should have an effect upon our lives or we will come short of the glory of God!

The Place of the Shewbread

Let's learn some lessons from the shewbread by seeing first the place in which it was eaten: "in the holy place" (Lev 24:9). This was the first room inside the tabernacle proper, the covered part. It is the place of fellowship with the Lord. It meant they had been to the brazen altar, that they were saved. They also had passed the laver and washed thereat "lest they die," which meant confessing sin and cleansing from defilement since they left the brazen altar, corresponding to the believer confessing his daily sins and being in perfect fellowship with the Lord. Inside the holy place, with no unconfessed sin, they could have fellowship with the Lord and partake of spiritual food.

Could these truths explain why many of God's children do not feed on the Word of God? They are out of fellowship with the Lord; they are outside the tabernacle, needing their feet and hands cleansed from defilement. Sin in the life will ruin the appetite for God's Word, for sin will keep you from the Word or the Word will keep you from sin. The reason some people get so much from the Word and have fresh truths to teach others is that they are in fellowship with the Lord and spend time in His presence feeding on His Word.

The only way the priests could see to eat the shewbread was by the light from the lampstand. When a man says he reads the Bible but gets nothing out of it and cannot understand it, he is confessing that he is still a natural man, because "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Co 2:14). "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Co 2:12). The believer, in fellowship with God in the holy place, can know God's Word and understand it, for the Holy Spirit is there to show him the Word.

In the holy place, the priest was shut out from the world and its distractions. Inside was the place of perfect peace so he could enjoy fellowship at the Lord's table. When one spends time in the holy place in fellowship with the Lord, the world will have no attraction for him. Inside the holy place, all furnishings were made or covered with gold, which must have been a beautiful sight. The spiritually minded person, spending time in the holy place, sees some of the Lord's beauties. The gold speaks of God's royal presence. The acacia wood covered with gold speaks of Jesus' humanity covered with God's deity. Outside the holy place, the acacia wood covered with brass pictured Jesus suffering as a man for our sins. His perfect humanity took our sins upon Him, and He died in our place. Inside the holy place, the humanity and deity are seen combined, with the deity overshadowing His humanity and shining forth. At the brazen altar the deity is hidden from human sight and we see Him judged in our place.

Today many people only see Jesus' humanity. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked, "Whom do men say I the Son of man am?" (Mt 16:13). The disciples answered, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, jeremias, or one of the prophets" (v. 14). Those observers saw only the human characteristics that paralleled the men they named. When Jesus asked, "But whom say ye that I am?" (v. 15), Peter, seeing beyond Jesus' humanity, said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). His knowledge came from spiritual insight given by God the

Father. Inside the holy place we see the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2:9).

The Position of the Shewbread

A second important thing about the shewbread is its position, for the table was only a little over two feet high, making it accessible only to a bending or kneeling person. The Word of God is also accessible to a person who humbles himself. How thrilling that even a babe in Christ can find precious morsels in it, and can make the promises real and practical in his life. How wonderful are these words of Jesus: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Lk 10:21). He added, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see; for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them" (vv. 23-24). So today, spiritual babes in Christ who humble themselves before the Lord and spend time in His presence are illumined to see things in the Word of God that even those of great intellect cannot see without the Spirit. We should praise Him for the spiritual understanding He gives, and then humble ourselves before Him, for we see higher on our knees in His presence at the table of shewbread than at any other place.

The Priests and the Shewbread

The priests were to eat of the shewbread, as "it shall be Aaron's and his sons'" (Lev 24:9). This spiritual food was for those who worshiped and served the Lord. Today God says that every believer is a priest, for we are "a royal priesthood" (1 Pe 2:9). Revelation 1:6 says the Lord Jesus "hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father;" which means the Word of God is meant for every believer to feed upon personally. A believer needs no one but the Holy Spirit to interpret God's Word to him: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you" (1 Jn 2:27). There is no excuse for the Christian not knowing God's Word, for God is anxious and willing to feed all who come to the table and help themselves. Aaron and "his sons" were to eat it. It is the most natural thing for children to follow in the footsteps of their father.

The Prescription for the Shewbread

The prescription for the shewbread (Lev 24:5) said it was to be of "fine flour." As the fine flour was used in making the meal offering which is a type of Christ, here again it is the picture of Christ, the living Word of God. There were no eggs or sugar, just the fine flour. We need the simple Word of God today with nothing added. Some try to dilute or destroy God's Word, but we just need to take God at His Word and act upon it. There should be no alterations of the Word, for God's Word is "settled in heaven" (Ps 119:89), and He has exalted it above His name.

The Portion of the Shewbread

The portion was given as "two tenth deals" in each cake (Lev 24:5). One-tenth was the amount in an omer, which was the daily portion of manna for the children of Israel. So there was more than enough in each cake for a priest. There were twelve cakes, so each name represented on the priest's breastplate had a full supply.

The Partaking of the Shewbread

There must be a partaking of the shewbread, for, "they shall eat it" (Lev 24:9). It was not enough to merely look upon or to handle the shewbread; it had to be eaten. Bibles are in profusion in America today, but too few persons feed upon the Word. It matters not how beautiful or how prominent the Bible is in a home; it must be read and digested if it is to do any good. The sad commentary of Jeremiah 6:10b is too true today: "Behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it." Hours spent watching TV or reading newspapers are sad excuses for not having time for the Word. Perhaps more than anything else, television is the reason that many "have no delight in" God's Word, for it destroys the appetite for spiritual food. Also, it takes time to digest and assimilate food. We must spend time in the holy place, in fellowship with the Lord, to see Jesus and digest the spiritual food of the Word. Joshua says we should "meditate therein day and night" on the Word of God" (Josh 1:8). As a cow chews its cud, so we should "meditate" on the Word, chewing on it until we thoroughly digest it. We feed on the Word when we allow it to grip our hearts. As we read it, we should enter into its truths and experiences until they affect our lives. Psychologists say people are using movies and TV as escapisms; they project themselves into the actors' experiences until they get a measure of satisfaction from feeling as though they have had the same experience. In a very real sense we should project ourselves as though we have partaken of the experiences of God's people in all their victories, and claim by faith the same power and purposes they had in order to do great exploits for God. We are told, "Whatsoever things are true . . . pure . . . lovely," etc., to "think on these things" (Phil 4:8). We naturally think or meditate on the things we have seen or heard or read about recently. The Bible says, "Set your affections on things above" (Col 3:2) and "think on these things." So we must spend time reading and feeding on God's Word, which is our special food as God's priests.

A Type of Christ

The table of shewbread was referred to as the table of the Presence. Gods light forever shines on His people. The 12 baked cakes of bread spoke of Gods people who were one with Him as the priests joined together for the fellowship of eating the bread and becoming one. Jesus referred to Himself as the bread of life and said if we eat this bread we will live forever. The very nature of bread is to provide physical sustenance and as you eat the bread and digest it, it becomes part of you. The very nature of the Word of God is to provide spiritual sustenance and as it is received it becomes part of our very nature. Just as the table always speaks of fellowship and communion, so the table of the shewbread points to Jesus who has made a covenant built on better promises and provided a blood covenant meal for us to partake that we might all be one in the Spirit.

John 6:35

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

John 6:51-58

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

John 6:63

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Only in the work of Christ as great high priest on behalf of his people was the work ever finished. His sacrifice was fully effective and was a completed work. No priest could ever be seated but after his great cry, 'It is finished', Jesus Christ left the altar of Calvary and sat down at the right hand of God.

Have you ever noticed that many couples begin to look alike after they have lived together for years? Similarly, as we see the "glory of the Lord" in His Word, we will be "changed into the same image" (2 Co 3:18). "We would see Jesus" (Jn 12:2 1) is the cry of our hearts today. We can see the Lord Jesus on every page of His Word if we "eat" it in the holy place.

The Tabernacle

Lesson 8

The Golden Lampstand

The golden lampstand, also known as the candlestick, was one of the most beautiful pieces of the tabernacle furnishings. The table of shewbread stood along the north wall of the Holy Place; the golden lampstand was along the south wall.

Construction of the Lampstand

In giving Moses directions for making the lampstand, God said, "And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side:" (Ex. 25:31,32).

After giving more details, God said, "And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it. And the tongs thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold. Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels. And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount." (vv. 37-40).

Notice that the lampstand was to be made of a talent of pure gold (v. 39). A talent weighed over 90 pounds. This would be about 1500 ounces, or about 1370 troy ounces, in which gold is measured. Think of what that would be worth today, considering the price per ounce of gold!

The lampstand was not to be cast in a mold; rather, it was to be hammered out so that the entire lampstand was formed from the one piece of gold. It was exceedingly important that God's instructions were followed in all that was done: "look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount." (v. 40).

Although the lampstand is referred to as a candlestick, it was not a candleholder as we commonly think of one today. Candles give light, but they are consumed in the process.

This was not the case, however, with the golden lampstand. The light was produced by burning the oil, which was poured into the lampstand's special gold containers. In the Scriptures, oil is often used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. This is especially fitting in the tabernacle because it shows us that all illumination is by the Holy Spirit.

Typology of the Lampstand

A popular interpretation of the typology of the lampstand is that the center shaft represents Christ, who is the head of the Church, and that the six side branches represent the Church as it is united in Christ, and bears light before the world. Although this interpretation at first seems to fit, there are some serious difficulties with it. For instance, there is no wood in the lampstand; therefore, it does not point to the humanity of Christ. As we have noted elsewhere, wood overlaid with gold was symbolic of the divine incarnation—that Christ was the God-Man. Since the lampstand was made of pure gold, it can represent only the deity of Christ.

As such, the lampstand represents God's presence by the Holy Spirit for illuminating all in the Holy Place of fellowship. As we will study later, the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, also made of pure gold, reveals the mercy of Almighty God. But the purpose of the lampstand in the Holy Place was to reveal how we might have fellowship with God.

There were no windows in the tabernacle; thus, there was no natural light whatsoever. So the golden lampstand pointed to Christ as the only light by which the priests could fellowship with God and serve in the tabernacle. The oil in the lampstand represented the Holy Spirit, who illuminates the Word of God to the believer so that he may walk in the light of the Word.

The lack of natural light in the tabernacle also reminds us that the realm of the natural reveals nothing of the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (I Cor. 2:14).

Those on the outside of the tabernacle saw only the drab skin covering, but those on the inside saw the beauty of the tabernacle as it was revealed by the golden lampstand. Only those who trust Christ as Saviour and thereby enter the spiritual realm are able to appreciate His beauty. Unbelievers may consider Him a great teacher with extremely high morals, but they are not able to appreciate the beauty of His deity.

Having come "inside" by receiving Christ as Saviour, Paul expressed the burning desire of his heart in these words: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;" (Phil. 3:10). Those in the natural realm see Christ only from the world's standpoint. This results in all kinds of philosophies and speculations about Christ and the world. These, in turn, lead to false teachings such as evolution. But this is understandable, since the unsaved look only from the outside.

Some also teach that the lampstand represents believers, who are the light of the world. It is true that Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). However, this does not necessarily mean that the golden lampstand of the tabernacle pictures this.

In order for the golden lampstand to be a type of believers, who are a light to the world, it would have to be taken outside of the tabernacle and exposed to the world. But the lampstand always remained within the tabernacle, so it was not seen by the world.

So if the lampstand was to represent Christ and the Church-in union with Him, shining into the world-it would have been made of wood overlaid with gold-to-represent the humanity of Christ. Also, it would have been permitted to shine outside the tabernacle.

All other furniture and articles in the tabernacle were for a special purpose inside the tabernacle. Specifically, the furnishings inside the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies were for the purpose of fellowship with, and worship of, God. Even though only priests were permitted in the tabernacle building, they represent all believers today, who comprise "a royal priesthood" (I Pet. 2:9).

Light From the Lampstand

The light from the golden lampstand shone not only on the table of shewbread but also on the altar of incense, the place of intercession. It also illuminated the entire Holy Place so the priests could behold the beauty of the Lord as represented there. The light revealed the cherubim on the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. In effect, the cherubim guarded God's holiness and said, "Stay out," since none were permitted to enter except the high priest once a year.

So the light from the golden lampstand revealed the table of shewbread, representing the Word of God, and the altar of incense, representing the place of prayer, and the cherubim on the veil to the Holy of Holies, representing guardians of the holiness of God.

The light in the Holy Place represented Jesus Christ in an Of His purity. This is a vivid reminder to us of what the Bible says concerning Christ: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John 1:5-7).

In the tabernacle, the light represented God, through the Holy Spirit, shining in the darkness, thus producing a place of fellowship. Anything that needed to be confessed would be revealed in the place of fellowship as the light shined on the table of shewbread and the altar of incense. And as is true now, it was also true then: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(1:9). The light of the Word of God is the only true light and safe guide. And the intercessory prayer life is effective only as it is accomplished in the true light of the Holy Spirit.

Notice what Jesus said of Himself as the Light of the World: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:5). " Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them." (12:35,36).

Jesus was crucified, buried and rose again to enter the Holy Place in God's presence; thus, the Light now dwells with God.

Even though Jesus no longer dwells with us as He did with the disciples, we are not without light-His death rent the veil in two and made it possible for all believers to enter the presence of God. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb. 10:19-22)

As we walk in the light, we will have fellowship with each other as well as with God, and Jesus' blood will cleanse us from all sin (see I John 1: 5-7).

Those who refuse to trust Christ as Saviour are in spiritual darkness, but those who believe in Him as Saviour walk in spiritual light.

The lampstand speaks of Christ as the believer's light in this dark interval before His return as the eternal Light in the new heaven and new earth. Although we have no actual tabernacle to come to, we have access into the true sanctuary and may walk in the light as He is in the light (v. 7).

The Lampstand and the Holy Spirit

Notice again the composition of the lampstand: "And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same." (Ex. 25:31)

The lampstand was not made of several separate pieces joined together but was hammered out from one chunk of pure gold. At the top of each stem was a cup into which oil was poured. Since there were seven stems, there were also seven lightholders.

Although the pure gold represents Jesus Christ in all of His deity, the seven stems remind us of the sevenfold Spirit of God with which Christ, even while on earth, was endowed. Isaiah prophesied concerning the coming of Christ and the sevenfold Spirit. The symbolism of the seven-stemmed lampstand becomes clear when we read Isaiah 11:1,2: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; (Isa. 11:1-2)

Revelation 1:4 also speaks of the sevenfold Spirit: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;"

The association of the seven-stemmed lampstand of the tabernacle with the sevenfold Spirit of God is also seen in Revelation 4:5: "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

So while the seven-stemmed lampstand represents Christ to the believers as His light in a dark place, it also represents the sevenfold Spirit of God.

As we think of the lampstand representing both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, we must remember that it is impossible to entirely separate the two. Romans 8:9 speaks of the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of God" and "the Spirit of

Christ": "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

To reveal Himself to us, Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus ascended, He said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John 16:13-15). Thus, we see what Christ meant when He said concerning the Holy Spirit, "He shall testify of me" (15:26).

Peter also spoke of the Holy Spirit in association with Jesus Christ: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:23-33).

So the gold of the tabernacle lampstand represents the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and its seven stems represent the sevenfold Spirit. That Jesus Christ has the sevenfold Spirit is especially seen in Revelation 3:1. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was speaking, and He said, "These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God."

It is particularly interesting to compare the seven stems of the golden lampstand to what is said in the sevenfold reference to the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11:2.

Verse 1 gives background concerning Christ: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:"

Then notice the sevenfold reference to the Holy Spirit in verse 2: "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;"

Isaiah 11 speaks primarily of the future kingdom; nevertheless, Jesus Christ is our High Priest now (Heb. 10:21), and believers are "a royal priesthood, an holy nation" (I Pet. 2:9). As such, we enjoy the privilege of entering the Holy Place of personal fellowship with Christ. The sevenfold Spirit rests on the glorified Christ, and believers "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). Our being seated with Him does not mean that we are there physically, but spiritually we enjoy the privileges of being rightly related to Jesus Christ, who is in the heavenlies, or spiritual realm.

Seven Aspects of the Holy Spirit

Seven different aspects of the Holy Spirit are viewed in Isaiah 11:2. It is interesting to think of the seven-stemmed lampstand as each aspect is considered.

First, the Holy Spirit is referred to as "the Spirit of the Lord" (v. 2). One might think in this regard of the center stem of the lampstand, for Isaiah 11:2 says, "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him" .

The first pair of opposite branches may be thought of in connection with the second reference to the Spirit in Isaiah 11:2: "The spirit of wisdom and understanding." Wisdom is more than knowledge; it is the proper use of knowledge. Understanding is a distinct aspect of the Spirit's ministry, for He causes us to understand the truth.

The next pair of opposite branches could be thought of in the following reference to the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11:2: "The spirit of counsel and might." Isaiah 9:6 lists "Counsellor" as one of the names of the incarnate Christ. The Holy Spirit gives counsel as we read the Word of God and seek His direction in applying it to our lives. The Holy Spirit also gives might in Christ, as Ephesians 6:10 says: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

The third set of opposite branches on the golden lampstand might be thought of in connection with the last reference to the Spirit in Isaiah 11:2: "The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." The Holy Spirit gives us knowledge of Jesus Christ. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit "shall testify of me" (John 15:26), and that "he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (16:15). The Apostle Paul's burning desire was to know Christ better (see Phil. 3: 10).

The Holy Spirit gives us a new understanding of Almighty God. Job expressed it in these words: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5-6)

When we properly understand the Lord, we will have the proper kind of fear. It will not be fear in the sense of being afraid; rather, it will be a reverent fear. The Holy Spirit's ministry is to produce the "fear of the Lord" in us (Isa. 11:2).

During the coming Tribulation, after the Church has been caught up to be with Christ, the sevenfold Spirit will also give spiritual light and make possible judgment that is absolutely correct. During this time Christ will exercise His right as sovereign over all the world by bringing judgment on those who reject Him. He will minister judgment through the sevenfold Spirit: "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." (Rev. 4:5)

The Apostle John was enabled to look ahead to this time, and he said, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. (5:6).

Seven Symbolic Meanings

The golden lampstand has seven distinct symbolic meanings.

First, the fact that the lampstand was made of beaten gold (Ex. 25:31) symbolizes the suffering Christ, who is now risen and glorified. The gold was beaten to shape it into the intended design. It was not melted down and poured into a mold but was beaten out of a solid piece of gold. This reminds us of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was beaten unmercifully as He willingly gave His life for us.

Gold is sometimes used as an analogy of what God wanted to produce in the believer's life. Job said, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)

Peter said, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (I Pet. 1:7).

Second, the golden lampstand was placed inside the Holy Place, not outside the tabernacle. From this we infer that Christ is hidden from the world but is revealed to the believer, who is part of the priestly family of God. The world, which views Christ from the outside, sees Him only as a great teacher or a great man, but they do not see His true preciousness. Those who receive Him as Saviour, however, have the same desire that the Apostle Paul had-to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. 3:10). Such knowledge of Christ comes only through the Holy Spirit.

The light from the golden lampstand reminds us of the Holy Spirit, who reveals the preciousness of Christ to us. And this preciousness could be seen only from within the Holy Place; none on the outside had any concept of the beauty of the light.

In our desire to know Christ better, we will recognize that we have not yet attained to the goal, but we keep pressing onward. The Apostle Paul realized this and said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:13-14)

Third, on the golden lampstand were seven bowls filled with oil. These remind us of the sufficiency of the Spirit of Christ, who has been given to believers. From Isaiah 11:2 we have seen that the sevenfold Spirit is able to meet all our needs.

Fourth, the time in Israel's history when the golden lampstand was given to the people is significant. The Israelites were in the desert, which symbolically was dark in contrast to the light of the Promised Land where God wanted the people to be. This reminds us of Jesus Christ, who is sufficient to supply all of our needs while we are living in a dark world. We may not know which way to turn, but He is our Light, and through the Word of God He will enable us to see as we need to see.

The Bible speaks of believers as children of light in contrast to unbelievers, who are of the darkness. The Apostle Paul told believers, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. (I Thes. 5:1-6)

Concerning the way God guides believers in a spiritually dark world, Psalm 32:8 says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."

Fifth, the seven branches of the golden lampstand holding up the seven lighted lamps foreshadow the Person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit within the sanctuary glorifies Christ. Because every believer is now indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Paul told Christians, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (I Cor. 6:19)

Thus, the believer's body is now the sanctuary where the Holy Spirit lives to reveal Jesus Christ. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would "take of mine, and shew it unto you" (John 16:15), and that is what the Holy Spirit is now doing in each believer's life.

Teaching us more about Christ is the operation of the Holy Spirit directed by the glorified Son of God. The Holy Spirit ministers to us to reveal the perfections of Christ and to make Him real to us. By this ministry, the Holy Spirit endears the Lord Jesus Christ to us. Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to behold and to enjoy the excellency of Christ.

Sixth, the golden lampstand was placed opposite the table of shewbread to cast light on it. There was no need for the priest to eat the bread in the dark, just as there is no need for an individual believer to read the Bible in spiritual darkness. The Holy Spirit's ministry is to illumine the Word of God to the believer so that he will understand it better.

As the light of the Holy Spirit shines on the Word of God, it will become clear to us. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

It is necessary for the Holy Spirit to illumine the Word, or else there will be confusion and disorder. Only by the ministry of the Holy Spirit can a Christian perceive Christ as the Bread of Life to sustain him. And only by the Spirit is the believer enabled to feed on Christ and to draw from Him all that is necessary for nourishment and strength.

Seventh, the light from the lampstand was also important in connection with the golden altar of incense. Without this light, the priest could not see to minister at the prayer altar. Since the golden altar speaks of worship, supplication and intercession, the aid of the Holy Spirit is indispensable in ministry at the altar. Apart from Him, one can neither praise nor petition as he should. The New Testament says, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. (Rom. 8:26-27)

In the present-day spiritual warfare in which the believer is engaged, he is instructed to pray in the Spirit: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (Eph. 6:18)

One prays in the Holy Spirit by allowing the Spirit to guide what he says and even how he says it.

In my praying, I have often said, "Lord, I don't know how to pray for this, but I want Your will to be done. I won't be happy or satisfied unless Your will is completely accomplished in this matter." I believe that at such times the Holy Spirit supersedes and presents our request to the Heavenly Father, even though we do not know how we should pray about the matter.

The Tabernacle

Lesson 10 Part 1

The Altar of Incense:

Introduction:

It was the Golden Altar of Incense, which was straight ahead, before the veil, this third piece of furniture in the Holy Place on which the holy incense was burned. Made from acacia wood overlaid with pure gold it stood higher than any other article of furniture in the holy place, 2 cubits (3 feet) tall. It was one cubit square and it had around the top a crown of gold. It had four golden horns just as the bronze altar in the courtyard. Lower down on each side there were golden rings to insert the poles for carrying.

Exod 30:1-10

And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: tim wood shalt thou make it.

A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same.

And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about.

And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal.

And thou shalt make the staves tim wood, and overlay them with gold.

And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.

And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.

And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.

Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.

And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD.

It had 4 horns of gold, one with it, a horn on each corner. (This represented the 4-camps, East-Judah, South-Ruben, West-Ephraim, North-Dan, all Gods people)

The golden altar was used for burning incense, which twice every day was offered by the priest after he had tended the wick and oil on the holy lamps. Its horns were also sprinkled with the blood of the sin offering.

The incense was a mixture of three rich and rare spices, which cannot be identified today. These were blended with frankincense and beaten to a fine powder and then salt was added. It was totally forbidden for this formula to be used by any private individual. It had to be used only in the worship of God in the holy place.

Exod 30:34-38

And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight:

And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy:

And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy.

And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD.

Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.

The incense was burnt on pieces of hot coal, which the priest removed in a censer or firepan from the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard. A censer apparently was a shallow bowl or pan with a handle on it. It could be also be used for removing the ashes from the altar or gathering up the burnt parts of the wick from the lampstand.

Poured out on burning coals the incense produced a delightful aroma in the Holy Place. It was the offering of the person whose sins had been forgiven by blood and who then went on to express the fragrance of love and worship, which was most pleasing to God.

The Golden Altar speaks to us of the worship of Jesus Christ and God's people through him as our high priest and mediator. It was only on the basis of His one sacrifice on the altar of the cross that worship is made possible. The coals, which lit the incense, were carried from the altar of sacrifice to the altar of incense.

Although the common priest would burn these holy spices on the altar over 700 times in a year he knew that no priest other than the High Priest could go beyond that point, and only on the Day of Atonement.

Lev 16:12

And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail:

-The sweet incense was to be kept burning at all times.

- It was before the veil, and the throne of God (Jesus for us)

On The Journey

Num 4:11

And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof:

Example of Moses' intercession:

Num 16:41-50

But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.

And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.

And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.

And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah.

And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.

A Type of Christ

The golden altar of incense tells us of the ministry of Jesus as our intercessor whose prayers never stop ascending to God on our behalf. Jesus said to Peter, "I have prayed for you." The four horns speak of Christ's ministry extending to the four corners of the earth. He will always pray for His own no matter where they are. He can intercede on our behalf because of the atoning work on the cross of Calvary. The incense was fueled by the fire from the altar. It is not just anyone praying for us but the King Himself as represented by the crown of gold. He knows our weaknesses and our failings and He is praying for us always.

Ps 141:2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

John 17:9-10 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

Luke 22:31-32 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

John 17:15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

Heb 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

I Jn 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

Rom 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Ps 121:4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Rom 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The golden altar of incense tells us of the ministry of Jesus as our intercessor whose prayers never stop ascending to God for us.

The Picture of Prayer

The psalmist said, "LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." (Ps 141:1-2). Here is another tabernacle "figure" which has cast many shadows of truth we can rejoice in and profit from today. The psalmist connected incense and prayer; the ascending of incense was the way he wanted his prayer to go up before God. He wanted his prayer to be as fragrant and pleasant to God as incense. Incense, then, was a picture of prayer in Old Testament days.

The New Testament also uses incense to picture prayer. In Revelation 5:8, "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints." Here the incense is stated to be prayers, and not just a picture of prayer. Revelation 8:3-4 reads, "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

The smoke of the incense was offered with the saints' prayers, and the two came together before God. Not only is incense a picture of prayer here, but the two are aligned. They are given as one and the same thing in Revelation 5:8. Incense, then, speaks of prayer ascending up before God, certainly a sweet smell to Him.

The altar of incense teaches us much about prayer. Here we can find out how to get our prayers answered. Many people never get their prayers answered; the tabernacle can show us why this is true. There are more instructions and information about prayer in the altar of incense than in any other place in the Bible. If you want to know how to get your prayers answered and what may be hindering your prayers, you can find the answer at the tabernacle and at the altar of incense.

The Place of Prayer

One of the first lessons about prayer from the altar of incense is the place of prayer. God said, "And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee." (Ex 30:6). This, we know, was in the holy place just before the veil, which stood between the holy place and the Holy of Holies where God dwelt with His people. To offer the incense the priest had to be inside the holy place at the place of worship.

There are two prerequisites for anyone coming into the holy place and to the altar of incense. First, he had to go to the altar of sacrifice, where the animal was slain and the blood shed.

The brazen altar, the place of sacrifice, was the picture of Calvary and of Christ suffering, dying, and shedding His blood for our sins. No one dared enter the holy place without the blood having been shed.

Today this means that anyone who wants to pray must first of all be sure that he has been to Calvary, where by faith he has offered Christ as his Saviour, as his Substitute and sacrifice for sins. He must claim Christ's blood to cleanse him from all sin before he can ever come into God's presence. An unsaved person has no access, no right, to come into God's presence in prayer and expect anything. The first prerequisite, then, is that a person must be saved or be born again. He must have sacrificed the Lamb of God for himself (when he claimed Jesus as his personal Saviour by faith).

Maybe you have prayed over and over again and wondered why God never heard your prayers and why you never got an answer. Perhaps the reason is that you have never personally received Christ as your Saviour. To receive answers to prayer, a person must first of all be saved. He must have a sacrifice before he can come into God's presence. Hebrews 10:19-20 says, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." God invites us to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16). But we do not come without the blood, without having claimed Christ's blood to cleanse us, to allow us to stand in the presence of a holy God.

The second prerequisite for coming to the altar of incense is in Exodus 30:18-20, where God said,

“Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:”

The priests had to wash their hands and feet before entering the holy place to worship, to offer incense to the Lord. This was so essential that God said they had to do it "that they die not" We saw that the laver is the place of confession of sin for the believer before he can come into God's presence to worship or serve Him. He must be cleansed from the daily defilement of sin. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps 66:18). This is another reason why some believers never get their prayers answered. We should be washed before we can pray to God, for He will not hear us with unconfessed sin in our lives, and our prayers will go unanswered.

Some today who have grudges, envy, jealousy, and animosity in their hearts are cheating themselves from seeing victory in their lives and from seeing God answer their prayers. “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.” (Ps 34:15-16). God says we should pray (Lk 18:1) and that He is a God who hears prayer (Ps 65:2), but the prayer must come from those who have been washed (who are saved and have confessed their sins) before they come into His presence. Not just the unregenerate have "the face of the LORD ... against them," but so do His own children who are walking in disobedience with unconfessed sin. To have our prayers answered, we must go to the laver and confess and forsake every sin.

Could this be why you have not had your prayers answered? Is there some inward, secret sin, known to no one but you and God, that is hindering your prayers? Confess it to God and forsake it; then come boldly to the throne of grace, and you will find "help in time of need" (Heb 4:16). Some have prayed for divine healing of their bodies, others have asked for power to witness, while still others have asked for better jobs, better health, and finances, but all has been in vain simply because there is still unconfessed sin in their lives.

God is a holy God, and the priest stood in the holy place to come to Him, for there he was in the place of fellowship with God. There he was occupied only with spiritual things and worshiped the Lord. This is the place where prayer ascends to God and gets through to Him. To get our prayers answered we must spend time in fellowship with God. “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” (Jn 15:7). This takes time. It means shutting ourselves up alone with God, spending time alone with Him in prayer, fellowshiping with Him, delighting ourselves in the Lord. It means to "set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col 3:2). This is talking about sitting together in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). We have been raised into the heavenlies; but only as we enjoy this fellowship and spend time there in spiritual things will we see God answer our prayers. A person can be in fellowship with another person, but, because they are hundreds of miles apart, they are not having fellowship with one another. We may be in fellowship with God, having no unconfessed sin in our life, yet we do not spend time in the holy place, fellowshiping with Him. Therefore, we do not get whatever we ask of the Lord. We need to abide, to dwell, and to spend time in God's presence to get our prayers answered.

Being in the holy place also depicted being in God's will. When God told the priests to go into the holy place, He said, "And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon" (Ex 30:1). It was God's will for the priests to go in and offer up incense. To get our prayers answered we, too, must be in God's will, and we must pray in His will. “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” (I Jn 5:14-15). Until a person has learned to pray in God's will and according to God's will, he will not see his prayer answered. There must be submission in the heart and mind of the believer when He prays. If the Lord Jesus is our Example, as He is, then we also need to be able to pray from the depth of our heart, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Lk 22:42b). We must subject our personal desires, ambitions, pleasures, and everything else to God's perfect, sovereign will so that we will trust God "that all things work together for good to them that love" Him (Ro 8:28). If we get our prayers answered, it must be according to God's will, in the holy place, in fellowship with God, with no unconfessed sin in our lives.

The position of the altar of incense was "before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat" (Ex 30:6). Since the altar of incense was two cubits high, while the Mercy Seat was a cubit and a half high, at the altar of incense one looked down upon the Mercy Seat. In the Old Testament, there was a veil between the altar of incense and the Mercy Seat. But the veil has been rent in two (Mt 27:51). We can come boldly to the throne of grace, directly into God's presence, and look on the Mercy Seat. As we come to God in prayer, we need to realize that we come to a throne of grace and whatever we receive is because of God's mercy. We deserve nothing; we should have a deep sense of our unworthiness before God. For one to demand anything of God indicates that he certainly is not conscious of looking on the Mercy Seat. We are indeed "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Ro 8:17); but while we are still in the flesh, there should be a deep consciousness of our unworthiness before God. God said, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear from heaven" (2 Ch 7:14). "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (Ja 4:6). The proper position for prayer is not a matter of standing, kneeling, with the head bowed or lifted up, but it is the attitude of the heart in a conscious looking upon the Mercy Seat, upon God's grace and goodness, so undeservingly received from Him.

The Tabernacle

Lesson 10 Part Two
The Altar of Incense:

The Power of Prayer

God instructs that the horns of the altar of incense shall be of acacia wood (Ex 30:3), overlaid with gold. Horns in the Bible speak of power. Daniel 8:6-7 speaks of the power of the ram with two horns. After the horns were broken (v. 7), "there was no power in the ram." Two articles in the tabernacle that had horns on them: the brazen altar, reminding us that there is power in the blood to cleanse from all sin, and the horns on the altar of incense, speaking of power in prayer, not in the prayer itself but in the One to whom the prayer is directed. God has ordained to use prayer to work miracles for His saints. The horns came out of the altar, not out of the incense. The altar, made of acacia wood covered over with gold, speaks of Christ. The brazen altar speaks of Christ in His humanity, judged for our sins, while the golden altar or altar of incense, made of acacia wood and covered over with gold, speaks of Christ glorified.

Christ is our Advocate; our prayer must go through Him to the Father. He is our Intercessor who "ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb 7:25) at the Father's right hand. There is power in prayer directed to God through Christ. If we have the "faith as a grain of mustard seed" (Mt 17:20), we can say to a mountain, "Be thou removed" (Mk 11:23), and it will. James says, "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray" (5:13). He tells us further that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (v. 15). There is power in prayer over physical sickness and ailments, so that God can intervene and work in our behalf. How tragic that so few today truly avail themselves of this power and see God work miracles in answer to prayer, to raise up the sick or afflicted. The power of prayer is summed up in James 5:16b: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The availing is limited only by how much we pray.

With these promises in prayer and the power of prayer, no wonder James said, "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (4:2b). For one of God's children to go through life and not avail himself of this mighty weapon of warfare simply means he is cheating himself and living a beggarly life when he could live a rich life. Too often prayer is a last resort, when it should be the first. We say, "I can't do anything else to help you, but I will pray," as though this were an extremity when nothing else will avail. God help us to realize the power in prayer and use it to its fullest for His glory!

Exodus 30:10 says, "And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD." In prayer the saint pleads for no blessing and asks for no pardon that His blood has not already bought.

The Provision for Prayer

The lampstand with its light was in the holy place so that the priests could see as they ministered at the altar of incense. Offering the incense was connected with lighting and dressing the lamps both in the morning and evening. "And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations." (Ex 30:7-8). The only way the priest could see when offering the incense was by the light of the lampstand.

Today God has made provision for the believer in prayer in the person of the Holy Spirit, who gives light, instruction, and illumination in spiritual things. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Ro 8:26). The Holy Spirit shows us how to pray; He helps us to know what to pray for, and He Himself makes intercession for us. Multitudes of believers have testified that in times of deep distress, when they neither knew how to pray nor for what to pray, somehow it seemed as though, just by groaning from their hearts, the burden of their hearts ascended to God. They sensed that God heard the unvoiced prayer. There is real comfort in realizing this help from the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 6:18 tells of "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Prayer is to be in the light shed by the Holy Spirit, in His power and energy, directed and assisted by Him. This is the divine provision for prayer to teach us how to pray, and also to know for what we should pray.

The Person of Prayer

The altar of incense was to be put "before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony" (Ex 30:6). Without a doubt, as the priests came into the holy place to offer the incense they were aware that just beyond the veil was the Mercy Seat where God dwelt with His people. They must have been conscious of how close they stood to His very presence. To come directly into His presence, they would have to go through the veil. Later the veil was "rent in twain" (Mt 27:51), so we can come directly into God's presence as we pray today. This veil (Heb 10:20) represented Jesus in His flesh, and He is the High Priest over God's house through whom we draw near "with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (v. 22). In a very real sense we come to God's throne. We come in Jesus' name, through Him, and Him alone. The Lord Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (Jn 16:23). Prayer is made through Christ Himself. We do not come to God through Mary, the saints, angels, or anyone else, but through Christ. To get our prayers answered, we must be sure that we come to God in prayer in Jesus' name, for He is the One who endorses all our prayers. If you would go to a bank and sign your name to a multimillion-dollar check without any money behind it, you would receive nothing. If we go to God in prayer in our own merit, we will get nothing. We need to come through the person of Jesus Himself, not just tacking "for Jesus' sake" or "in Jesus' name" on the end of our petitions, but in reality coming in His name.

The Practice of Prayer

"And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it" (Ex 30:7). When is the best time to pray? God instructed Aaron to offer incense every morning. Every believer will admit it is good to pray in the morning when his mind is fresh and clear, uncluttered with the day's affairs. The Bible starts out, "In the beginning God." We too should begin every day with God. We need instruction and inspiration to face the day; we know not what the day may hold, but we know who holds the day.

A good example is given in Psalm 5:3, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." Many great saints of God found the early morning hours, when all is quiet and one can be alone, the best time to spend with God in prayer. Christ set an example in Mark 1:35, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." For us to find a solitary place, it is almost a must that we get up early. If we wait until later in the day, we may find ourselves so rushed from one essential duty to another that we shove prayer aside and never find time to pray as we should.

Another good time is mentioned in Exodus 30:8, "And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it." It is a good thing to stop at the end of the day and look back over its events and count your blessings and praise God for them. Someone has said, "To thank God for our blessings extends them; not to thank Him ends them." Prayer is not always just asking for something; it should be filled with thanksgiving. Evening is a good time when we can thank God for all He has done for us throughout the day. One sign God gives of the last days is that people shall be unthankful (2 Ti 3:1). Also, in the evening we should judge ourselves (1 Co 11:31). If we were to do this regularly and confess our sins to Him, we would not be judged or chastened of the Lord, as so often is the case. We are told, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph 4:26).

Many can testify "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." (Ps 63:5-6). In the evening we should pray ourselves to sleep, which will bring satisfaction to our souls. If many who are bothered with insomnia would learn to meditate upon God at night, their whole lives would be enriched and transformed. A preacher often gets some of his best messages and sermons as he lies in bed at night, meditating upon God's Word and praying for the services to come. We are told to "stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still" (Ps 4:4). To get our prayers answered, to be relieved of the agonizing burdens of our hearts, to see miracles in answer to prayer, maybe we need to confess: "I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping." (Ps 6:6, 8).

The Persistence of Prayer

There must be persistence in prayer. "And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations." (Ex 30:8). This immediately reminds us that we should "pray without ceasing" (1 Th 5:17). We should pray in the morning and in the evening, but we also should be in a constant attitude of prayer all day long. Moment by moment, as the need arises, the smoke of our incense should ascend to God all through the day; no matter where we are. Christ, even on the cross, amid all the jeering and scoffing, prayed to God. We need to develop the habit of prayer so that at the very moment of need we can cry out to God from hearts that stay in tune with Him. It was said of Charles Spurgeon that he glided from laughter to prayer with the ease of one who lived in both elements. He was always in touch with God, so it was as natural for him to pray as to breathe. This is praying without ceasing. Nothing is too trivial or too great to bring to God, so pray without ceasing.

The Passion of Prayer

The incense was made to ascend by burning. "And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning" (Ex 30:7). This reminds us that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Ja 5:16b). Sometimes we sense that our prayers do not get any higher than our heads. If we were to search our hearts honestly we would have to admit that our prayer at that moment was not a deep burden or conviction of our heart. Sometimes, too, we know our heart is not right toward God as we pray. Also, there are times when we are conscious of deep need; we are greatly moved by the urgency of the matter and cry out of broken hearts to God. This is the burning of incense, the effectual fervent prayer that ascends to God.

Cheap, trumped-up, sentimental emotionalism won't get a thing from God, but the person who comes to Him with a broken heart, a broken and a contrite spirit, shall be effectual and receive answers. When Hannah was deeply moved as she prayed to God for a son, she said, "I have ... poured out my soul before the LORD" (1 Sam 1:15). In prayer like that, one is not so much conscious of the phrasing of his petitions as he is of communicating his burden to God and crying out for help. Where is brokenness of spirit today? Where do you hear praying out of broken hearts? How long has it been since someone prayed and you felt as though God were right there? When did you feel as though the person reached up and got hold of God Himself as he cried in agony and a broken spirit for God to hear and answer him? It isn't that our tears or our agony change God's heart and mind, but our passion simply tells us that our hearts are so in tune with God that we can pray in His will, "Not my will, but thine, be done." We are praying in the Spirit, so we can receive the petitions we ask of God. As we look at the world in sin and see men and women about to perish, we need to get stirred up and cry out to God about these things. Effectual, fervent prayer will go up as incense and reach the throne of God to get our prayers answered.

The Prescription for Prayer

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy: And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy. And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD. Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.” (Ex 30:34-38).

This incense was made of precious and rare ingredients, each of the same weight and importance. God warned that the people were never to make anything that smelled like it, for this incense was only to be made to offer up to God. These three spices in no way typify or represent three things in prayer, but there are three specific factors for getting our prayers answered. First, prayer is to be made in Jesus' name, for He said, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (Jn 16:24). Again, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (Jn 14:13). One of the prerequisites of prayer is that we pray in Jesus' name, not just for His sake, but consciously in His name.

Second, we must pray believing, for God said, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Mt 21:22). "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6). An essential ingredient in prayer is to come believing that God hears prayer and that He is a prayer-answering God. A good practice is to make a list of our requests and, after we have prayed for them, to mark down the date of the answer. Many never expect to see God work miracles in answer to prayer, and because of their lack of faith they never get their prayers answered.

A third ingredient for prayer is that we pray in His will. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 Jn 5:14-15). Prayer is to be in God's will, according to His will, for Him to answer our prayer.

In all three of these instructions God makes blanket statements that whatsoever we ask, we will have. For results, we need to be sure prayer has these three ingredients.

The Perversion of Prayer

After God had given the prescription for prayer, He warned, "Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon" (Ex 30:9). There was to be no perversion of the offering of the incense. Anything offered other than what God had prescribed was "strange incense," a perversion of what He had instructed. The word "strange" in Hebrew means "alien" or "foreign," so anything offered that was not in accordance with God's prerequisites was alien or foreign. Jesus warned, lest our prayers be as that of the hypocrites, that we should not pray to be seen or heard of men, and not to make vain repetitions as the heathen do. Those practices are "strange incense." To read a prayer from a prayer book simply because we think it is pretty, when it has not become our own from our heart, is certainly strange incense not prescribed by God. Many times in churches people pray aloud with highsounding phrases and clichés they have heard from others, and we become more conscious of what they are saying than to whom they are praying. Praying to be heard of men can easily become the strange incense we are warned not to offer.

What would a mother think if her little child came and read to her a flowery statement by someone else, as though it were her own request? The mother would rather have her come and just say what she wants, out of her heart in her

own words. Whether flowery and high-sounding or not, this would be real and not foreign to her. The best way to pray is to come with open, bared hearts, sincerely before God, and simply make our requests known to Him. God is not so much concerned with the words and the way we express them as He is with the earnestness of our hearts and our coming in faith, believing. We need to be sure that our prayer is our own, from our heart, prescribed by God, ascending to Him. Any other prayer is strange incense forbidden by God.

The Prompting of Prayer

Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord, and God killed them because of it. "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD (Lev 10:1-2).

They were doing a right thing, but in the wrong way. They were the sons of Aaron and had a right to offer incense. God does not tell us where they got the fire, but He does say it was "strange fire ... which he commanded them not." Because of their disobedience, God destroyed them with fire.

In Leviticus 16:12 the fire to be used in the censer to offer up incense was to come from the burning coals of fire on the brazen altar. That which was to kindle the incense and cause it to ascend to God was to come only from the brazen altar; anything else was strange fire. "And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces" (Lev 9:24). Here we see the origin of the fire which God wanted used to offer not only the sacrifices, but also the incense. It was fire from the Lord Himself that consumed the sacrifice. When the people saw the sacred and unusual fire, they shouted and fell on their faces. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross 1,900 years ago, the Bible says "it pleased the LORD to bruise him" (Is 53:10). Men did not put the Lord Jesus to death, but God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all and caused Him to suffer. It was the fire of God, the judgment of God, that came upon Him for man's sin. This is why He was consumed. This is why He died.

What, then, should cause us to pray today? What should make the incense ascend from our hearts? Too many people claim they need to get inside an ornate church, with soft music, to put themselves "in an atmosphere and mood of prayer." External means to prompt prayer are nothing more than "strange fire." One motivation to cause incense to arise from our hearts is a look at the wondrous cross of Calvary. Fire, or prompting, from God for what the Lord Jesus has done for us, should make us pray. We do not need the external means and methods of man; we simply need to keep close to Calvary.

Paul said he wanted to glory in nothing "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus" (Gal 6:14). If we do glory in the cross (not just a metal ornament about our necks or a statue with the image of Christ upon it) and with the eye of faith look back at Calvary and see what the Lord Jesus did for us, we will have all the burden, all the urge, we need to pray. Perhaps this is why the Lord's Supper is important for us today. Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19). As we partake of the Lord's Supper we are reminded of His death, sufferings, and the shedding of His blood, and we do show His death until He comes. When we come to the Lord's table and there truly remember His death, we have a hunger to pray. The incense is ascending up from our heart at that time, and this is a delight to God. Prayer that is prompted by anything else is "strange incense," and God says it brings forth death; it is an abomination to Him. As believers, we should be careful not to lean on external means to motivate prayer. It may be strange fire that comes forth, and, instead of our getting our prayers answered, we might receive God's wrath.

The People for Prayer

When the priests went into the holy place to worship God they were to put on a "breastplate of judgment." In this breastplate were twelve precious stones, each engraved with the name of one of the children of Israel. A beautiful picture is given in Exodus 28:29-30, "And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually. And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he

goeth in before the LORD: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually.”

The priests were reminded that they were continually bearing the names of people upon their hearts before the Lord. This certainly is the way prayer should be made by believers. To really get our prayers answered we should have names of individuals upon our heart. It is not enough for us to pray vaguely and generally, "Lord, save everybody" or "God, bless everyone." Often in church we pray, "Lord, if there is an unsaved person here, save him today." Week in and week out, many churches never see one person come to know Christ as personal Saviour.

What a difference when in a church the believers have the names of individuals upon their hearts and pray specifically, after "God, save Bill and Joe." They see them come, one another, confessing Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. This is true in individual prayer life as well. Those who only pray generally, do not see very many come to Christ. But those who keep a prayer list of individual names that they pray for specifically and consistently, will often find them coming one after another to receive Christ as Saviour. We need to pray for believers too. It is one thing to pray for God to heal all the sick and to bless all the missionaries, but it is far different to pray for individuals by name. It may be time consuming and may seem repetitious to make the same request for many separate individuals, but this is God's method for answering our prayers. Many missionaries, delivered in a time of deep need or distress, learned later that someone had prayed very specifically for them at the exact moment of deepest need. This is true intercession. We must be specific in praying and bear the names of individuals before the Lord.

It is no accident that the breastplate was to be upon the high priest's heart when he went in before the Lord. This reminds us that prayer must come from the heart. Prayer needs to be fervent; it needs to mean business with God. We do not simply go through the motions of prayer, vainly repeating names or requests, but true prayer comes from the bottom of our hearts. The high priest was to bear the names of the children of Israel upon his heart. When God's people, a church or an individual, bear people upon their heart before the Lord continually, this will bring revival and transform a church in a very real way. Prayer merely uttered from the head because "we should pray" does not often get the answer from God. But prayer upon the heart of a saint who pleads for individuals before the Lord is heard of God, and the answer is given.

If we will bear the names of people upon our hearts before the Lord continually, we will not only see our own lives transformed, but the Church transformed as well. Multitudes will come to know Christ as Saviour. We must deal with people as individuals and not in groups; name them one by one before God, and see God work in their hearts and transform their lives for His glory.

The Preciousness of Prayer

Whatever else might be said of prayer, "It is most holy unto the LORD" (Ex 30:10). Without a doubt God loves to hear His children talk to Him. Parents cherish the memory of their children first beginning to talk and coming to them even with the most minute, insignificant little requests. There is not a sadder moment than when a parent is denied the privilege, either through death or distance, of being able to communicate with his child. If talking to one another is so precious and real to us, how much more must it be between God and His own children. The Bible tells us "it is most holy unto the LORD" (Ex 30:10). God wants us to pray; He wants to hear us talk to Him; He wants to know our burdens and sorrow. It delights Him to hear us tell Him the requests of our hearts, that He as our heavenly Father might do something about them.

God was greatly provoked as they were "burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt" (Jer 44:8). Not only did they burn incense to other gods, but they burned incense unto the "queen of heaven" (vv. 17-19, 25). This, of course, God forbids, for incense is holy and precious to the Lord. To offer up prayer to anyone other than God Himself is an abomination and is disobedience unto God. Prayer is "most holy unto the LORD" (Ex 30:10). May we keep it that way in all our practice, that there be no perversion of our offering of incense to the Lord.

The Tabernacle
Lesson 11

The Ark

Preparation of the Ark

Directions for the Ark's preparation are given in Exodus 25:10-15. This chest was three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches wide, and two feet three inches high, making it about the size of a small cedar chest. It was made of acacia wood with an overlay of "pure gold, within and without" (v. 11). Four rings of gold were on the sides to hold staves of wood, also covered with gold, by which to carry the Ark on the Israelites' journeys through the wilderness. The Ark's top was a slab of solid gold called the Mercy Seat, with two cherubim at the ends, all made of one piece of beaten gold. The cherubim faced each other, with their wings stretched out over the Mercy Seat and touching each other. Here, God said,

"And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel." (Ex 25:22).

The command for the Ark's construction

Note God's command: "And they shall make an ark of timber of shittim wood" (v. 10). The way to approach God and the place to meet Him come as a revelation from Him, not from the reasoning of man. "There is none that seeketh after God" (Ro 3:11) except by the divine "drawing" of the Holy Spirit (Jn 6:44). Man left to his own devices and wisdom will change "the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Ro 1:23). The tragedy is that, with all his wisdom and logic, man cannot realize his folly in turning to false gods, as God says in Isaiah 44:14-19.

Noah was commanded, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch" (Gen 6:14). Reason said this was foolishness, for it had never rained and there was no place to float such an ark. But "by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (Heb 11:7).

One other ark is mentioned in Scripture, the ark made by Moses' mother when she hid him from Pharaoh's death penalty upon all Israelite children. She covered this ark with pitch, even as Noah did; the Hebrew word root for "Pitch" is also the root for "redemption."

The construction of the ark

The construction of the ark is given; it was to be made of wood. This speaks of the humanity of Christ, as "a root out of a dry ground" (Is 53:2). If He were no more than a mere man, there would surely be "no beauty that we should desire him" (v. 2). One thing made a difference, however, for God said, "And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about" (Ex 25:11). Christ was a man in every sense of the word, except that He did not sin, but above all, He was "God ... manifest in the flesh" (I Ti 3:16). The word speaks of His humanity and the gold of His deity. From this we see "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (I Pe 1:11). The wood furniture outside the tabernacle proper was covered with brass, which speaks of judgement. In the holy place or "heaven itself" the wood was covered with gold, speaking of glory to follow. Also, there was the "crown of gold round about." One day He shall wear the crown and be rightfully worshiped as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The carrying of the ark

Carrying the Ark is mentioned next: "And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them" (Ex 25:14). The Ark, to be carried by Israel as they journeyed through the wilderness, assured them of God's presence. Today we journey as pilgrims and strangers through the wilderness of this world; we also are assured of God's presence with us, for our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The staves (v. 15) were never to be taken out as long as they were still traveling in the wilderness. So, as long as we are in the world, we have the assurance that the Holy Spirit will abide with us (see Jn 14:16).

When the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines (I Sa 4), Eli's daughter-in-law gave birth to a son and named him Ichabod, meaning "the glory is departed" (vv.19-22). Because God plagued the Philistines so severely, they sent the Ark back to Israel, where it remained in the home of Abinadab in Kiriath-jearim. Many years later, when David had established his throne in Jerusalem, he placed the Ark on an ox-drawn cart, contrary to the instructions in Numbers 4, to take it up to Jerusalem (II Sa 6). During the journey, one of David's men was killed by the Lord when he touched the Ark to steady it. David, fearing the Lord's wrath, would not take the Ark into Jerusalem; therefore, he put it in the house of Obed-edom. It remained there three months, and Obed-edom and his household were blessed by God. Reassured, David had the ark carried up to Jerusalem by bearers, with sacrifices and great rejoicing.

David was so overjoyed that he girded himself with a simple loincloth and danced in front of the procession. His first wife, Michal, was disgusted with him and berated him for his unkingly behavior. He told her that he was willing to humble himself even more in order to celebrate before the Lord, to whom he owed his position as king. As punishment for her scorn, she remained childless to the day of her death.

Today we need to yield to the Holy Spirit, to do all that He urges us to do "before the Lord," and not be stopped by criticism or scoffing we receive. This is not at all to endorse wild fanaticism or disorderly behavior; but, as Vance Havner said, "Too many go to the ball games and act like a bunch of Comanche Indians, and then come to church and sit like a bunch of wooden Indians." With a heart of love and devotion to the Lord Jesus, controlled and motivated by the Holy Spirit, we should so walk in the Spirit as to do even the unusual to the glory of God.

Preservation of Articles Within the Ark

Look now at the preservation within the Ark. "And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee" (Ex 25:16). Inside the Ark three things were kept as Israel traveled through the wilderness: "the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant" (Heb 9:4). It is time to see what these things meant to Israel and what they should mean to us today.

The Law

First, there were the tables of the Law which God gave to Moses in the mountain. The first tables were broken by Moses when he came down from the mountain and saw that Israel was breaking the Law in worshiping the golden calf (Ex 32:19). God told Moses to "hew ... two tables ... like unto the first; and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest" (34:1). These tables were deposited within the Ark and kept there for years. Deuteronomy 31:24 says that after Moses finished writing the book of the Law, he instructed the Levites to put it in the Ark of the Covenant, "that it may be there for a witness against thee" (v. 26).

Two things are to be learned from all this. First, the Law was ever present to remind Israel that they had sinned and needed the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat or they would be condemned. Years later, when Josiah was king, the Law was found in the house of God and read. The king was convicted, as were all the people, and they repented, turned to the Lord, kept the Passover again, and saw revival. -Second, the Law within the Ark speaks of Christ, who could say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps 40:8). Again, "I do always those things which please him [my Father]" (Jn 8:29). How wonderful it is to realize that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Ro 10:4). He came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill it for you and me. Now God looks at us as though we ourselves had kept the Law, for we are now in Christ, and all that He accomplished is credited to us.

The Pot of Manna

The golden pot of manna also was kept in the Ark. "And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations. As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept" (Ex 16:33-34). The manna was the food God miraculously provided for the Israelites in the wilderness. It was first given when they began to murmur for lack of food and complained to Moses. God gave them specific instructions about gathering the manna daily and not trying to keep any for the next day. Sure enough, some tried to keep it, but it became rotten (16:20). "And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan" (v. 35).

Jesus said,

I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (Jn 6:48-51).

The manna, then, was a type of Christ.

There is the initial act whereby we partake of Christ as the bread of life and receive eternal life. There is also the daily partaking of Him through the written Word for our spiritual food. This cannot be stored up but must be taken daily, even as the Israelites took the manna daily in the wilderness.

A great tragedy occurred along the way. Israel said, "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna before our eyes" (Num 11:5-6). They forgot the slavery, the hard taskmasters, and in Egypt. When they began to complain about God's provision, they wanted to satisfy their fleshly appetites. It is dangerous to look at and set our affections on temporal things, for we, too, will complain and lose our taste for the things of God.

When Israel grew tired of the manna, "The people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it" (Num 11:8), but still they could not make it satisfying to themselves. Today, some try to "doctor up" God's Word to make it palatable, but it just will not satisfy the worldly minded. The

people cried out for meat, and God sent a wind which brought quail from the sea for them to eat. But God said they were to eat it for a month until it came out of their nostrils and was loathsome to them. It did just that, and then God sent a plague upon them. The sad commentary on this whole incident is in Psalm 106:15: "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul."

Aaron's rod

Aaron's rod that budded was also to be put in the Ark as a testimony. Again we see another story of tragedy in the life of Israel in their wilderness wanderings, recorded in Numbers 16-17. The people were not satisfied with their leaders.

And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?" (Num 16:3).

Does this sound familiar to some congregations today? In the first place, Moses did not take this honor on himself; God chose him. The congregation did not act very holy along the way, even though they thought they were holy. Because of their sin and rebellion, God did a most unusual thing to judge Korah and those who followed him.

The ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit [hell], and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation (vv. 31-33).

It is still a dangerous thing to rebel against God and His leaders!

To show the others who was to be the spiritual leader, God told them to take twelve rods and write the name of the twelve tribes of Israel on them, with Aaron's name on the one for the tribe of Levi. They were to place them before the Ark overnight, and in the morning the owner of the rod that blossomed was to be the leader. When Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, "Behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds" (17:8). Here was God's seal on the one to be His leader and priest. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels" (v. 10). So it was to be a sign for Israel for years to come of their rebellions and of God's seal on Aaron and his sons as priests of God. Ministers of God need the seal of a life-giving ministry and of souls being saved as they minister the Word of God.

Propitiation over the Ark

God tells about the Mercy Seat in Exodus 25:17-22. A slab of pure gold, the same length and width as the Ark, was the Ark's cover. Made from the same piece of gold and fashioned at the ends of the Mercy Seat were the cherubim. God said that between these two cherubim and above the Mercy Seat is where He would meet and commune with Israel. The word for Mercy Seat is the same word translated propitiation, which means to placate, appease, or make satisfaction. The work of Jesus Christ is seen as the fulfillment of the Mercy Seat:

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 Jn 2:1-2).

Now, God is a holy God, for the seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts" (Is 6:3). Any sin is a heinous offense to God's holiness. Divine justice demands that sin be fully punished, for in no way can an infinite God be generous or lenient toward man in forgiving his sins. The righteous demands of God's Law must be fully met before God can have anything to do with sinful man. However, God's matchless love has provided the one and only way that God can remain just and yet justify the sinner, and that is at the Mercy Seat. Christ has satisfied God's every demand for righteousness and the righteous settlement of man's sins. Christ has once suffered for sins and shed His blood.

In the Old Testament, on the Day of Atonement the priest went into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat. This was to make atonement for the sins of the people for the past year. When Christ died, "by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb 9:12). "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (9:24).

Not only was Jesus Christ the atonement for our sins, the sin offering and trespass offering, but He was the fulfillment of the whole burnt offering as well. This was the offering which pictured doing God's complete will and fully satisfying a holy God. It was such an offering that God says is a sweet-smelling sacrifice to Him.

The description of the two cherubim is given in Exodus 25:18-22. From their position they seem to be bowed in the presence of the omnipotent God, indicating an act of reverence. We need to learn from this picture that there should be deep reverence in the presence of the holy God. When the apostle John saw Christ in His glorified form, he "fell at his feet as dead" (Rev 1:17). One day every knee will bow before Him (see Ro 14:11). How tragic that some will have to bow unwillingly and hear the sad words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41).

Then we see that "toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be" (Ex 25:20). The idea seems to be that they are looking on the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat. First Peter 1:11-12 seems to indicate that Christ's sufferings are "things the angels desire to look into."

Finally, the Mercy Seat is the place of union and communion with God. Man can only meet God on His terms at the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat. When the sinner comes by faith to the throne of grace and claims Christ's blood to satisfy God for his sins, he will immediately be born of God. This brings him into eternal union with God. No longer is he seen as in Adam alone, for now he is in the second Adam, Christ. No longer is he "without God in the world" (Eph 2:12), but his body becomes "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (I Co 6:19).

God also says it is from here that He will commune with men from above the Mercy Seat. The tabernacle had a veil, which kept the priest from going into the very presence of God except once a year on the Day of Atonement. Now that the veil has been rent, God says we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Heb 10:19-20).