

The Tabernacle of God

Before we actually begin this study on the tabernacle, it will be helpful to take a close look at the condition of Israel at the time God gave them the tabernacle.

Israel at The Giving of The Tabernacle

Sheltered Exodus 12:12, 13

They were sheltered from a richly deserved judgment.

God can only dwell in the midst of a sheltered (sanctified) people. Otherwise they are still under judgment as is the rest of mankind.

Redeemed Exodus 13:1, 2

They were a purchased people. The very blood that sheltered them was also the purchase price paid.

Deliverance Exodus 14:21, 22

They were delivered from bondage to sin, Satan, and the world.

They were to go forth as servants of God, but free from all else.

Provision Exodus 16:16-18

They had supernatural provision.

They received water from the rock, fresh manna each day, their clothes did not wear out, et cetera.

Sanctification Exodus 20:1-3

They were sanctified to obedience.

Not only is the blood sprinkled upon the door for shelter, but it is also sprinkled upon the path of God's redeemed people to secure their walk for him.

Restoration Exodus 33:12-14

They were restored from the sin and folly of a departure from God.

If we let our thoughts stray from God for even an hour we will dishonor him like Peter, David, and Hezekiah.

Rest Exodus 35:1-3

They have entered into the thoughts of God's rest.

Here we have the repetition of the command to remember the Sabbath, pointing to the rest of God.

The Materials For The Tabernacle Exodus 25:1-7

These materials were to be collected in a freewill offering: "Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart, ye shall take my offering."

Metals

Only three metals used:

Gold

Symbolizes deity.

All shittim wood was overlaid with gold.

The lampstand and mercy seat were solid gold.

Silver

Symbolizes redemption.

Silver forms the foundation of the Tabernacle. Each board rested in two sockets of silver.

Brass

Symbolizes judgment.

Used exclusively in the court.

Curtains

Four materials used for curtains:

Blue

Purple

Scarlet

Fine linen

Other Coverings

Goat's hair

Ram's skins dyed red

Badgers' skins

Shittim wood for boards

Final Items

Oil, spices, and precious stones.

A Change in Order

The first thing we need to look at is the change in the order for building the various parts of God's Tabernacle.

In Exodus 25:1-22, God begins with the construction of the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant and then moved outward to the structure of the Tabernacle. This initial description shows God speaking from the viewpoint of the law and his throne is the first thing described.

Unfortunately, by the time actual construction began (Exodus 35) the people had sinned (Exodus 32) and dishonored God's throne. Therefore, God had to intervene with mercy and grace, thus, the narrative of the making of God's Tabernacle begins with the construction of the curtains which made the Tabernacle proper.

The Linen Curtains

Exodus 36:8-13

Why Linen?

On the day of atonement, the High Priest set aside his glorious priestly garments, which clearly depicted his position and calling, and wore only spotless white.

This is how he dressed as the bearer of the blood of atonement going into the presence of God.

Jesus set aside his glory as God and was clad only in sinless humanity.

Their Construction

There were a total of 10 curtains, each 28 cubits (42 feet) long and 4 cubits (6 feet) wide.

They were joined, side-by-side, in two sets of 5 curtains each. The two parts were then joined to each other by 50 loops of blue, and hooked with golden hooks, which joined everything together making one Tabernacle.

The Colors

Though the curtains themselves were of fine linen, pure and white, they were embroidered with 3 vivid colors: blue, purple and scarlet.

Blue

The significance of blue is given to us in Exodus 24:9, 10.

The intense blue of a sapphire speaks of heaven. The word "sapphire" is from the same root word meaning "to speak," or "declare," and also a "book."

In the 19th Psalm we read, "The heavens *declare* the glory of God." The heavens sapphire the glory of God.

God directed that all of Israel should have a ribbon of blue on the bottom edge of their garments (Numbers 15:38-40). Heaven's color was upon Jesus from the beginning.

Purple & Scarlet

Both of these royal colors were put upon Jesus in his last hours.

Purple, "Argaman," like blue, "Tekeleth," is the name of a dye obtained from a shellfish.

Scarlet was obtained from the crushed bodies of "Tola" worms.

Their Dimensions

The word for curtains is the word "yerioth," which comes from a root word meaning to tremble or wave—the way suspended curtains do.

The word "yerioth" is feminine and, when scripture speaks of the curtains being joined "one to another," it is "a woman to her sister."

This becomes even more striking when we look at the unit of measurement for the tabernacle, i.e., the "cubit."

Cubit (ammah), comes from a root word meaning "mother." It was the length of the mother-arm, the forearm, and is, therefore, a standard that comes directly from man, not from above him.

The curtains were 4 cubits wide and 28 cubits long. Four is the number of the earth; 28 is the product of 4X7. Seven speaks of completion or perfection.

These curtains were in two sets of 5, exactly like the ten commandments. Five is the number of grace.

The ten commandments were on two tables of stone.

The commandments on the first table depict our responsibility toward God:

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Honour thy father and thy mother.

The commandments on the second table represent our responsibility toward our fellow man:

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

The Loops of Blue

The loops were blue and were added to the curtains so as not to disrupt the pattern of the curtains themselves. The taches would pass through the loops without penetrating the fabric of the curtain.

Jesus is represented in the loops of blue. Jesus alone unites us in our responsibilities toward both God and man.

The number of loops was fifty, a number signifying celebration and ceremony. Fifty is 5X5X2 or full grace, grace intensified.

The Golden Taches

It is the deity of Jesus that holds fast what is due to God and man.

Word for tache is “chairsim” coming from a root word meaning to bend or stoop. We are thus reminded of the humbling of the Logos in assuming the human nature for the work of salvation.

The Covering of Goat’s Hair

Exodus 36:14-18

This is referred to as “the tent over the tabernacle.”

The goat’s hair was spun (Exodus 35:26) and woven into a dark cloth for the curtains.

The fact that goat’s hair is black (or at least very dark) is discovered in Song of Solomon:

1:5

Kedar was a son of Ishmael. The tents of the nomadic tribe that descended from him were of black or dark brown goatskin.

6:5

An additional use for this cloth of goat’s hair was sackcloth; a common material of apparel for prophets.

Since these curtains speak of Jesus, they must present him as a prophet.

Not Goat’s Skin

It is important to understand that these coverings were made of goat’s hair, not of the skin.

Hair is the outermost covering, over the skin, and is the point of contact between the animal and the outer world.



This signifies a separation.

The Prophets Speak

The prophets were not called to ministry until after the failure of the people and of the priesthood.

The prophets’ ministry is to speak for God and call people to repentance and accountability.



This is how we see Jesus.

The Dimensions

Eleven curtains divided into two sets of five and six respectively.

Width = 4 cubits

Length = 30 cubits (sorrow & mourning)

The number 30 is the product of 5 (grace) and 6 (man).

We see grace being multiplied to man to alleviate his sorrow and suffering.

Ram’s Skins And Badger’s Skins

Exodus 36:19

Although we have precious little description of these two items in this verse, we may appeal to scripture for deeper enlightenment.

Ram’s Skins

There are three features to be considered with the ram’s skins:

Rams

The most obvious feature is that the animals were rams.

When Abraham went to offer up Isaac as a burnt-offering, God provided a ram, “caught in a thicket by his horns.”

At the coming of Christ, God had brought a vine out of Egypt (Israel) and planted it in the on the mountain of his inheritance.

God expected it to bring forth grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.

The vineyard had become a thicket.

The horns of the ram suggest the authority of Christ.

The authority of Jesus was at least partly responsible for the Jews delivering him up to death.

The superscription on his cross read, “King of the Jews.”

The ram was caught by his horns in the thicket.

Two rams were used for the consecration of priests (Exodus 29:15-26).

One of the rams was a burnt-offering, and the other was called the ram of consecration.

The priests laid their hands upon this ram, showing their identification with it; then it was slain, and its blood sprinkled not only upon the altar (indicating God’s acceptance of the sacrifice), but also put upon the ear, thumb, and great toe of the priest, showing that he was now specifically and completely set apart to God.

Skin

The very first intimation of salvation by substitution is discovered in the clothing of Adam and Eve.

The first promise was that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head.

This shows Christ’s victory over Satan, through death.

But in the clothing of skins we have the application of the benefits of that death to his people.

Dyed Red

Though it scarcely need mentioned, red signifies the Lord’s death.

Therefore, in the ram's skins dyed red, we see Christ, yielding his perfect life in devotion to God, making himself our substitute.

Badger's Skins

The root of this word is the tanning process that makes the skin impervious to rain and weather.

In Ezekiel 16 we find God recalling his grace and provision for Israel as follows:

He found her lying in her own blood

He had given her life

He had clothed her with a beauty not her own

In connection with all of this adornment, God had shod her with badger's skin (Ezekiel 16:10).

Thus, the significance seems plain enough; the skins of badgers were quite adequate covering for the feet of a bride, and typical of the ample provision provided by God for our journeyings here.

The Boards of The Framework

Exodus 36:20-24

Acacia wood is the prominent material in both the framework and the furniture of the tabernacle, the candlestick and laver being the exceptions.

Other than its reference to the Tabernacle, there is only one passage which refers directly to shittim wood—Isaiah 41:19, 20:

I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

Israel was a moral waste...nothing grew for God.

God is going to make the wilderness and solitary place rejoice.

Why Shittim Wood?

Why not cedar or olive wood?

Cedar and olive were used in the construction of Solomon's temple.

That temple was a type of the millennial glory and habitation of God among the restored nation of Israel (1 Kings 6:15, 31-33).

Acacia (shittim), however, was the only tree that grew in the desert. It was the only three immediately available for the purpose intended—a habitation in the desert, made of the wood of the desert.

Dimensions

The boards were all the same size:

10 cubits long

1½ cubits wide

10 cubits × 1½ cubits = 6.6666666666666666

Six is the number of man.

Number of Boards

The number of boards will determine the overall length and width of the Tabernacle.

There were 20 boards on each side, thus a total of 40 boards for the sides.

20 × 1½ = 30 cubits in length.

There were 6 boards on the back (west)

6 × 1½ = 9 cubits, but there were 2 corner boards also bringing the width to a probable 10 cubits.

The Tabernacle structure had only 3 walls.

1½ Cubits

The width of 1½ cubits expresses a relationship between Christ and man.

Christ is full, i.e., he is one (1) and is neither parsed out nor divided up.

The half cubit represents man being completed in him.

Man is not yet full, i.e., there are still people being added to the family of God.

Since there is no distinct separation in the boards (a board of 1 cubit fastened to a board of ½ cubit) but simply a measure, the idea of the church is brought forth.

Characteristics of The Acacia tree

It is the tree of the desert, but there are different varieties of acacia:

One produces a gum used as an ointment for healing.

Another is used to produce a medicinal tonic.

Still another has leaves that are very sensitive to its surrounding.

The durability of the wood suggests the incorruptible nature of the humanity of Jesus.

Ear to Body

In Hebrews 10:5 we read:

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

This is a quote from Psalm 40:6 which says:

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

First he is given an ear to hear and agree with God's perfect plan and purpose.

Next he is given a body with which to execute God's word.

This body was perfect:

Perfectly free from sin.

Perfectly free from unbelief.

Perfectly free from unforgiveness.

Perfectly capable of dying.

Not mortal, but capable of dying.

Perfectly capable of yielding to sin.

The Gold Upon The Wood

The boards, the ark, and all the furniture were completely hidden from outside view.

They were only visible (ever) to the priests and to God.

The gold speaks of deity, the wood his humanity.

So, in the boards we have a picture of the incarnate Christ.

The wood was covered with gold, thus God sees his coequal son in the depths of his humiliation.

The Significance

The boards made up the framework of the tabernacle. They were placed side-by-side and set upon sockets of silver.

The Sockets And The Boards

A Common Foundation of Redemption

The silver was obtained through Israel's payment of the ransom price.

Exodus 30:11-16

Exodus 38:25-27

It is abundantly plain that the foundation of the tabernacle, God's habitation, is based upon redemption.

At ½ shekel (10 gerahs) for redemption, the obvious thought is the availability of the ransom price, thus leaving each person without excuse. God's people, resting upon a foundation of redemption, form the habitation of God in the world.

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

Upright

The boards are standing up!

Since Christ does not need redemption, the boards represent us in him.

We are in him according to the full value of what he is.

Colossians 2:6-10

John, speaking of our relationship in the family of God, says, "As he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

How is He?

However he is, that is how we are, too. Right now!

Two Tenons

Each board had two tenons, not just one. Each tenon was embedded in its own socket.

The word for tenon is "hand." Each tenon represents faith.

Two Faiths?

The two tenons (hands) are you and Christ.

Christ used his faith to gain victory for you.

You use your faith to appropriate all that he has gained for you.

Once the tenons are in place in the sockets, they are invisible.

Our faith is not on display.

Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Romans 14:22

Our faith is hidden inside what it is resting upon.

Resting

The boards are not "clinging" to the sockets, as though everything depended upon the strength of the board.

The boards "rest" upon the sockets of silver.

The tenons prevent the boards from slipping off the sockets.

Each board rested upon its sockets showing that our individual security does not depend upon our fellow-Christians, but only on Christ's work.

The Rings on The Boards

There were 3 rings on each board through which the bars passed.

No board was complete without these rings.

The rings speak of the eternal link between the believer and God, and indicate that no board was for itself, but had a connection with all the others.

The gold of the rings reveals the divine nature of the tie between the boards.

John 1:12, 13

The rings show that each believer is eternally linked, by a divine work, to Christ and to his fellow believers.

The Bars

There were 5 bars on each side of the Tabernacle, or 15 bars total.

Each group of 5 bars was comprised of 1 board that spanned the entire length of its respective wall, and 4 other bars, two above and two below.

The bars were made of shittim wood overlaid with gold.

The numbers 1 and 4 are significant.

1 = sovereignty

4 = earth

We see the sovereign Lordship of Christ and the unity he brings to his people in this world.

The central bar points to his deity while the other four bars illuminate his humanity.

It is the fullness of Christ that unites his people, neither his deity nor his humanity alone can do it.

Thus, the bars depict the Lordship of Christ in our lives, bringing us into alignment with each other in him.

The Veil & Entrance Hanging

Exodus 36:35-38

The Veil Materials

The materials for the veil are the same as for the 10 curtains—blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cherubim.

It is significant that the blue is mentioned first rather than the fine linen.

This suggests that as the cherubim for the curtains were embroidered upon a groundwork of white linen, those for the veil were put upon a background of blue, and the remaining colors were used in forming the figures.

The 4 Pillars

The fact that these four pillars rest upon silver shows us that, like the boards, they speak of Christ's people as seen in him.

The question is sure to arise, "But how can Christians in any sense be represented in God's house as holding up Christ?"

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out. Revelation 3:12

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. John 12:32

Sin is Not The Veil

Sin has never been the veil of separation. The very layout of the Tabernacle, and the order of rites prohibits this idea.

Before the high priest ever approached the veil, his sin, along with the sin of the nation, was atoned for at the brazen altar.

A Barrier

Though not sin, the veil is a barrier nonetheless. The access to God is barred.

This is evidenced not only by its hanging there, but also by the cherubim which were embroidered upon it. When God turned Adam and Eve out of the garden for their sin, he set cherubim at the entrance with a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.

The veil was Christ in the flesh!

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14:6

But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest,

while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Hebrews 9:7, 8

Christ abode alone in untouchable, unapproachable perfection. No sinner may approach God through the life of Christ. If Christ will bring sinners to God, it would have to be through his death, bearing the penalty for their sin.

Rending The Veil

Sin was not rent, it was put to death on the cross.

The flesh of Christ must be given up in death so the way to God could be manifest.

Apart from the cross, Christ's perfection would have kept man eternally apart from God.

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; Matthew 27:51

The significance of the veil then is clearly seen in Hebrews 10:19, 20

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;

The Entrance Hanging

The significance of the materials remains constant.

While the veil barred the way into the presence of God, the hanging was for the constant entrance of the priests into the holy place.

The 5 pillars were of shittim wood, overlaid with gold, with hooks of gold, and “chapiters,” or capitals, and fillets of gold.

These pillars rested upon sockets of brass, not silver.

Because the pillars do not stand upon silver, they do not suggest believers.

The veil is the testimony of the Church to Christ, but the outer hanging is the Lord’s own testimony to what he is.

Christ did not come to judge the world (John 12:47) since all things are judged by God’s word.

Jesus never swerved from God’s word for even a moment.

There was no toning down of divine truth in order to meet or confront man.

Therefore, we find Christ’s foundation of brass as being rooted in God’s word.

At the top of the pillars were capitals of gold, showing that Christ, having completed his work, is now crowned with glory.

We now have before us the completed building, with the hangings at the entrance and before the Holy of Holies.

Our next considerations will be of the ark and the mercy seat.

The Ark

Exodus 37:1-9

The ark was a chest or coffer of acacia wood, 2½ cubits long, 1½ cubits wide, and 1½ cubits high.

It was overlaid with gold inside and out, so that nothing but gold could be seen.

Around the top was a crown of gold, and on the four corners were placed four rings of gold, two on a side, through which were passed two staves of acacia wood, overlaid with gold, which were never to be removed from the ark.

Upon the ark was a cover of pure gold, with a cherub at each end.

The entire mercy seat was beaten out of one piece of gold.

Inside the ark was placed “the testimony,” or the two tables of the law, and from Hebrews 9:4 we learn:

Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

Our investigation of the ark will not be in the spirit of Uzzah who thought the ark needed his hand to steady it (2 Samuel 6:6, 7), nor of those at Beth-shemesh who looked into the ark and were judged for their irreverence (1 Samuel 6:19).

Our attitude will be more along the lines of the cherubim—reverence, godly fear, and worship.

The Dimensions of The Ark

The first thing we must come to terms with is revealed in the ½ cubit dimensions. Our knowledge of God is partial, not complete (1 Kings 10:6, 7).

Overlaid With Gold

The most striking observation regarding the ark its covering of gold.

The acacia wood gave form and dimension to the ark, but the appearance was all gold—no wood was visible.

Thus, the humanity of Christ gives him the form in which he was and is.

The divine nature is displayed over the form of a servant.

The Primary Purpose of The Ark

The answer to this question brings two great truths to surface. We will consider them in the order they naturally occur. However, in God’s mind they would, undoubtedly, come in the reverse order.

A Reminder

At that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark. And I made an ark of shittim wood...and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the LORD commanded me.

Deuteronomy 10:1 -5

The Tables of The Law

Here in Deuteronomy, Moses was recounting to the people how God had led them and cared for them, and how they had completely failed.

The point of the exercise was to magnify God and generate true humility resulting in genuine dependence and obedience

Even though a second set of tables was provided out of God’s mercy, they were going to be nothing short of a curse to the stiff-necked and rebellious people.

They should have been safe and “unbroken” in any Israelite’s tent, but this was not the case.

A special place had to be prepared for them and, so, Moses speaks of an ark of shittim wood. So God had to prepare a shrine for that which should have been enshrined in each heart.

So God raised up a second Adam and he is testified to in the ark. One who would safeguard the law and keep it in his heart.

Golden Pot of Manna

The manna was the daily food of the people throughout their wilderness journey (Exodus 16:14-21).

They were forbidden to lay up any of it; it was to be gathered daily for their daily need.

In John 6:32, 33, Jesus declares himself to be the true manna.

The dew fell in the wilderness and, when it had passed, the manna was visible.

The golden pot emphasizes the glory of Christ.

Aaron's Rod That Budded

This marks a solemn epoch in Israel's history. In Numbers 16:1 ff., we read of Dathan and Abiram, of the tribe of Reuben, and Korah, of the tribe of Levi, who rebelled against divinely appointed authority—in Moses as leader and in Aaron as priest.

Dathan and Abiram rebelled chiefly against Moses as leader, while Korah's rebellion was primarily against Aaron as priest.

Moses and Aaron cannot be separated because Christ, of whom they were types, is both King and Priest.

So while others may put forth their rod, they are already shriveled and dead. Only the true priesthood ministers life.

Another aspect of Aaron's rod is discovered in the fact that it was taken from the almond tree.

Almond, in Hebrew, means "the hastener," being the first to bloom in the Spring; just as Christ is the "... first-fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Thus, the first purpose of the ark is a repository for the law, the manna, and Aaron's rod; each of these articles was a reminder and a witness of the failure on the part of the people.

The tables of the law were a reminder of the golden calf apostasy.

The manna reminded them of their murmuring and unbelief.

Aaron's rod recalls the rebellion of Korah against the priest of God.

The Foundation For The Mercy-seat

This is, doubtless, the primary purpose from God's point of view.

Since the mercy-seat will be covered next I will not go into to it now, but I will make mention of the staves which were put into the rings on the two sides (or feet) of the ark to carry it through the wilderness.

Emphasis has been placed upon the "feet," suggesting that the ark, when carried upon the shoulders of the priests, would be above their heads and in plain view of the people as it was being carried.

The staves in the rings remind us that Christ always journeys with his people. If his people are pilgrims, he will be a

_____ pilgrim too, and fulfill his word,

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Hebrews 13:5

The people were never to march without the ark. It was to go before them and mark out the way.

The Mercy-seat Exodus 37:6-9

The word is not literally "mercy-seat," but "covering."

Man's idea of a covering is concealment; God's is atonement.

Pure Gold

Since the mercy-seat was of pure gold there were no alloys in it. Thus, whatever the mercy-seat stands for, it must be divine and eternal.

One Piece

Because the mercy-seat was beaten from a single piece of gold, the cherubim were an integral part of the mercy-seat; not merely an addition to it.

Heathen cultures had something similar to the ark and mercy-seat. The "cherubim" were grotesque and repulsive.

The most significant feature of these heathen arks is that upon the lid there is an idol—man's work and god—upon which the cherubim gazed in worship.

On the mercy-seat there is no representation of God. The cherubim look down upon the mercy-seat.

Upon the top of the ark there was a crown of gold which served a twofold purpose:

Beauty for the ark

Securing the mercy-seat in place

This crown of gold represents the glorified Christ (Hebrews 2:9).

Justified by The Law

Jesus could have been justified by the law and sat enthroned upon it.

But, instead of being the executioner of the law, he bared his spotless chest to the sword of justice as our substitute.

The same life that holds the law unbroken receives the penalty for its having been broken by all others.

Because the storm of God's wrath (as touching the law) has completely spent itself upon Jesus, the law can no longer curse the person who takes refuge in Jesus.

This, then, brings us to the mercy-seat—a divine, righteous, and eternal covering for the law of God and for the guilty (but believing) sinner.

Since the mercy-seat is the exact same measure as the ark, the law was completely hidden from view. Therefore the law could not act against people, even though they had broken it.

The Cherubim

The cherubim are supports or guardians of the throne of God.

Genesis 3:24

Numbers 22:23

1 Chronicles 21:16

These show guardian cherubim

From Exodus 25:22 and Numbers 7:89 we find the cherubim forming the sides or supports of the throne of God.

Cherubim are seen as supporting God in 1 Chronicles 28:18.

In Ezekiel 1:4-28 we see 4 cherubim, not two. They have the likeness of a man, but with 4 faces:

A man

Jesus the man

A Lion

Jesus the King

An Ox

Jesus the Servant

An Eagle

Jesus the Son of God

The mercy-seat was (and is) the place of communion— Exodus 25:22

The Holy Place 37:10-16

In the Holy of Holies the ark with its mercy-seat stood alone, except on the day of atonement. But in the holy place was the table of show-bread, the altar of incense, and the golden candlestick.

It was in this chamber that the priests performed many of their routine duties, tending the golden lampstand, the table of shewbread, and the golden altar of incense.

In Hebrews 9:1-5 we find the symbolic value of all of these.

Although the measurements of the temples were double that of the tabernacle, the same furniture was used.

It is interesting to note that on the Arch of Titus only the golden lampstand and the table of shewbread are depicted. The golden altar of incense was omitted.

The Beaten Gold

There is a special significance in the gold being beaten and not cast.

Although Christ, himself, was beaten, and allowing some rudimentary connection between the beaten gold and the beating of Christ, this is not the primary significance of the beaten gold.

No Other Like It

A mold is used to cast an object. While the mold itself is unique, it produces many objects all exactly the same.

An object that is carved from wood or stone, or beaten from a single piece of gold is completely unique. There will never be anything made exactly like it.

Christ is unique in all of creation. There will never be another Christ.

This will become even more pronounced when we examine the Lampstand in two weeks.

The Table Exodus 37:10-16

The table has 4 distinct features: materials, dimensions, form, and uses. Each of these features, combined, will give us the meanings of the whole.

Materials

The same materials that were presented to us in the ark and the boards; shittim wood overlaid with gold.

Dimensions

The height is the same as the ark, i.e., 1½ cubits.

This strongly suggests that the bread of communion is on the same level as the mercy-seat.

Fellowship with God is with Christ, and must, therefore, be on the same plane as the value of Christ's redemption.

The overall dimensions of 2X1X1½ do not mean that much to us until we double them (Job 11:6).

4X2X3 = In the earth (4) there is unity (2) through God (3).



2 Corinthians 13:14

Form

There are certain attributes of the two crowns and the border that require our close attention.

As the gold "crown" on the ark served both to beautify it and to hold the mercy-seat securely in place, so too the crown around the table would serve as an adornment and to keep the showbread from slipping off.



Hebrews 2:9

The Showbread

Actually the showbread was known by a number of names:



Bread of face

Being set before God's face



The continual bread

Ever before God



Bread of ordering



Bread of setting forth

Pierced Cakes

The “cakes” of showbread (Leviticus 24:5) is literally “pierced cakes.”

This piercing is appropriate, not primarily for Christ's piercing on the cross, but the quality of life he lived here on earth—his constant subjection to the heat of trial.

Fine Flour

These loaves were made of fine flour, which speaks of the perfect humanity of Jesus.

Each cake was made of two tenth deals of flour—the amount of flour that accompanied the offering of a ram.



The skin of the ram was used for the covering of the Tabernacle, and signifies the consecration of Christ unto death.

Twelve Loaves

We are instantly reminded of the 12 tribes of Israel.



12 is the number of divine government

Thus the twelve loaves represent Israel under the control of divine government.

The Border

The border is a separation suggesting exclusion from the table of all that is not consistent with the glory of Christ.

If we look at the loaves as suggesting Christ's people in him, they are separated from all the world.

The Vessels

The vessels were of pure gold; all is divine.



Dishes

Contained the bread



Spoons

To spoon the frankincense over the bread



Covers

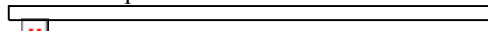
Flagons or jugs to hold the drink offering



Bowls

For the drink offering poured out of the flagons

The table speaks of the food of God—Christ's person—in which he has communion with his people.



The Lampstand Exodus 37:17-24

Pure Gold

Beaten from one talent of pure gold, the lampstand would be appraised between \$25,000 to \$50,000.

It had a base or “shaft” with 3 pairs of branches extending from a central branch.

All of the branches were adorned with “bowls, knobs, and flowers,” from the almond tree.

Light

Although the lampstand was to give light throughout the entire holy place, it is mentioned in connection with each article in the room.

Exodus 40:24, 25

Exodus 30:7, 8

The lampstand was positioned in such a way that it never had to be moved in order to give light so service could be rendered in the holy place.

Christ does not have to be changed for each generation of service.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Psalms 119:105

It is God's word that should illumine all that we do in service to him.

Oil

Beaten, not pressed, of the best of the olive fruit.

Oil has four uses in scripture:

Food

Medicine

Light

Anointing

Wicks

The snuffers and snuff-dishes were used to trim the lamps and carry off the burnt portions of wick.

Trimming was done morning by morning to avoid any dimming of the light in the sanctuary.

While the oil and the light speak of the Holy Spirit, the candlestick speaks of Christ.

We Are The Wicks

If a wick is to be used, it must be burned; when burned, it must be trimmed.

Only The Priest

Trimming was the work of the priest. No hand but his could remove the burned portion of the wick to enable it to burn brightly once again.

None but the hand of Jesus can cause the light of his people to burn brightly.

Did Not Fail

Trimming the lamps did not imply that they had failed to give light. The priest would not allow the lamp to reach that stage.

The charred portion had to be removed, revealing a fresh portion for the oil to pass through unhindered.

The wick was not the fuel, but the channel for the fuel.

The portion of the wick that is removed is that which had been used to give forth the light.

Therefore it is that portion of the believer's life which has shone so brightly in the power of the Spirit, that must be removed.

If we are allowed to dwell upon, boast in, rest in this area of our lives, it mars our brightness.

Past experiences of:

service

communion

worship

prayer

Are nothing more than a burned wick today.

It cannot be a channel for today's flame.

The Golden Altar

Exodus 30:22-38; 37:25-29

At 2 cubits, this is the tallest piece of furniture in the Tabernacle. The materials used are the same as for the ark: shittim wood overlaid with gold.

The Significance

The Golden Altar speaks of praise and worship offered to God.

Perfect Humanity

The humanity of Jesus in praise may be observed at the grave of Lazarus:

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. John 11:41, 42

He had just been weeping over the death of Lazarus showing his perfect compassion; and in his work of raising the dead he showed his dependence upon his Father.

Glorious Deity

Jesus shows his transcendence—

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Matthew 11:25-27

Acacia Overlaid With Gold

As our High Priest, the prayer of Jesus in John chapter 17 shows us his hypostatic union.

Though the gold is more apparent, he shows us both his natures.

Dimensions

1 cubit square (four square) = perfect sovereignty

2 cubits high (Ephesians 1:21)

The Horns & Rings

The number of horns is not given, and the number of rings is ambiguous.

Conjecture sets the number of horns and rings at 4.

Although there may have been 4 horns on the golden altar, the 4 horns are emphatically connected to the brazen altar.

The golden altar, while witnessing of the atonement at the brazen altar, is not connected with atonement, but is typical of the prayer, praise, and worship of Christ.

Censer

The censer answers to the Golden Altar

Hebrews 9:3, 4

The Incense

Incense consisted of 4 “sweet spices,” in equal portions by weight.

1. Stacte: Gr. To drop or distill

Drops of gum would exude from the tree.

Luke 22:44

2. Onycha: Gr. Found only here. Literally “fingernail.” It is the name of a shellfish that fed upon the “nard” or stems of fragrant plants by the water.

3. Galbanum: Gr. Found only here. Literally “fatness,” the richest or choicest part.

4. Frankincense: Comes from a tree bearing flowers with 5 petals and 10 stamens.

The fruit is five-sided, and there are 5 species of the plant.

The gum is obtained from incisions and is used for incense, medicine, and as an antidote to poison..

The Anointing Oil

The ingredients for the oil of anointing are:

1. Myrrh: The gum of a dwarf tree of the terebinth family which exudes spontaneously or through incisions made to extract it.

The gum used for the oil was to be “pure,” literally “free”—the best—what flowed spontaneously.

Very fragrant and very bitter.

Exodus 15:23 (same root)

2. Cinnamon: Both aromatic and flavorful.

3. Calamus: Very fragrant, the fragrance was obtained by crushing the plant.

4. Cassia: More pungent than cinnamon, but less fragrant, it was used both as a flavoring and as a medicine.

The Fire of The Altar

The last element of the Golden Altar was the fire needed to burn the incense.

Only the coals from the altar of burnt-offering could be used at the Golden Altar.

There is a special warning about using “strange fire.”

No Separation

The two altars must not be separated.

Praise must always be based upon the sacrifice of Christ.

We must understand that our sin has been judged and atoned for before we may praise God with a pure heart.

Strange fire

When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram disowned Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16:1 ff.) They took brazen censers (which speak of judgment) and offered incense using strange fire.

The Altar of Burnt-offering

Exodus 38:1-7

Prominence

This was, indeed, the most prominent article in the court, and the first thing encountered by those who entered the court to draw near to God.

The altar of burnt-offering was, arguably, the most important piece of equipment associated with the Tabernacle and its court.

Materials

The materials were acacia wood overlaid with copper.

Copper was the characteristic metal outside the Tabernacle, as gold was within.

All the vessels of the altar were made of copper as well.

Copper is an excellent conductor of both heat and electricity.

Dimensions

The dimensions of the altar are substantially larger when compared with the altar of incense.

At 5 cubits square its area is 25 square cubits while that of the altar of incense is only 1 square cubit.

The altar of burnt-offering is 5×5 , while the altar of incense is 1×1 .

The volume of the altar of incense is 2 cubic cubits ($1 \times 1 \times 2$).

The volume of the altar of burnt-offering is 75 cubic cubits ($5 \times 5 \times 3$).

The Tools

As previously mentioned, all of the vessels and tools of the altar of burnt-offering were made of copper. These tools were:

Pots for the ashes

Literally, “the fat” [ashes]

Shovels for removing ashes or fire

Bowls for catching the blood to be sprinkled

Flesh hooks or forks for handling the meat

Fire pans for holding the fire.

The Grate of Network

The grate kept the sacrifice from simply falling into the fire.

The grate was on the inside of the altar and halfway down from the top. It was fastened to 4 copper rings which passed through the sides of the altar.

The portion of the rings on the outside of the altar were for the staves to be passed through to carry the altar.

The grate was typical of the loving arms of Christ.

Christ Seen in The Altar

The acacia wood speaks of the perfect humanity of Christ.

The altar was the constant witness of death, but Jesus did not have to die; death had no claim on him; therefore he could lay down his life in atonement.

Not only is Christ the altar, but he is also, ultimately, the sacrifice upon it.

Continuous Fire

Fire was always upon the brazen altar (Leviticus 6:12, 13).

This fire upon the brazen altar came out from before the Lord and consumed the sacrifice (Leviticus 9:24).

The altar of burnt-offering was the one place where the fire of God’s judgment could burn; and this was focused on the grating of copper.

The only thing that was consumed by the fire of the altar was the sins which our Lord had graciously taken upon himself.

The Laver Exodus 38:8

In the directions for its use (Exodus 30:17-21), there is precious little description, which has its significance.

Silence in Scripture is Not Meaningless!

A Receptacle

The laver and its foot were ²¹receptacles, not basins (Exodus 30:18, 19). It is, therefore, highly unlikely that the “foot” would have been used to wash the feet. The foot was most likely used to remove water from the laver for the purpose of washing.

Omission of Detail

The dimensions and form of the laver and foot are not given. Only the material and position they were to occupy in the court are mentioned—between the altar and the tabernacle.

Explicit directions for its use were given.

Aaron and his sons had to wash their hands and feet from it when entering the tabernacle, or going to the altar of burnt-offering in connection with the sacrifice.

They could not neglect this under penalty of death.

Another striking omission regarding the laver is that it was not specially committed to any of the Levite families, nor was any provision made for carrying it through the wilderness.

The laver is mentioned only once after the account of its construction, when Moses anointed it (Leviticus 8:11).

Spiritual Significance

In the consecration of the priests, Aaron and his sons were taken and washed completely—bathed all over (Exodus 40:12, 13).

That washing was once for all, and was done by Moses.

The laver represents Christ and the water would be God’s word.

Only The Feet

Jesus only washed the feet of his disciples, he did not wash, nor did he require them to wash their hands.

The hands are indicative of work, a requirement of the law, but our place as Christians is,

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the ²²washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Titus 3:4, 5