

A REVELATION OF.....

THE AMAZING

TABERNACLE OF

MOSES

**A PICTURE OF THE DEVELOPMENT
OF OUR LIVES AND THE CHURCH**

**ONE OF A SERIES OF REVELATIONS ON VARIOUS
ASPECTS OF SCRIPTURE, AS INSPIRED BY THE
HOLY SPIRIT.**

Penned by:

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A NOTE FROM DAVID.....

The first modern revelation of the importance of Moses Tabernacle as being the pattern of a godly walk, and one of church development and life, came out of the Latter Rain Movement, after World War 2.

In more recent times the teaching has been neglected, but it is still applicable today. And the Lord is today, giving even more revelation about it, as we move still closer to the end of the age.

Yes, an understanding of Moses Tabernacle is vital for every Christian with a heart to know God and His plans in a deeper way.

We will take a look at the Tabernacle from three different perspectives.

First of all, in order to learn about the Tabernacle and its functions we are going to take a walk through it from the perspective of a Jewish farmer, 3,500 years ago, during the time it was in use.

Then we will see how it establishes God's pattern for the church, before finally, looking at its implications for the church of the future. The end-time church, His bride, the one for which Jesus is to return.

This is a key understanding, and one that every serious believer needs to be fully aware of today. Not simply to understand, but to apply to our lives.

I pray that you will find it as illuminating, challenging, yet encouraging, as I have in my life.

His servant and yours,

David Tait

PART 1: THE BACKGROUND

DEFINITION OF TERMS

TABERNACLE (1.) A house or dwelling-place (Job 5:24; 18:6, etc.).

(2.) A portable shrine (comp. Acts 19:24) containing the image of Moloch (Amos 5:26; marg. and R.V., “Siccuth”).

(3.) The human body (2 Cor. 5:1, 4); a tent, as opposed to a permanent dwelling.

(4.) The sacred tent (Heb. mishkan, “the dwelling-place”); the movable tent-temple which Moses erected for the service of God, according to the “pattern” which God himself showed to him on the mount (Ex. 25:9; Heb. 8:5). It is called “the tabernacle of the congregation,” rather “of meeting”, i.e., where God promised to meet with Israel (Ex. 29:42); the “tabernacle of the testimony” (Ex. 38:21; Num. 1:50), which does not, however, designate the whole structure, but only the enclosure which contained the “ark of the testimony” (Ex. 25:16, 22; Num. 9:15); the “tabernacle of witness” (Num. 17:8); the “house of the Lord” (Deut. 23:18); the “temple of the Lord” (Josh. 6:24); a “sanctuary” (Ex. 25:8).

A particular account of the materials which the people provided for the erection and of the building itself is recorded in Ex. 25–40. The execution of the plan mysteriously given to Moses was intrusted to Bezaleel and Aholiab, who were specially endowed with wisdom and artistic skill, probably gained in Egypt, for this purpose (Ex. 35:30–35). The people provided materials for the tabernacle so abundantly that Moses was under the necessity of restraining them (36:6). These stores, from which they so liberally contributed for this purpose, must have consisted in a great part of the gifts which the Egyptians so readily bestowed on them on the eve of the Exodus (12:35, 36).

The tabernacle was a rectangular enclosure, in length about 45 feet (i.e., reckoning a cubit at 18 inches) and in breadth and height about 15. Its two sides and its western end were made of boards of acacia wood, placed on end, resting in sockets of brass, the eastern end being left open (Ex. 26:22). This framework was covered with four coverings, the first of linen, in which figures of the symbolic cherubim were wrought with needlework in blue and purple and scarlet threads, and probably also with threads of gold (Ex. 26:1–6; 36:8–13). Above this was a second covering of twelve curtains of black goats’-hair cloth, reaching down on the outside almost to the ground (Ex. 26:7–11). The third covering was of rams’ skins dyed red, and the fourth was of badgers’ skins (Heb. tahash, i.e., the dugong, a species of seal), Ex. 25:5; 26:14; 35:7, 23; 36:19; 39:34.

Internally it was divided by a veil into two chambers, the exterior of which was called the holy place, also “the sanctuary” (Heb. 9:2) and the “first tabernacle” (6); and the interior, the holy of holies, “the holy place,” “the Holiest,” the “second tabernacle” (Ex. 28:29; Heb. 9:3, 7). The veil separating these two chambers was a double curtain of the finest workmanship, which was never passed except by the high priest once a year, on the great Day of Atonement. The holy place was separated from the outer court which enclosed the tabernacle by a curtain, which hung over the six pillars which stood at the east end of the tabernacle, and by which it was entered.

The order as well as the typical character of the services of the tabernacle are recorded in Heb. 9; 10:19–22.

The holy of holies, a cube of 10 cubits, contained the ‘ark of the testimony’, i.e., the oblong chest containing the two tables of stone, the pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded.

The holy place was the western and larger chamber of the tabernacle. Here were placed the table for the shewbread, the golden candlestick, and the golden altar of incense.

Round about the tabernacle was a court, enclosed by curtains hung upon sixty pillars (Ex. 27:9–18). This court was 150 feet long and 75 feet broad. Within it were placed the altar of burnt offering, which measured 7 1/2 feet in length and breadth and 4 1/2 feet high, with horns at the four corners, and the laver of brass (Ex. 30:18), which stood between the altar and the tabernacle.

The whole tabernacle was completed in seven months. On the first day of the first month of the second year after the Exodus, it was formally set up, and the cloud of the divine presence descended on it (Ex. 39:22–43; 40:1–38). It cost 29 talents 730 shekels of gold, 100 talents 1,775 shekels of silver, 70 talents 2,400 shekels of brass (Ex. 38:24–31).

The tabernacle was so constructed that it could easily be taken down and conveyed from place to place during the wanderings in the wilderness. The first encampment of the Israelites after crossing the Jordan was at Gilgal, and there the tabernacle remained for seven years (Josh. 4:19). It was afterwards removed to Shiloh (Josh. 18:1), where it remained during the time of the Judges, till the days of Eli, when the ark, having been carried out into the camp when the Israelites were at war with the Philistines, was taken by the enemy (1 Sam. 4), and was never afterwards restored to its place in the tabernacle. The old tabernacle erected by Moses in the wilderness was transferred to Nob (1 Sam. 21:1), and after the destruction of that city by Saul (22:9; 1 Chr. 16:39, 40), to Gibeon. It is mentioned for the last time in 1 Chr. 21:29. A new tabernacle was erected by David at Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:17; 1 Chr. 16:1), and the ark was brought from Perez-uzzah and deposited in it (2 Sam. 6:8–17; 2 Chr. 1:4).

The word thus rendered (‘ohel) in Ex. 33:7 denotes simply a tent, probably Moses’ own tent, for the tabernacle was not yet erected. 1

TABERNACLE. 1. The tabernacle of the congregation (av), more properly ‘tent of meeting’, as in rv, rsv: a small, provisional meeting-place of God and his people in use before the large tabernacle was built (Ex. 33:7-11). This tent of meeting was pitched outside the camp. Moses would enter it and the Cloud, marking the divine Presence, would descend and stand outside it at the door. In this the function of the tent resembled that of the cleft of the rock in which Moses was placed (Ex. 34:22-23), and that of the cave in which Elijah stood (1 Ki. 19:9-18), to be addressed by God while the glory of God passed by outside. The tabernacle, by contrast, was erected in the midst of the camp, and the Cloud of glory rested not outside but inside it, so that at first Moses had to stay outside (Ex. 40:34-35).

2. The tabernacle commonly so-called was the portable sanctuary in which God dwelt among the Israelites in the desert. After their entry into Canaan, it was stationed successively at Shiloh (Jos. 18:1), at Nob (1 Sa. 21) and at Gibeon (1 Ch. 16:39). Eventually Solomon brought it up to the Temple (1 Ki. 8:4). It is called simply *misûkaun* = ‘dwelling’ (evv ‘tabernacle’), as in Ex. 25:9; or *misûkaun YHWH* = ‘dwelling of Yahweh’ as in Lv. 17:4; or *misûkaun haÛeud_uÆt_* = ‘dwelling of the *covenant terms’ (av, rsv ‘of the testimony’), because it housed the covenant tablets, as in Ex. 38:21; or *Ûoûhel moÆÛeud* = tent (av ‘tabernacle’) of meeting’, i.e. the appointed meeting-place between God and his people, as in Ex. 28:43; or *misûkaun Ûoûhel moÆÛeud* = ‘dwelling of the tent of meeting’, as in Ex. 39:32; or *miqdausû* = ‘sanctuary’ as in Ex. 25:8; or *qoÆd_esû* = ‘holy place’ (av, rsv ‘sanctuary’), as in Ex. 38:24. It is also called *bet_YHWH* = ‘house of Yahweh’, as in Ex. 34:26.

The materials used in its construction are listed at Ex. 25:3-7. The metal translated ‘bronze’ (av ‘brass’) was more probably copper. The colour ‘blue’ was probably a violet-blue and the colour ‘purple’ a reddish-purple. The material translated ‘goatskins, (rsv; av ‘badgers’ skins)’ was probably dugong (or ‘porpoise’, neb) skin.

I. Tabernacle, tent, coverings and frames

In its stricter technical meaning the term ‘tabernacle’ refers to a set of ten linen curtains, which when draped round a structure of wooden frames formed God’s dwelling-place. The curtains were of linen with figures of cherubim woven into the violet-blue, reddish-purple and scarlet tapestry-work. Each measuring 28 cubits by 4, they were sewn together along their length into two sets of five, which when assembled were held together by fifty golden clasps (av ‘taches’) passing through loops on the edge of each set (Ex. 26:1-6). The tabernacle was covered by eleven goats’-hair curtains, called in strict terminology ‘the tent’ (Ex. 26:7-15). They each measured 30 cubits by 4, were sewn together into two sets, one of five, the other of six, which when assembled were held together, like the tabernacle, by loops and clasps, only their clasps were of copper.

Over the tent went a covering of tanned (literally, ‘reddened’) rams’ skins, and over that again (cf. neb ‘an outer covering’; av, rv ‘above’,) a covering of dugong skin (Ex. 26:14). These curtains were spread over the top, back and two sides of a framework (Ex. 26:15-30) assembled from forty-eight units, each 10 cubits high and 1 1/2 wide, called qerausûé/ān. The most likely interpretation of these qerausûé/ān is that given by A. R. S. Kennedy (HDB, 4, pp. 659-662); they were not solid boards (as av, rv), nor planks (as neb), but open frames, each consisting of two long uprights yaud_ō/Ā : not ‘tenons’ as in most versions) joined by cross-rails somewhat like a ladder. Such frames would have three advantages over solid planks: they would be much lighter, less liable to whip, and instead of hiding the beautiful tabernacle curtains would allow them to be seen from the inside all round the walls. The feet of the two uprights in each frame stood in sockets made of silver obtained from the census tax (Ex. 30:11-16; 38:25-27). Twenty frames in their sockets, stationed side by side, formed each side of the tabernacle; six formed the rear. In each corner at the rear was an extra frame. The purpose of these extra frames, to give rigidity to the whole structure, is clear; but the details of the specification are not.

Perhaps the best explanation is that given by U. Cassuto: each corner frame was coupled (not ‘separate’ as rsv) at the bottom and the top so as to form a twin with the end frame in the side, and then clamped to its twin by means of a metal ring (translating v. 24 ‘into the one ring’ and not ‘at the first ring’, as rsv). To keep the frames in alignment five bars ran along the sides and rear through gold rings attached to the cross-rails of each frame. The middle bar ran the whole length, the other four only part of the way. The frames and bars were made of acacia wood overlaid with gold.

When the frames were assembled the distance from the top of the frames at the front along the roof and down to the bottom of the frames at the rear was $20 \times 1 \frac{1}{2} + 10 = 40$ cubits. The assembled tabernacle curtains measured 28 cubits by $10 \times 4 = 40$ cubits. They were spread over the frames so that the 40 cubits ran from the top front of the frames to the rear bottom. The assembled tent curtains measured 30 cubits by $11 \times 4 = 44$ cubits. When they were spread over the tabernacle curtains, the extra 2 cubits (30 as against 28) gave an overhang of 1 cubit on each side (Ex. 26:13). The extra 4 cubits in the other direction (44 as against 40) were disposed as follows: at the rear the tent extended 2 cubits beyond the tabernacle curtains (v. 12), and at the front the other 2 cubits were doubled back and, presumably, tucked under the tabernacle curtains all the way along the top and sides, so protecting what otherwise would have been an exposed edge of tabernacle curtain (v. 9). The word used for arranging the curtains over the frames is not the normal word for pitching a tent, nat\va/Ēbut paurasĒ, which means ‘to spread’ (it is used of wrapping cloths round the furniture). The roof was flat. To prevent the curtains from sagging at the roof and so causing the frames to collapse inwards, there were probably (the text does not say so, but it omits many details which one would need to know to make a tabernacle) wooden struts running across the top of the framework from side to side (see, for comparison, the portable pavilion of Hetep-heres). J. Fergusson (Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible, 3, pp. 1452-1454) and many others have argued unconvincingly that the curtains

must have been spread over a ridge-pole. Some of their arguments presuppose that the sides and rear of the tabernacle were formed of solid planks; since they were formed not of planks but of open fragments, their arguments are invalid, and would lead to the impossible result of exposing the holy place and the most holy to view from the outside. Other arguments are invalidated by their failure to observe that the term 'tabernacle' in Ex. 26:1-13 refers not to the building in general but to the ten linen curtains.

II. The interior

The interior of the dwelling was divided into two compartments by a veil hung under (not 'from' as rsv) the clasps that joined the tabernacle curtains (Ex. 26:31-34). Hence we know that the first compartment was 20 cubits long, the second 10. The height of the frames, 10 cubits, gives us the second dimension, and in all probability the breadth of both compartments was 10 cubits likewise: for while the six frames at the back give a total breadth of 9 cubits, allowance must be made for the thickness of the side frames and corner frames. The first compartment is called 'the holy place', the second 'the holy of holies', i.e. the most holy place, or simply 'the holy place' (Lv. 16:2-3; Heb. 9:12; 10:19, rv. rsv 'sanctuary' in these latter two verses is misleading: entry into the holy of holies is intended). Again, the first compartment is sometimes called 'the first tabernacle' and the second 'the second tabernacle' (Heb. 9:6-7, av, rv; rsv 'the outer tent' and 'the second' respectively). The dividing veil (παρουκ_ετ_: a term used of no other hanging), made of the same material, colours and design as the tabernacle curtains, was hung by gold hooks on four acacia-wood pillars overlaid with gold and standing in silver sockets. The pillars had no capitals. At the door (= doorway) was a linen screen of violet-blue, reddish-purple and scarlet (but without cherubim). It hung by gold hooks on five acacia-wood pillars overlaid with gold standing in copper sockets. These pillars did have capitals and were overlaid with gold, as were their fillets (Ex. 26:36-37). To distinguish the παρουκ_ετ_ from this screen, the παρουκ_ετ_ is sometimes called the second veil.

III. The furniture

In the most holy place stood the *ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10-22). A slab (av, rsv 'mercy seat') of pure gold with a cherub at each end rested on top. The name of this slab, kapporet means not 'lid' but 'propitiatory', i.e. place where the blood of propitiation was sprinkled. This is how the lxx (hilasteurion) understood it as does the NT (Heb. 9:5; rsv 'mercy seat'). The poles for carrying the ark ran through rings attached to the feet (not 'corners', as in av) of the ark (Ex. 25:12). There is no implied discrepancy between Ex. 25:15 and Nu. 4:8. The latter verse indicates that to facilitate the covering of the ark for transport the poles were temporarily removed and immediately replaced: the former verse directs that at all other times the poles were to be left in their rings even when the ark was not travelling.

In the holy place in front of the veil was the incense-altar (Ex. 30:1-10). Made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold—hence its other name, ‘the golden altar’—it was a cubit square and 2 cubits high, with horns projecting at the four corners and an ornamental gold moulding round the top. (For a pagan, stone incense-altar with horns, see *Altar.) For transport, two poles were shot through gold rings attached just under the moulding. The altar stood directly opposite the ark (note the emphasis of 30:6), and so was regarded as ‘belonging to’ the most holy place (cf. 1 Ki. 6:22 and Heb. 9:4, where ‘golden altar of incense’ and not ‘censer’ seems to be the right translation). With the position of the altar compare the position of the two incense-altars in the temple at Arad (BA 31, 1968, pp. 22ff).

On the N side (Ex. 26:35) stood a table for the Bread of the Presence (av ‘shewbread’; *Showbread) (Ex. 25:23-29). One such table and a lampstand (see below) from Herod’s Temple are represented on Titus’ Arch at Rome. Some doubt is cast, however, on the accuracy of these sculptures, since on the lampstand’s base various non-Jewish figures appear. The detail of v. 25 is uncertain. Some translators envisage an 8-cm wide horizontal border, some an 8-cm high vertical rim, or frame, running round the top of the table, others, in agreement with apparent vestiges on Titus’ Arch, envisage 8-cm broad cross-struts between the legs of the table.

The vessels connected with the table were: plates, presumably for the bread; dishes (kappout_: for incense, so rsv; cf. kap_, in Nu. 7:14 = av ‘spoon’); and flagons and bowls for drink-offerings (not as av ‘to cover with’).

On the S side (Ex. 26:35) stood the *lampstand, menorah (av ‘candlestick’) (Ex. 25:31-40), in the form of a stylized tree. In strict technical parlance the base and central shaft form the lampstand proper; the six branches are then described as ‘going out of the lampstand’ (v. 33). In v. 31 the rsv’s literal translation, ‘its cups, its capitals, and its flowers’, i.e. three items, is to be preferred to interpretative renderings such as that of neb ‘its cups, both calyxes and petals’, i.e. one item made up of two parts. The capitals were round protuberances of some kind, in the arms and shaft of the lampstand (not, as ‘capital’ might suggest, on the ends of them). It is probable, but not completely certain, that the six branches rose to the same height as the central shaft. The seven lamps were presumably placed one on the end of each of the six branches and one on the central shaft. There were provided *snufflers and *trays.

IV. Court

The tabernacle stood in the W half of a courtyard, 100 x 50 cubits, the long sides running N and S (Ex. 27:9-19). The tabernacle door faced E.

The courtyard was bounded by a linen screen (evv ‘hangings’) 5 cubits high hung on pillars. There was an opening for a gate, 20 cubits wide, set centrally in the E end. The gate screen was linen, embroidered in violet-blue, reddish-purple and scarlet.

The pillars were apparently made of acacia wood (they are not mentioned in the list of copper articles, Ex. 38:29-31), and stood in copper sockets. They were stabilized by guy-ropes and pegs, and had capitals overlaid with silver, and silver bands, called fillets, round the neck.

Three main methods are advocated for spacing the pillars:

(1) On the basic assumption that there was one pillar per 5 cubits of hanging, and that no pillar was counted twice, sixty pillars in all are placed to make twenty spaces along the two long sides and ten spaces along the two ends. The gate screen then hangs on four of its own pillars and one of the others.

It is questionable whether this satisfies the direction for the 20 cubits of gate-screen ‘ . . . their pillars four. . . ‘.

(2) The Baraitha on the Erection of the Tabernacle, 5, has it that the pillars stood in the middle of each imaginary space of 5 cubits and that there were no pillars in the corners. (For an attempted solution of the difficulties this would create at the corners and the gate, see M. Levine, *The Tabernacle*, 1969, pp. 76, 81.).

(3) Since the text nowhere says that the pillars were 5 cubits apart, maybe at the corners the two end pillars stood together. Or perhaps the corner pillars were counted twice (the text does not explicitly state that the total was sixty). The gate could then be recessed (or advanced). But this system gives very awkward measurements for the spaces between the pillars.

In the E half of the court stood an altar. It was called the copper altar from its covering material and the altar of burnt-offering from the chief *sacrifice offered on it (Ex. 27:1-8). It was a hollow framework of acacia wood, 5 cubits square and 3 high, with projecting horns at the top corners. The whole was overlaid with copper. Halfway up the altar, on the outside, was a horizontal ledge (av ‘compass’) running all round. (For a stone altar of comparable dimensions with horns, see Y. Aharoni, *BA* 37, 1974, pp. 2-6; *Altar.) Running vertically all round from the ground up to the ledge (not ‘extending halfway down the altar’ as rsv) was a grating of copper network, on the four corners of which were the rings for the carrying-poles. The grating was not a hearth, and the altar was topless and hollow. Some suppose that in use it was filled with earth and stones, others that it acted like an incinerator, draught being supplied through the grating. Its service vessels were *pots for ashes, *shovels, *basins, *forks (av *’fleshhooks’) and *firepans.

Between the altar and the door of the tabernacle stood the laver (Ex. 30:17-21; 38:8; 40:29-32). It was a copper basin standing on a copper base. Nothing is told us of its size, shape and ornamentation (nor of its means of transport, though the absence of this detail

from the MT of Nu. 4 may be accidental: lxx gives the expected information). It held water for the priests' ablutions.

In camp the tabernacle court was surrounded first by the tents of the priests and Levites, and outside them by those of the twelve tribes (Nu. 2; 3:1-30).

V. Problems arising

Revision of source-critical theories, particularly those relating to the so-called Priestly texts, together with archaeological discoveries have considerably modified the earlier arguments of the liberal school against the historicity of the tabernacle. See e.g. G. Henton-Davies, *IDB*, 3, pp. 503-506; Y. Aharoni, *Orient and Occident* (ed. H. A. Honner, Jr), 1973, p. 6; C. L. Meyers, *IDBS*, p. 586. Allegations that the instructions for the building of the tabernacle are in parts impracticable, and thus evidently the work of an idealist, would be valid only if the records were intended to be fully detailed blueprints. They are not that, of course, but records 'for our learning'. Hence many practical details of no aesthetic, symbolic or spiritual value are omitted. At the same time portable pavilions, employing practically the same constructional techniques as the tabernacle, are known to have been in actual use in Egypt long before the time of Moses; see K. A. Kitchen, *THB* 5-6, 1960, pp. 7-13. From the fact that the instructions for the making of the incense-altar stand in Ex. 30, and not as expected in Ex. 25, it used to be argued that its description is a late addition to Exodus and that the incense-altar was not introduced into Israel's worship until a comparatively late date. But since incense-altars have been discovered at Arad and at various Canaanite sites dating from the 10th century bc, it is highly improbable that Israel lacked one in the early period. Similarly, on the basis of the wide divergence of the lxx from the MT in Ex. 36-40, it used to be argued that the last chapters of Exodus in Heb. had not yet reached their final form when the lxx was translated, and that the lxx followed in part a Heb. tradition which knew of no incense altar. But the argument is not valid: see D. W. Gooding, *The Account of the Tabernacle*, 1959.

VI. Significance

Theologically the tabernacle as a dwelling-place of God on earth is of immense importance, as being the first in the series: tabernacle, Temple, the incarnation, the body of the individual believer, the church. It follows from the fact that the tabernacle was built to God's design as 'a copy and shadow of heavenly things' (Heb. 8:5) that its symbols conveyed spiritual meaning to the Israelites of the time. What that meaning was is often stated explicitly, as with the ark and mercy seat (Ex. 25:16, 22; Lv. 16:15-16), the veil and the two-compartment structure (Lv. 16:2; Heb. 9:8), the incense-altar (Ps. 141:2; cf. Lk. 1:10-13; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4), the laver (Ex. 30:20-21), the copper altar (Lv. 1:3-9; 17:11); and where it is not stated explicitly, as with the table and the lampstand, it is self-evident from their declared function. How far these symbols were also types of spiritual realities later to

be revealed to us is disputed. Understandably, the extravagant interpretations that from the early centuries have been placed upon the subject have brought it into disrepute. But the NT declares that the law had 'a shadow of the good things to come', which good things actually came with Christ (Heb. 10:1; 9:11). So Christ is said to have entered through the veil (Heb. 6:19-20), and to be set forth as a propitiatory, or mercy seat (Rom. 3:25, hilasteurion; cf. Lxx Ex. 25:17-22; Lv. 16:15-16. rsv 'expiation' is scarcely exact); while the writer to the Hebrews indicates that he could have expounded in this fashion all the tabernacle vessels and not simply the one feature which was relevant to his immediate argument (Heb. 9:5).

Bibliography. A. H. Finn, JTS 16, 1915, pp. 449-482; A. R. S. Kennedy, HDB, 4, pp. 653-668; M. Haran, HUCA 36, 1965, pp. 191-226; U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, 1967, pp. 319ff.; R. K. Harrison, IOT, 1970, pp. 403-410; R. P. Gordon, A Bible Commentary for Today, 1979, pp. 173ff. 2

ALTAR—(Heb. mizbe ah, from a word meaning "to slay"), any structure of earth (Ex. 20:24) or unwrought stone (20:25) on which sacrifices were offered. Altars were generally erected in conspicuous places (Gen. 22:9; Ezek. 6:3; 2 Kings 23:12; 16:4; 23:8; Acts 14:13). The word is used in Heb. 13:10 for the sacrifice offered upon it—the sacrifice Christ offered.

Paul found among the many altars erected in Athens one bearing the inscription, "To the unknown God" (Acts 17:23), or rather "to an [i.e., some] unknown God." The reason for this inscription cannot now be accurately determined. It afforded the apostle the occasion of proclaiming the gospel to the "men of Athens."

The first altar we read of is that erected by Noah (Gen. 8:20). Altars were erected by Abraham (Gen. 12:7; 13:4; 22:9), by Isaac (Gen. 26:25), by Jacob (33:20; 35:1, 3), and by Moses (Ex. 17:15, "Jehovah-nissi").

In the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple, two altars were erected.

(1.) The altar of burnt offering (Ex. 30:28), called also the "brassen altar" (Ex. 39:39) and "the table of the Lord" (Mal. 1:7).

This altar, as erected in the tabernacle, is described in Ex. 27:1-8. It was a hollow square, 5 cubits in length and in breadth, and 3 cubits in height. It was made of shittim wood, and was overlaid with plates of brass. Its corners were ornamented with "horns" (Ex. 29:12 ; Lev. 4:18).

In Ex. 27:3 the various utensils appertaining to the altar are enumerated. They were made of brass. (Comp. 1 Sam. 2:13, 14; Lev. 16:12; Num. 16:6, 7.)

In Solomon's temple the altar was of larger dimensions (2 Chr. 4:1. Comp. 1 Kings 8:22, 64; 9:25), and was made wholly of brass, covering a structure of stone or earth. This altar was renewed by Asa (2 Chr. 15:8). It was removed by Ahaz (2 Kings 16:14), and "cleansed" by Hezekiah, in the latter part of whose reign it was rebuilt. It was finally broken up and carried away by the Babylonians (Jer. 52:17).

After the return from captivity it was re-erected (Ezra 3:3, 6) on the same place where it had formerly stood. (Comp. 1 Macc. 4:47.) When Antiochus Epiphanes pillaged Jerusalem the altar of burnt offering was taken away.

Again the altar was erected by Herod, and remained in its place till the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (70 A.D.).

The fire on the altar was not permitted to go out (Lev. 6:9).

In the Mosque of Omar, immediately underneath the great dome, which occupies the site of the old temple, there is a rough projection of the natural rock, of about 60 feet in its extreme length, and 50 in its greatest breadth, and in its highest part about 4 feet above the general pavement. This rock seems to have been left intact when Solomon's temple was built. It was in all probability the site of the altar of burnt offering. Underneath this rock is a cave, which may probably have been the granary of Araunah's threshing-floor (1 Chr. 21:22).

(2) See ALTAR OF INCENSE 1

ALTAR.

I. In the Old Testament

In all but four of the OT occurrences of the word 'altar', the Heb. is *mizbe'eah*, which means 'place of sacrifice' (from *za'ab_ah*, 'to slaughter for sacrifice'), and one of the remaining occurrences (Ezr. 7:17) is simply its Aram. cognate *mad_bah*. While etymologically the term involves slaughter, in usage it was not always so restricted, being applied also to the altar for burning incense (Ex. 30:1). For other occurrences of 'altar' in the evv, see g, below.

a. The Patriarchs

The Patriarchs built their own altars and offered their own sacrifices on them without having any recourse to a priesthood. Noah built one after the flood and made burnt-offerings on it (Gn. 8:20). Abraham built altars to Yahweh at Shechem, between Bethel

and Ai, at Hebron and at Moriah, where he offered a ram instead of Isaac (Gn. 12:6-8; 13:18; 22:9). Isaac did likewise at Beersheba (Gn. 26:25), Jacob erected altars at Shechem and Bethel (Gn. 33:20; 35:1-7), and Moses erected one at Rephidim after the victory of the Israelites over Amalek (Ex. 17:15). The altars were evidently erected mainly to commemorate some event in which the principal had had dealings with God. No information is given as to their construction, but it is reasonable to suppose that they were of the same type as those later allowed in the Mosaic law (see d, below).

b. Pre-Israelite altars in Palestine

In the early days of Palestine exploration it was ' customary to see altars in many things which today are understood as domestic, agricultural or industrial installations. True altars have, however, been uncovered at several sites from different periods. At Ai, Mme J. Marquet-Krause discovered a small temple of the Early Bronze Age in which was an altar of plastered stones, against the wall, on which animal and food-offerings had been made. In Middle Bronze Age *Megiddo (level XV) two temples were found containing rectangular altars, one of mud bricks and the other of lime-plastered stones. Temples of the Late Bronze Age containing altars of similar type have been found at Lachish, Beth-shean and Hazor. In the levels of this period at Hazor a great hewn block of stone was discovered, with two hollowed basins on one face, perhaps for catching the blood of sacrificed animals. At Megiddo and Nahariyeh great platforms of stones which were probably used as places of sacrifice were uncovered, but these were more *'high places' than they were true altars.

A number of hewn limestone altars with four horns at the upper corners, dating from about the period of the conquest, were found at Megiddo. These, however, to judge from their relatively small size (largest c. 70 cm high), were probably incense altars. Numerous clay stands which may have been for burning incense have been uncovered at such sites as Megiddo, Beth-shean and Lachish, from Bronze and Iron Age Levels.

Thus altars were in use among the Canaanites in the Promised Land, a fact that gives point to the careful regulations on this matter in the Sinai revelation. That altars were not limited to Palestine is shown by the discoveries at such sites as Eridu, Ur, Khafajah and Assur in Mesopotamia, and the episode in which Balaam erected, and offered bullocks on, 7 altars at Kiriath-huzoth (Nu. 23) may perhaps be understood in this light.

c. The altars of the tabernacle

At Sinai God revealed to Moses the specifications for two altars which were to be used in the *tabernacle: the altar of burnt-offering and the altar of incense.

d. Built altars

In Ex. 20:24-26, God instructed Moses to tell the people to make an altar of earth (mizbah\ ʾōd-ʾaṣma\ or (unhewn) stones (mizbah\ ʾōbaṣuné\), upon which to sacrifice their offerings. In neither case were there to be steps, so that the ‘nakedness’ of the offerer might not be uncovered. The form of this passage, in which God tells Moses to pass on this instruction to the people, suggests that it, like the Ten Commandments at the beginning of the chapter, was addressed to each Israelite individually, rather than to Moses as their representative as in Ex. 27. It may be that under this provision the layman was permitted to perform this himself, and it is perhaps in the light of this that the altars built by Joshua on Mt Ebal (Jos. 8:30-31; cf. Dt. 27:5), by Gideon in Ophrah (Jdg. 6:24-26), by David on the threshing-floor of Araunah (2 Sa. 24:18-25) and by Elijah on Mt Carmel (1 Ki. 18), as well as the episodes described in Jos. 22:10-34 and 1 Sa. 20:6, 29, are to be viewed (cf. Ex. 24:4).

e. The Temple of Solomon

In building his *Temple, Solomon, though influenced by his Phoenician associates, sought to follow the basic layout of the tabernacle and its court. Though David had already built an altar of burnt-offerings (2 Sa. 24:25), Solomon probably built a new one, as is indicated by 1 Ki. 8:22, 54, 64 and 9:25 (not mentioned in the main description, 1 Ki. 6-7). Altars of this period are well illustrated by the finds (IA II period) at Arad where in the temple courtyard stood an altar made of brick and rubble for burnt-offerings (cf. Ex. 20:25) which measured 5 cubits sq. (2.5 m) like that of the tabernacle (Ex. 17:1; cf. 2 Ch. 6:13). Two stone incense-altars with concave bowl-shaped tops were found on a step leading up to the ‘holy of holies’. Other Israelite incense-altars of the Israelite period have been recovered from Beersheba, etc.

f. False altars

Unlawful altars were in use in both Israel and Judah, as is shown by the condemnations of the prophets (Am. 3:14; Ho. 8:11) and the account of Jeroboam’s sins in 1 Ki. 12:28-33, as well as by archaeological finds.

g. Ezekiel’s vision

During the Exile, Ezekiel had a vision of Israel restored and the Temple rebuilt (Ezk. 40-44), and while no incense altar is mentioned, the altar of burnt offering in this visionary temple is described in detail (43:13-17). It consisted of 3 stages reaching to a height of 11 cubits on a base 18 cubits square. It was thus in form reminiscent of a Babylonian ziggurat, and this impression is furthered by the names of some of its parts. The base, h’v\ ʾaṣma\ (Ezk. 43:14, av ‘bottom upon the ground’, literally ‘bosom of the earth’) recalls the Akkadian irat irš’iti with the same meaning, and the terms har’ōeṣl and ari’ōe\ translated ‘altar’ in vv. 15-16 may be Hebraized forms of Akkadian arallu, one of the names for the underworld, which had the secondary meaning ‘mountain of the gods’.

Such borrowings from the Babylonian vocabulary, which would be independent of their etymological meaning, would have been normal after an exile of many years in Babylonia. The altar was ascended by a flight of steps, and the 4 upper corners bore horns.

h. The second Temple

When the Temple was rebuilt after the Return it was presumably provided with altars. These are referred to in Josephus (*Contra Apionem* 1. 198) and in the Letter of Aristeas, but on this period neither of these authors can be followed uncritically. In 169 bc Antiochus Epiphanes carried off the ‘golden altar’ (1 Macc. 1:21), and 2 years later he surmounted the altar of burnt offering with a ‘desolating sacrilege’ (1 Macc. 1:54), probably an image of Zeus. The Maccabees built a new altar and restored the incense altar (1 Macc. 4:44-49), and these must have continued in use when Herod enlarged the *Temple in the latter part of the 1st century bc. In his time the altar of burnt offering was a great pile of unhewn stones, approached by a ramp.

II. In the New Testament

In the NT two words for altar are used, that most frequently found being *thysiasteurion*, which is used often in the lxx for *mizbeʿah*. This word is used of the altar on which Abraham prepared to offer Isaac (Jas. 2:21), of the altar of burnt offering in the Temple (Mt. 5:23-24; 23:18-20, 35; Lk. 11:51; 1 Cor. 9:13; 10:18; Heb. 7:13; Rev. 11:1), and of the altar of incense, not only in the earthly Temple (Lk. 1:11) but also in the heavenly (Rev. 6:9; 8:5; 9:13; 14:18; 16:7; cf. also Rom. 11:3; Heb. 13:10). The other word, *boʿmos*, is used once (Acts 17:23). It was used in the lxx for both *mizbeʿah* and *baʿma* (High place), and had primarily the meaning of a raised place.

Bibliography. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel. Its Life and Institutions*, 1961, pp. 406-414, 546; B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1889, pp. 453ff.; A. Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services as they were at the Time of Jesus Christ*, 1874, pp. 32-33. 2

LAVER (WASHING BASIN)—(Heb. *kiyor*, a ‘basin’ for boiling in, a ‘pan’ for cooking (1 Sam. 2:14), a ‘fire-pan’ or hearth (Zech. 12:6), the sacred wash-bowl of the tabernacle and temple (Ex. 30:18, 28; 31:9; 35:16; 38:8; 39:39; 40:7, 11, 30, etc.), a basin for the water used by the priests in their ablutions.

That which was originally used in the tabernacle was of brass (rather copper; Heb. *niḥsheth*), made from the metal mirrors the women brought out of Egypt (Ex. 38:8). It contained water wherewith the priests washed their hands and feet when they entered the tabernacle (40:32). It stood in the court between the altar and the door of the tabernacle (30:19, 21).

In the temple there were ten lavers used for the sacrifices, and the molten sea for the ablutions of the priests (2 Chr. 4:6). The position and uses of these are described 1 Kings 7:23–39; 2 Chr. 4:6. The ‘molten sea’ was made of copper, taken from Tibhath and Chun, cities of Hadarezer, king of Zobah (1 Chr. 18:8; 1 Kings 7:23–26).

No lavers are mentioned in the second temple.

Easton, M. G., M. A. D. D., Easton’s Bible Dictionary, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996. 1

(TABLE OF) SHEWBREAD—Ex. 25:30 (R.V. marg., ‘presence bread’); 1 Chr. 9:32 (marg., ‘bread of ordering’); Num. 4:7: called ‘hallowed bread’ (R.V., ‘holy bread’) in 1 Sam. 21:1–6.

This bread consisted of twelve loaves made of the finest flour. They were flat and thin, and were placed in two rows of six each on a table in the holy place before the Lord. They were renewed every Sabbath (Lev. 24:5–9), and those that were removed to give place to the new ones were to be eaten by the priests only in the holy place (see 1 Sam. 21:3–6; comp. Matt. 12:3, 4).

The number of the loaves represented the twelve tribes of Israel, and also the entire spiritual Israel, ‘the true Israel;’ and the placing of them on the table symbolized the entire consecration of Israel to the Lord, and their acceptance of God as their God. The table for the bread was made of acacia wood, 3 feet long, 18 inches broad, and 2 feet 3 inches high. It was plated with pure gold. Two staves, plated with gold, passed through golden rings, were used for carrying it.

Easton, M. G., M. A. D. D., Easton’s Bible Dictionary, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996. 1

(TABLE OF) SHOWBREAD. Heb. *lehem happanê* אֶפֶס, lit. ‘bread of the face’, i.e. bread set before the face or presence of God (Ex. 25:30; 35:13; 39:36, etc.) or *lehem hamma’arek* אֶרֶק, lit. ‘bread of ordering’ (1 Ch. 9:32, etc.). After Moses had received divine instructions concerning the making of a table, dishes, spoons, covers and bowls for the holy place of the tabernacle, he was directed to place ‘showbread’ on the table. This arrangement was never to cease (Ex. 25:30). The showbread consisted of twelve baked cakes, made of fine flour, each containing two-tenths of an ephah (*Weights and Measures). These were set in two rows, six to a row (*ma’arek* אֶרֶק, Lev. 24:6). Upon each row (lit. ‘the row’, Lv. 24:7) of cakes frankincense was placed ‘as a memorial’ (*le’azkara* אֶזְכָּרָה) and was offered by fire to the Lord (Lv. 24:7). It was the duty of the priest each sabbath day to place fresh or hot bread on the table (1 Sa. 21:6). The old cakes then became the perquisite of Aaron and his sons who ate them in the holy place because they

were ‘most holy’ (Lv. 24:5-9). It was these loaves that David requested of Ahimelech, the priest, for himself and his men (1 Sa. 21:1-6; cf. Mt. 12:4; Mk. 2:26; Lk. 6:4).

The position of the table upon which the showbread was placed was in the holy place on the N side of the tabernacle opposite the lampstand (Ex. 26:35). The table was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold and bordered with a golden crown. It had a ring at each corner for the rods by which it was carried (Ex. 25:23-28). According to the original commandment it never failed to appear in the appointed place of God’s worship (2 Ch. 4:19; 13:11). The Kohathites had charge of the showbread (1 Ch. 9:32).

The passages referred to do not themselves indicate the significance of the showbread, but it is possible to infer from these data that God is man’s provider and sustainer, and that man lives constantly in the presence of God. This truth makes it obligatory for man to offer his life to God (Rom. 12:1). d.f. 2

CANDLESTICK (LAMPSTAND)—the lamp-stand, ‘candelabrum,’ which Moses was commanded to make for the tabernacle, according to the pattern shown him. Its form is described in Ex. 25:31–40; 37:17–24, and may be seen represented on the Arch of Titus at Rome. It was among the spoils taken by the Romans from the temple of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). It was made of fine gold, and with the utensils belonging to it was a talent in weight.

The tabernacle was a tent without windows, and thus artificial light was needed. This was supplied by the candlestick, which, however, served also as a symbol of the church or people of God, who are “the light of the world.” The light which “symbolizes the knowledge of God is not the sun or any natural light, but an artificial light supplied with a specially prepared oil; for the knowledge of God is in truth not natural nor common to all men, but furnished over and above nature.”

This candlestick was placed on the south side of the Holy Place, opposite the table of shewbread (Ex. 27:21; 30:7, 8; Lev. 24:3; 1 Sam. 3:3). It was lighted every evening, and was extinguished in the morning. In the morning the priests trimmed the seven lamps, borne by the seven branches, with golden snuffers, carrying away the ashes in golden dishes (Ex. 25:38), and supplying the lamps at the same time with fresh oil. What ultimately became of the candlestick is unknown.

In Solomon’s temple there were ten separate candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right and five on the left of the Holy Place (1 Kings 7:49; 2 Chr. 4:7). Their structure is not mentioned. They were carried away to Babylon (Jer. 52:19).

In the temple erected after the Exile there was again but one candlestick, and like the first, with seven branches. It was this which was afterwards carried away by Titus to Rome, where it was deposited in the Temple of Peace. When Genseric plundered Rome, he is

said to have carried it to Carthage (A.D. 455). It was recaptured by Belisarius (A.D. 533), and carried to Constantinople and thence to Jerusalem, where it finally disappeared. 1

LAMPS, LAMPSTAND: Small open pottery bowls with one or more slight lips, which can be identified as lamps (Heb. *neur*, Gk. *lychnos*, *lampas*), first appear in the Middle Bronze Age. This simple form continued in use throughout the Iron Age, the lip becoming more pronounced. The final development took place in the Hellenistic period when the Greek style of lamp with inward curving rim became completely enclosed, a small central hole alone remaining for feeding the oil (cf. Mt. 25:4). These lamps were mass-produced from moulds, one making the base, the other the lid. A very long spout for the wick characterizes Hellenistic lamps; this was shortened in the Roman period. Small handles were sometimes added. The moulds for the lids were frequently impressed with floral and other patterns, and, in the Roman period when the lid became broad and concave, with pictures that appear in relief on the lamps. From the 3rd century ad Christian symbols (cross, fishes, alpha and omega) form decorative motifs, while the seven-branched candlestick (*menorah*) marks Jewish lamps. The standard Palestinian lamp of the Gospel period was plain, round, with a fairly wide flanged filling hole, and a flared nozzle for the wick, sloping downwards.

Lamps could be held in the hand, set on a shelf or placed on a stand (Heb. *meno* *fa* *Æ* 2 Ki. 4:10; Aram. *neb_rasûta* *Æ* Dn. 5:5; Gk. *lychnia*, Mt. 5:15; cf. ANEP, no. 657, left edge). A simple wooden stand would serve most households, but some Iron Age lamps were provided with thick bases or separate hollow pedestals. Where brighter light was needed lamps with several spouts were employed, seven-spouted examples having been found in Palestine from this and earlier times, and many with provision for multiple wicks are known from the Roman era.

Pottery forms were copied in metal, although few examples survive from the OT period. In the tabernacle stood the elaborate golden lampstand (Ex. 25:31ff.). Three branches ending in flower-shaped lamp-holders protruded from either side of the main stem, which also supported a lampholder. Representations on certain Maccabean coins, a Herodian period drawing on stone found in Jerusalem and a relief on the arch of Titus supplement Hebrew descriptions, and it may be assumed the pattern given in Exodus was followed closely throughout. Ten similar lampstands were made for Solomon's Temple (1 Ki. 7:49).

The single lamps described burnt coarse olive oil or fat, and could stay alight for 2 to 4 hours, it seems, with an occasional trimming of the wick which was made of flax or other fibre (Heb. *pisûta* *Æ* Is. 42:3; 43:17). It might be allowed to die away at night, or be kept alight (1 Sa. 3:3; Pr. 31:18).

Out-of-doors lamps could be carried in pottery vessels, although no examples are known earlier than the Roman era. These were dome-shaped with a flat base, a handle at the top

and an opening at one side for the light. Such may have been the 'lantern' of Jn. 18:3 (Gk. phanos), or it may have been a more elaborate metal form. Gk. phanos can also mean 'torch', and that could be the sense here. Gideon's men had torches at an earlier date (Heb. *lappé*, Jdg. 7:16). 2

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

(2.) The altar of incense (Ex. 30:1–10), called also "the golden altar" (39:38; Num. 4:11), stood in the holy place "before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony." On this altar sweet spices were continually burned with fire taken from the brazen altar. The morning and the evening services were commenced by the high priest offering incense on this altar. The burning of the incense was a type of prayer (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:3, 4).

This altar was a small movable table, made of acacia wood overlaid with gold (Ex. 37:25, 26). It was 1 cubit in length and breadth, and 2 cubits in height.

In Solomon's temple the altar was similar in size, but was made of cedar-wood (1 Kings 6:20; 7:48) overlaid with gold. In Ezek. 41:22 it is called "the altar of wood." (Comp. Ex. 30:1–6.)

In the temple built after the Exile the altar was restored. Antiochus Epiphanes took it away, but it was afterwards restored by Judas Maccabaeus (1 Macc. 1:23; 4:49). Among the trophies carried away by Titus on the destruction of Jerusalem the altar of incense is not found, nor is any mention made of it in Heb. 9. It was at this altar Zacharias ministered when an angel appeared to him (Luke 1:11). It is the only altar which appears in the heavenly temple (Isa. 6:6; Rev. 8:3,4). 1

INCENSE. A common feature of OT ritual, incense was a costly offering and a sign essentially of the acknowledgment of deity (cf. Mal. 1:11). The word has a double application: it refers both to the substance used for burning and to the aromatic odour which is produced. Two Heb. words are thus rendered: (1) *leb_oena*, 'frankincense'; and (2) *qet'ouret*, the 'sweet smoke' (evv 'incense') of Is. 1:13. Among the Israelites only priests were allowed to offer incense. When the Lord gave Moses instructions for Aaron, these included strict regulations concerning the use of incense in the holy place (Lv. 16:12f.). Incense is also used in Scripture as a symbol for prayer (e.g. Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3f., Gk. *thymiama*).

Frankincense (Heb. *leb_oena*). This substance consisted of the resinous exudate of certain *Boswellia* trees, the principal species being *B. frereana*, *B. carteri* and *B. papyrifera* in NE Africa, *B. sacra* in Dhofar, S. Arabia, and *B. serrata* in NW India, where they grow in semi-desert mountains. They furnished much of the wealth acquired by traders who followed the old spice-routes from S Arabia to Gaza and Damascus (Is. 60:6).

The whitish-yellow aromatic resin was obtained by incising the bark, and, although acrid to the taste, frankincense was extremely odoriferous. It comprised one ingredient of the holy anointing oil (Ex. 30:34), and was also burnt with other substances during the cereal-offering (Lv. 6:15). Frankincense was placed in purified form on the showbread in the tabernacle (Lv. 24:7). While it gratified the senses (Ct. 3:6; 4:6, 14), it was also symbolic of religious fervour (cf. Mal. 1:11). The gift of frankincense presented to Christ by the wise men (Mt. 2:11) has been interpreted as symbolizing his priestly office.

See F. N. Hepper, 'Arabian and African Frankincense', JEA 55, 1969, pp. 66-72.

Galbanum (Heb. h/elbenae; etymology uncertain). A strong-smelling spice (Ex. 30:34), usually regarded as the gum of an umbelliferous plant, *Ferula galbaniflua*, native to Persia. The other constituents of the sacred incense were stacte and onycha (*Herbs and Spices). See also *Sacrifice And Offering (OT), IV. a; *Cosmetics And Perfumery, V. b (which includes bibliography). 2

ARK—Noah's ark, a building of gopher-wood, and covered with pitch, 300 cubits long, 50 cubits broad, and 30 cubits high (Gen. 6:14–16); an oblong floating house of three stories, with a door in the side and a window in the roof. It was 100 years in building (Gen. 5:32; 7:6). It was intended to preserve certain persons and animals from the deluge which God was about to bring over the earth. It contained eight persons (Gen. 7:13; 2 Pet. 2:5), and of all "clean" animals seven pairs, and of "unclean" one pair, and of birds seven pairs of each sort (Gen. 7:2, 3). It was in the form of an oblong square, with flat bottom and sloping roof. Traditions of the Deluge, by which the race of man was swept from the earth, and of the ark of Noah have been found existing among all nations.

The ark of bulrushes in which the infant Moses was laid (Ex. 2:3) is called in the Hebrew *teebah*, a word derived from the Egyptian *teb*, meaning "a chest." It was daubed with slime and with pitch. The bulrushes of which it was made were the papyrus reed.

The sacred ark is designated by a different Hebrew word,

ARK OF THE COVENANT. Called also 'ark of the Lord', 'ark of God', 'ark of the covenant of the Lord' (Dt. 10:8) and 'ark of the testimony' (εμδ_uÆ = covenant-terms: *Witness). The ark was a rectangular box (OauroEn) made of acacia wood, and measured 2 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/2 cubits (i.e. c. 4 x 2 1/2 x 2 1/2 feet or c. 1.22 m x 76 cm x 76 cm). The whole was covered with gold and was carried on poles inserted in rings at the four lower corners. The lid, or 'mercy-seat', was a gold plate surrounded by two antithetically placed cherubs with outspread wings.

The ark served (i) as receptacle for the two tablets of the Decalogue (Ex. 25:16, 21; 40:20; Dt. 10:1-5) and also for the pot of manna and Aaron's rod (Heb. 9:4-5); (ii) as the

meeting-place in the inner sanctuary where the Lord revealed his will to his servants (Moses: Ex. 25:22; 30:36; Aaron: Lv. 16:2; Joshua: Jos. 7:6). Thus it served as the symbol of the divine presence guiding his people. The ark was made at Sinai by Bezalel to the pattern given to Moses (Ex. 25:8ff.). It was used as a depository for the written law (Dt. 31:9; Jos. 24:26) and played a significant part at the crossing of Jordan (Jos. 3-4), the fall of Jericho (Jos. 6) and the ceremony of remembering the covenant at Mt Ebal (Jos. 8:30ff.).

From Gilgal the ark was moved to Bethel (Jdg. 2:1; 20:27), but was taken to Shiloh in the time of the Judges (1 Sa. 1:3; 3:3), remaining there till captured by the Philistines on the battlefield at Ebenezer (1 Sa. 4). Because its presence caused 7 months of plagues, the Philistines returned it to Kiriath-jearim, where it remained for 20 years (1 Sa. 5:1-7:2), except possibly for a temporary move to Saul's camp near Beth-aven (1 Sa. 14:18—where, however, lxx indicates that the original reading was probably 'ephod').

David installed the ark in a tent at Jerusalem (2 Sa. 6), and would not remove it during Absalom's rebellion (2 Sa. 15:24-29). It was placed in the Temple with great ceremony in the reign of Solomon (1 Ki. 8:1ff.), and re-sited in the sanctuary during Josiah's reforms (2 Ch. 35:3) when Jeremiah anticipated an age without its presence (3:16). It was presumably lost during the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 bc. There was no ark in the second Temple (Josephus, BJ 5. 219).

Gold-overlaid wooden receptacles or portable shrines are known from the ancient Near East in pre-Mosaic times. The ark is unique, however, as the repository of the covenant-tablets, i.e. documents bearing the 'covenant-stipulations' (Oeud_uEt_). 2

1. Easton, M. G., M. A. D. D., Easton's Bible Dictionary, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996.

2. The New Bible Dictionary, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

PART 2: A REVELATION OF..... THE AMAZING TABERNACLE OF MOSES

MOSES TABERNACLE INTRODUCED

Brought up in an evangelical Baptist, I have to admit hardly hearing of, and certainly not understanding the amazing truths contained within, and patterns set by, the very first church building, Moses Tabernacle. Constructed in the Sinai Desert some 3,500 years ago, to very detailed plans and specifications prepared by the ultimate Architect, God himself, supernaturally transmitted to the Construction Manager, Moses, and built by those Israelites who were particularly devoted to their God.

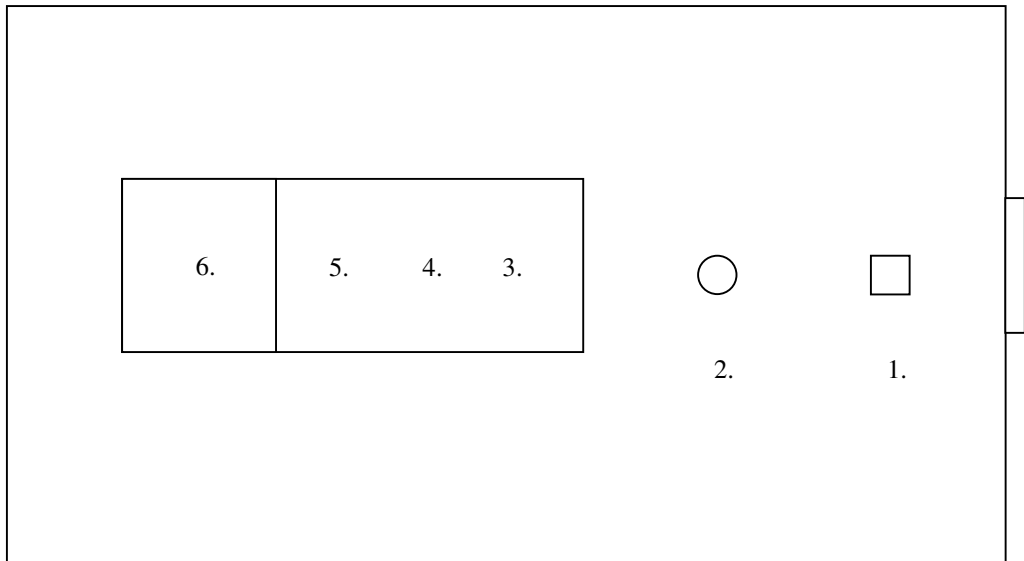
Fifteen years ago now, when introduced to the revelations of Pentecost, I was simply 'blown away' (amazed) that God, three and a half millenniums ago, revealed Himself, the pattern of Heaven, and what was to be His unchanging pattern for the Church both present and future. For the Tabernacle reveals both the nature and purpose of Jesus, and of the New Testament Church that Jesus was to establish through His death and resurrection. Which we are part of today. And which sets out our future too!

As the detailed plans and drawings are perfectly preserved in the Bible, we still have an excellent picture of the physical form of the Tabernacle itself. In fact a replica has been built and is open to visit in Israel. One day I will get to see it. We also have God's detailed instructions on the priesthood. These were the clergy who were to be responsible for looking after the Tabernacle in which God's presence was to dwell for some 500 years or so, until Solomon's Temple was built. Some of these exciting revelations will be investigated further in succeeding chapters.

However, before we do, I felt it would be a good idea to get in tune with the times, by paying a visit to the tabernacle for ourselves, from the perspective of an ordinary citizen, such as you or me. As details of this are

sketchy, what follows is one man's view of what it may have been like to visit.

LAYOUT OF MOSES TABERNACLE



FURNITURE

1. BRONZE ALTAR

2. WASHING BASIN

3. TABLE OF SHEWBREAD

4. LAMPSTAND

5. INCENSE ALTAR

6. ARK OF THE COVENANT

Note: This illustration, indeed the whole presentation, isn't designed to give a comprehensive picture of the amazing truths that Moses Tabernacle contains. It is limited to those facts that are important in understanding the form of worship God desires us to bring to Him.

The bible gives a comprehensive 16 chapter, detailed description of Moses Tabernacle in Exodus, through chapters 25 to 40. It describes most aspects of the physical design of the structure and the furniture it contains, in

considerable detail, but is much less revealing about the way the Tabernacle functioned. Further information can be gleaned from the first 10 chapters of Leviticus, and snippets elsewhere. But nowhere is there a detailed description of the daily ‘happenings’ in this worship centre.

There are many writings on the spiritual meanings of the intricate Tabernacle design details that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. I would strongly recommend that you consider reading these for the still ‘relevant revelations’ they contain. What follows however is a story, based as closely as possible on the scriptures, hopefully giving a feeling for and understanding of, some of the amazing truths the Tabernacle contains. However it is only a story, so let’s not base our theology on it! It has been both fun and a challenge to compile. I hope you find it helpful in bringing Moses Tabernacle to life for you too.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF.....

Let's wander back in time - a mere 3,500 years - to the days shortly after the children of Israel had entered the Promised Land, having spent 40 long years in the Sinai Desert. No trouble to us! We don't need a time machine, only an imagination. Much cheaper and less high tech! More likely to work too!

You are now a God fearing Israelite of average means, living with your family on a small farm. You wish to repent (Say sorry to God and undertake not to do it again) for offending your neighbour last week when talking to him, well – to be honest - gossiping really, about a mutual acquaintance. You didn't mean to be offensive at the time, but now realise you shouldn't have said the things you did. Having sinned, you really want to make a Sin Offering before your Lord. For the Pentateuch, traditionally known as 'the five-fifths of the law' (1st 5 books of the bible) has been read many times to you by the priests on the Day of Atonement, and during other festivals over the years. So much so that you now know the main points off by heart!

Conveniently, the home of the Lord, His Tabernacle that Moses built some 50 years ago, is close by, only 5,000 paces or so (4km) down the road. A nice early morning walk before it gets too hot. That way you can beat the crowd, for it is not very big really and the priest gets very busy at times.

The next day, rising at the crack of dawn, you go out to your field, and select the choicest female lamb from your flock for the sacrifice. You do this gladly, full of joy to offer the very best to your God, in the very Tabernacle where His holy presence dwells. Taking the lamb in your arms, you set out as the sun peeks over the horizon, down the road leading to God's presence. The road is quite dusty, as there hasn't been much rain lately. For it comes mainly during the change of seasons.

Getting closer, the outside walls gradually materialise from within the early morning haze. With a sigh of relief you see that the majestic cloud of God's presence is stationary, billowing above the tent itself. You certainly

didn't want to have to pack up and shift, today of all days. From the instructions given to Moses when your father was with him in the desert, you know the exact dimensions - 100x50 cubits. (1 cubit approximately equals ½ metre or yard – 50x25 metres or yards) About a quarter the size of a football field, you automatically estimate. Yes, half the length by half the width seems pretty near. As you get closer, the construction of the walls comes more clearly into focus. No glasses to correct short or long sightedness in those days! You see that they are made of a strong linen material, just too tall to look over at 5 cubits high. (2½ metres or yards) Some kids are nearby who, kids being kids, peak underneath. They are quickly given the message, by one of the Levites on duty inside, to move away before getting into serious trouble.

The linen curtains, yellowing slightly now after years of battling the harsh desert elements, are hung 1 cubit above the ground, between posts, pegged back on stays, much like a modern tent. Some things never change!

However, your eyes are strongly drawn to the curtains forming the doorway, just at this very moment being drawn back, ready for the day's activities. For they are different to the rest of the wall. While made of the same linen material, they are intricately embroidered in purple, red and blue. You can still clearly remember the air of excitement and anticipation, sitting at your mother's feet as a youngster, watching these glorious designs taking shape. For she and her friends diligently embroidered all the gateway curtains for the Tabernacle from designs supplied by that divinely inspired craftsman, Bezalel. As God had instructed, His chosen group of men, those who had a real passion for building the Tabernacle, closely supervised the ladies. Bless her heart! Great memories of those desert days. How sad that mum, dad and all the others died before we crossed the river into this fantastic, fertile land. I still miss them. A real lesson not to disobey God though!

As the curtains are drawn back you see your friend Eliasaph, the Levite on gate duty that day. And naturally, you pass a few words with him. For when has a good Jew ever been short of a few words! Ahead of you, you see the awesome, imposing, sacrificial *Brazen Alter*, the central feature of

the open courtyard. Not as big as you would think though, but it appears so powerful and strong, to make one question its 5x5x3 cubits measurements. (2½ metres or yards square x 1½ high) Amazing how efficiently the sacrifices burn though! And durable too! For it is only made of common acacia wood, covered on both sides with copper. Amazingly, well not really, because God knows, this combination forms the most effective fire resistant material around!

The atmosphere suddenly changes when passing through the gate. For now you are in the courtyard of God's dwelling place. In the Outer Court, where the one and only almighty God demands the cleansing of sin through sacrifice, to come into His Holy presence. The lamb starts squirming in your arms. For she can sense the smell of death that permeates the surroundings and is scared. Looking into her innocent, pleading eyes you turn quickly away, with tears in your eyes. You can't bear to look at her again. What had she done to deserve this untimely end? Absolutely nothing! Solely your responsibility! What a sudden reminder of the awfulness of sin and God's righteous judgement! Moving now towards the Brazen Altar, towards your meeting with God – feeling absolutely devastated. Oh God, that perfect, innocent lamb's life - the price for my sin, for my life. Your legal requirement, I know. Oh God, I am so sorry for my stupid words. I won't make that mistake again! A fear filled, 'awe-full' moment!

The priest attracts your attention as he bounds towards you, speedily covering the few metres from the bronze *Washing Basin*, set on its sparkling, shiny brass stand. It is so lovingly polished by the Levites that you can see your face in it. He is ready to make your sacrifice, having washed both his hands and feet in the basin's water, holy water that the Levites had sprinkled with anointing oil and blood. With mixed emotions you hand over your struggling, squirming lamb to the priest, desperate as she senses her impending death. In one movement, the priest holds down her head and expertly slits her throat, avoiding the innocent, pleading look in her panic-stricken eyes. Her bright red lifeblood spurts out in an unforgettable stream through her severed artery, her body spasms confirming the grim finality of a gruesome death. A life for a life as God's

law requires. The priest dips his finger in the blood, quickly placing a touch on each of the four horns of the altar while simultaneously holding the lamb up by its back legs, its remaining lifeblood draining out in a grim red ooze at the base of the altar. An innocent life for your life – the price has been paid for your sin.

Quickly slitting open and gutting the lamb, the priest throws the putrid smelling offal to one side for later disposal. The foul smell almost causes you to throw up! After skinning the lamb, he carefully removes all the fat from the carcass in accordance with God's instructions to Moses. The fat is placed upon the altar, producing, as it burns, an aroma pleasing to the Lord. The priest puts the carcass to one side for later cooking and consumption by himself and his sons. So overcome are you by the gruesomeness of the whole experience and the terrible price the innocent lamb had to pay for your stupidity, your unnecessary sin, that you unashamedly fall onto your knees, crying out to the Lord your God in repentance. 'My God, please forgive me, please forgive me – I won't do it again! Please God! Please God! Please God!' Surely there must be a better way!

The priest sees your distress and gently places his hand on your shoulder. 'You have done well, my friend. The Lord is pleased with you. For you only see the horror of sin and sacrifice, but He shows me His glory too. Let me tell you about it.

See the tent over here. Not that big is it, only 30 cubits long by 10 wide and 10 high, (approx. 15x5x5 metres or yards) but inside the glory of God is revealed. Come with me. See these layers of covering on the outside of the tent? Like everything else in this place, each has a special meaning. There are actually 4 layers, but you can only see 2 from here. Here on the outside – you can touch that one if you like – the cover is made of sea cow skins. Note the '*bluey*' colour. The oil in the skins keeps the tent dry when it rains. The oil and the blue colouring remind us of the Spirit of God (Later revealed as the Holy Spirit) who covers all our lives. Underneath is another cover of ram skins died red, a reminder of the blood sacrifice required for sin, which saddened you so much earlier. (Jesus – but He hadn't been born yet!) Look up here. This black cover, protruding over the

entrance, is woven from goats' hair. That of course represents our sins of omission, of not doing the things God desires of us, rather than our known although unintentional sins, which are sacrificed on the Altar outside. You remember the sacrificial goat and scapegoat sacrificed for our sins on the Day of Atonement? Of course you do, for I have seen you there.

I am sorry that you can't come inside the tent with me, for it is just so glorious in there. But we believe that one day it will be possible for all to enter, although we don't know how. (We do now! – through the death of Jesus on the cross) But it is only from the inside that you can see the fourth cover of glorious pure white linen, with cherubim signifying God's presence emblazoned in purple, red and blue. (Colours of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit). You may remember your mother and the other women embroidering them in the desert all those many years ago, when you were just a kid.

But I digress. You know, the strange thing about this cover is that you can only see part of it, the piece that crosses the roof. For at the sides of the tent are two glowing gold walls that both support and hide most of it. They are absolutely stupendous! Just has to be the glory of God. I have never quite been able to work out what all this means though.

See this magnificent curtain here that forms the entrance to the tent. Embroidered again in purple, red and blue. God is everywhere in this place! What you can't see though, is the curtain inside. That one separates the back third, the Holy of Holies where God's presence dwells, from the Holy Place in front, where we, the priests, attend to the daily duties the Lord has us do for Him.

For we have three jobs to do twice daily. But I am getting ahead of myself. For before I go in to the tent, into the Holy Place, I must first wash my feet in the washing basin, as I did before making the sacrifice for you. It will literally cost my life if I forget! But once I have been purified in God's eyes, I can go in and carry out my tasks.

My first job is to attend to the *Table of Showbread*. This simple, yet exquisite oblong gold table, is adorned with gold mouldings, both around the edge and on the handbreadth wide gold rim that surrounds the top. Every Saturday, our Jewish Sabbath of course, I place on the table 12 loaves of bread, representing our 12 tribes, but more importantly symbolising the perfect, never ending word of God. You know, we get to eat this bread after we take it off the table at the end of the week. Remarkably, it is as fresh then as the day we put it on!

Twice daily I have to burn frankincense, set out in lines beside the 2 rows of 6 loaves. What a sweet fragrance it has. Helps keep God's word of life at the forefront of my mind. I normally do this in the early morning and again at twilight while I am attending to the rest of my duties inside.

For I am required to light the *Golden Lampstand* each evening, having first filled the cups with oil and trimmed the wicks. Some people call it a golden candlestick because of its design, but it really is a lamp, not a candle, even though it may look like one. It is so important that the oil is pure. If there is any possibility that the lamp may malfunction because of poor oil or wicks, I have to stay here all night to make sure it doesn't go out! But fortunately our oil and wick makers are most diligent, working as they are for the Lord. In the morning, as the sun comes up, I have to get out of bed and come down here to snuff the flame out. I don't mind though, as it pleases God and gives me a good, early start to the day too!

Sorry, I have got ahead of myself and not told you what the Lampstand looks like. I don't know how I forgot, as the Lampstand is simply the most intricate, breathtaking, solid gold creation I have ever seen. I don't know how Bezalel did it - the work is so fine. The seven lamps are borne on 7 branches; each branch topped with a cup in the shape of an almond flower, delicately decorated with incredible, lifelike buds and blossoms down the stem. A grand total of 66 masterpieces in all, including the cups, beaten out of a single piece of pure gold. You should see the delightful dancing images of the flames' shimmering lights reflecting from the golden walls as darkness falls. Incredible! Yes, the light of the oil of the Spirit brings

divine illumination on the bread of God's word. It certainly is an encouragement to research the scriptures more deeply.

Having set up or extinguished the lamps, depending on the time of day, I then move slowly to the *Incense Altar*. Placed as it is, near the entrance of the Holy of Holies, so my mind increasingly focuses on the glory of the Lord. In some ways this altar looks like a miniature version of the Bronze Altar over here, on which your lamb was sacrificed. However it sits on a gold plated stand with a solid gold moulding around the top. The altar itself is coated with gold, not bronze, as indeed, is all the furniture in the tent.

Fortunately the temperatures required for burning incense are not as great either, so the fire can be smaller too. When I come in to the Holy Place, I bring some hot coals from the Bronze Altar, which I then use to burn the special incense the Lord has provided us with the recipe for. We aren't allowed to use this incense for anything else. It is a real pity because the fragrance is simply 'heavenly', the only word I can find to adequately describe the spiritual effect it has on me. As the fragrance permeates the air, I just have to pray out loud to my God and worship Him with all my being. It is an amazing experience to feel so close to God. I just look forward to it so much all day. It would be just wonderful if everyone could share my experience! (Now we can!)

But great though the Incense Altar experience is, it is surpassed by the sheer awesomeness of the Day of Atonement, the day I truly meet with God. This is the one day of the year that I, as High Priest, can visit Him in His Holy of Holies. I do wish I could do it more often, for there is nothing else in life to compare with it! The presence of God just envelops me. It is impossible to explain really. His awesomeness, power and majesty is overwhelming, yet you can sense His love and caring at the same time. There is just nothing else like it. I break down and cry, yet worship Him at the same time! Inexplicable!

But I had better start at the beginning. For God has set up a system that must be followed when entering into His presence. Remember my uncles, Nadab and Abihu? They broke the rules and paid for it with their lives.

You will no doubt recall that day. It doubled the workload on my dad Eleazar, and Uncle Ithimar, as for a long time they were the only priests left. But it is a bit easier now as my generation comes of age and is able to shoulder the workload. Making sacrifices is heavy, hard work, you know. But again I digress!

The main thing I have to be sure of is to follow the Lord's instructions precisely, so I don't meet my uncles' fate! I need to be personally pure, as do the people I am representing, for purity is essential to live in His presence. So firstly, He requires me to take off all my clothes – a bit embarrassing really – and wash myself in the basin before going into the Tent. There I put on the sparkling white linen clothes, to be worn only on this special day. For they speak of purity and holiness. Then I come back out into the courtyard to make a Sin Offering for myself, just as you did earlier. Yes, I need to be 100% right with God too. Taking some of the blood from my sacrifice, I fill my censer (bowl with a handle) with hot coals and select two handfuls of the special fragrant incense I talked of earlier. Now I am prepared to enter the Holy of Holies.

The sense of anticipation builds inside me as I pass through the Holy Place towards the Holy of Holies. I particularly notice that the curtain separating the areas has 2 giant cherubim woven into it, again in God's colours, purple, red and blue. Your mother's handiwork as well, I recollect. My mind ponders upon what I am going to experience inside. For God's presence lives between the 2 cherubim on the *Ark of the Covenant*. Opening the curtain, I quickly throw incense onto the burning coals, forming a cloud in the room, particularly over the Atonement Cover, so protecting me from the full glory of God. That heavenly fragrance fills the room and permeates every pore in my body. Even Moses, great as he was, couldn't look God in the face and live. So I need to be doubly careful!

I had better describe the Ark before I go on. It is an oblong box, (2½x1½x1½ cubits) made of Acacia wood, plated inside and out with gold. Around the top it has a pure gold moulding. The lid, the Atonement Cover, with its accompanying cherubim's, forms the boundaries within which God dwells. Of course I know He is everywhere, but this is the specific place

He meets with us. The Atonement Cover has to be perfect, for it to be God's dwelling place amongst us, and it is. Bezalel, the master craftsman, made it himself. It was fashioned out of a single piece of gold, shaped into a smooth, flat lid. Two large, delicately sculptured, solid gold Cherubim with outstretched wings face each other, gracefully rising up, one from each end of the cover. I only get a glimpse of it of course, because it is quickly enveloped in the dense cloud of smoke resulting from burning the incense.

The Ark contains 3 different items. The two stone tablets with the 10 commandments written on them, my grandfather Aaron's budding, almond tree staff, and a jar of the manna we lived on during those 40 long years in the desert. I haven't seen them of course, as they were placed in there well before my time. You remember the desert too of course, when you were a lad. The manna tasted great, but sometimes we can have too much of a good thing! Never grateful for what we have, are we! But getting back to the Holy of Holies. Walls of solid gold surround the room, while the roof is a continuation of the pure white, linen cover, embroidered with Cherubim's, that covers the Holy Place too. The glow of gold - the glow of God. Unbelievable!

But now, on with the action. Now where did I get too? Yes. The heavenly cloud formed by the burning incense. Immersed in the cloud, literally and spiritually, I dip my finger in the bull's blood I have brought in from my sacrifice, and sprinkle it on the Atonement Cover. Seven times more I sprinkle it on the floor in front of the Cover. 'Oh Lord, how unworthy I am to come into your presence. Through this blood, I thank you that I am forgiven and can be one with you again. Thank you Father. How humble I feel, that you, Almighty God will forgive me and still accept me, even after the life I have lived.' His strength and grace overcome me, and I break down and cry out in His awesome presence. 'My God! My God! My God!....' I take my leave and walk back out to the Courtyard, a new man, cleansed by the grace of God, ready now to do the same thing for His, for my, people.

You know the rest, for you have been at the ceremony, my friend. How the sacrificial goat and scapegoat are chosen by lot. The sacrifice of the one, the sprinkling of the blood, once again, on and in front of the Atonement Cover. This time though, on behalf of all of us Jews. What an honour this is for me. Then followed by the release of the scapegoat into the wilderness to die rejected, carrying away all our sins.

Of course I have to again change my clothes, following the same procedure as earlier, but in reverse. For I have discovered that God is a God of order, not of chaos, and He requires His patterns to be fulfilled exactly as He sets them down.

Well, I had better get going now, for there is a quite a queue building up, waiting for me to attend to their sacrifices too. See you next time. The Lord bless you.”

The sun's now high in the sky. Not looking forward to the 5,000 pace journey home just yet, you see down the road a shaded, inviting olive grove. A great place to sit down and ponder all that has been experienced and learned. The Spirit of God settles upon you, opening up new realms of understanding of your God and His glory. At peace with yourself. At peace with God. The sun rises to its peak as you drift off into a restful, contented sleep. After all, it is siesta time!

ESTABLISHING GOD'S PATTERN FOR THE CHURCH

A PATTERN OF PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

Fear the new and untried? Love new challenges? Enjoy taking risks? No, no, and again no! Creatures of habit, aren't we. Slipping into our routine provides a comfort zone. No need to make new decisions. Leaving things the way they are, the way we know they work. As we get older particularly, we place more value on experience than innovation. Let's face it, we get lazy! That which was right, that which worked yesterday, is just fine for today too, thank you very much. And on, and on, and on, and on! How boring and comfortably predictable we become!

But God is not like us! He is a God of change! The single thing that displeases God the most amongst true Christians is not our obvious sin, our reluctance to evangelise or read the bible or even to pray! Rather it is our unwillingness to listen to what He desires to tell us and then do something about it, both individually and as 'the Church'. Thinking about it, that is what this book is all about – hearing and implementing the word of God. While God is never changing, being the same yesterday, today and forever, we are not to be, until we have reached His realm of perfection, that is! Once we've arrived we can have a rest! I know I won't be lying on my laurels for quite some time yet! Never - without God's help! Good to have a goal though!

A CASE STUDY: AN OBSERVATION OF CHANGE

We (and I include myself here) are comfortable amongst those we know, alongside those who think along similar lines to us. With those who worship in the same way as we do, those who sit in the same seats around us in church, week by week. Legendary stories abound of people sitting in other peoples 'pews'. Most of us laugh at them but we shouldn't, for the same patterns abound in our lives too.

It was interesting to observe what happened when our church shifted into a new building. It was a special time for us, having met in rented premises

for the previous 14 years. I must explain that ours is a radical, non-traditional Pentecostal fellowship, where long term seat reservation isn't a custom that fits easily within our church culture! We were all really excited on the first Sunday, entering our new church that we had worked so hard to prepare for this occasion. Until it came to decision time of where to sit, that is. For decisions had to be made! Pastors and elders to the front - of course! Least committed to the back? Best to get lost in the middle? And the 'biggie'! Left or right hand side?

We did sort it out and had a marvellous service of celebration for God's goodness to us. By the next week, the precedent having already been set, seating decisions were a lot easier. By the third week we were settled, comfortable in our general positions within the auditorium. For we're all creatures of habit, aren't we? But habit quickly becomes tradition and tradition in turn, breeds intolerance towards those whose traditions are not the same as our own.

CHANGE IN THE CHURCH

As Revelation 12:11 sets out the way of salvation, the walk for the individual, so the Tabernacle of Moses clearly illustrates God's pattern for the church. It is a pattern starting at the entrance to the Outer Court, progressing through the Holy Place, to finally enter the Holy of Holies. I am sure that by now, you will be able to relate Revelation 12:11 to this pattern. Entry into the Outer Court through the blood of the Lamb, to the Holy Place by the word of their testimony (given by The Holy Spirit) and finally to the Holy of Holies through total submission to God the Father. For there is but one pathway leading to God. As Jesus himself said,

"No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

If Jesus lied in this, can we believe anything He said? If He is telling the truth, shouldn't we believe Him! Good people, Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus, people who have never heard of Jesus, as well as those who have heard and not believed, will not go to heaven. Seems unfair to our human understanding, but God is God! What a motivation to evangelise! To give

these people a chance of heaven! For there is only one way to reach God, and that is through Jesus.

Before we look at the pattern in more detail, let's have a brief look at how the "Church" has developed over the 1970 odd years since it was founded.

“POTTED” HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

THE EARLY CHURCH:

30AD April: Death of Jesus on the cross. (The day of the Feast of Passover)

April: Resurrection and appearance to Mary Magdalene. (The day of the Feast of Firstfruits)

May: Ascension to heaven. Believers reduced from 500 to 120 at Pentecost.

May: Pentecost. Holy Spirit arrival. 3,000 added to the Church. (The day of the Feast of Weeks, that is Pentecost) Symbolic restoration of the 3,000 killed for making the infamous golden calf while the law was being given to Moses on Mt Sinai, at Pentecost, approximately 1,500 years before. Chance? No way!

33AD Church still confined to Jerusalem. Many miracles occurred as they moved in the power of the Holy Spirit. However, contrary to popular belief, the very early church was not keen to “*go and make disciples of all nations*” (*Matthew 28:19*). They had a siege mentality. They did not want to see the Church taken over by gentiles as their nation had been by the Romans and others, in the past. Jesus preached to the Jews, so they also carried on in the same way, in the same tradition or ‘comfort zone’. They were disobedient to His new command, which may well have had important implications for all Church history, as we will see later. Conversions occurred and the Church spread, but mainly through people visiting Jerusalem and taking ‘the way’ home with them.

37AD The conversion of Paul, aged 29. After a period of seclusion, Paul started his ministry at age 30, the same age as Jesus. Significant, in that it was the age the Levites and priests started work in the

Tabernacle, the accepted age of spiritual maturity. Paul, a Jew born in Tarsus in Greece, a Roman citizen, trained as a Pharisee from a young age in Jerusalem. An internationalist, he was called to do the work the Apostles and early church had neglected to do. Not God's first choice but the ideal backup – right age, right birth, right training and fully committed to all he did, whether it was persecuting the Christians or leading them to Christ! Initially the churches were set up with unity of doctrine and church government but gradually, as Paul's letters show, divisions began to appear.

48AD Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem to sort out a crucial problem within the early church that was causing a division between Jewish and gentile believers. The argument concerned the necessity for gentile believers to follow Jewish law and tradition, in particular the need for male circumcision. A 'painful process' for an adult male, but a requirement for entry into Judaism. After lengthy debate it was agreed that under 'grace', this previous legal requirement was no longer necessary. Much to the relief of gentile male converts, I'm sure! Tradition dies hard though! Legalism of a different sort didn't take too long to return, particularly once the state got involved with the church. For the survival of the state effectively depends upon the rule of law.

68AD May or June: Paul executed in Rome. He had succeeded in establishing toehold churches throughout much of the known world, using his normal method of first preaching to the Jews in the local synagogue. When the Jews threw him out, which they invariably did, he turned to the local gentiles. The city authorities then usually ejected him, usually at the request of the Jews! The churches of this time were small, mostly house churches, initially at least. No giant cathedrals yet!

70AD 5th August: The burning of the temple, as prophesied by Jesus. Still hasn't yet been physically replaced although there are Jews wishing to do so. As Christians, Jesus is our 'spiritual temple', so the rebuilding of a physical temple is unnecessary.

2nd September: The final destruction of the upper part of Jerusalem. Led to the Christians of the area being scattered throughout the known world, taking their faith and beliefs with

them. Yes, a tragedy for the Jewish nation. But a positive step for the spreading of the gospel. God's ways are certainly different to ours!

c.100 Death of the last of the Apostles, John. Authority and unity of 'apostleship' disappeared.

THE DECLINE OF THE CHURCH:

130 Laying on of hands becomes a formal ritual.

140 Ministry of the prophets vanishes.

150 Gifts of the Spirit are disappearing entirely.

160 Plurality of eldership fades away.

180 Local church autonomy diminishes as churches start to come under the control of Rome.

187 First infant baptism and sprinkling. Form over substance.

200 Ritual becoming the norm as the church had form but had lost its power. Water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ denied, largely through Pope Stephen.

210 Doctrine of the priesthood of all believers rejected as a class of clerics developed.

225 Church membership became based on a creed rather than salvation.

240 Holiness disappeared and worldliness infiltrated the church.

350 Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion. Salvation by faith not required for membership, with many 'heathen' being forced to accept Christianity by the sword.

380 Rome became the final authority in church matters.

THE DARK AGES: An ongoing decline that lasted for over 1100 years until the Reformation.

1300's Bible translated into easy English by John Wycliffe, and by others into the major European languages, enabling the spreading of the word amongst ordinary people, so setting the scene for the Reformation. Wycliffe's theme was the interpretation of scripture, by scripture, not by man.

1450 The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg provided the vehicle for the viable spread of the Bible to the masses.

RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH:

Traditional Church

1517 Martin Luther started the Reformation with his revelation; “The just shall live by faith.”

Evangelical Church

1524 Water Baptism restored through the Anabaptists.

1559 John Calvin’s book ‘Institution of the Christian Religion’ focused on “salvation by grace through faith.”

1600’s Emphasis on the restoration of spiritual life.

1738 Holiness emphasised by Wesley.

1792 William Carey founded the first missionary society, the BMS, to evangelise internationally.

1800’s Emphasis on social reform based on Christian principles e.g. Lord Shaftesbury in (factory and mining reform) and W E Gladstone (political reforms) in Britain and Charles Finney (abolition of slavery) in the USA.

Pentecostal Church

1901 The birth of the Pentecostal Movement in the USA saw the reintroduction of the gifts of the Spirit in a major way, to the church.

1904 The Welsh Revival was a practical example of the amazing affects that revival can have on society.

1920’s Introduced decades of the ministry of Evangelism to the church. e.g. D. L. Moody, Smith Wigglesworth, Billy Graham, Oral Roberts and many others majoring on the truths of water baptism and often, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The gifts that were restored as a result of this were primarily vocal - speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy.

Charismatic Church

1948 First return of the prophetic ministry to the Pentecostal Church through the Latter Rain Movement.

1960's The Charismatic Movement commenced, taking the gifts of the Spirit into many mainstream churches.

1970's Prophets fully accepted in the church, bringing with them the truth of the laying on of hands. The revelation gifts that returned were word of knowledge, discernment of spirits and the word of wisdom.

What is apparent from this timeline is the parallel between the decline of the mainline church over the first 4 centuries and its ongoing restoration over the last 5, since the Reformation. The gospel truths and movement of the Holy Spirit however, were not entirely lost during the Dark Ages, being retained in Independent Church movements throughout the world. Considering the close parallels, it is not unreasonable to project into the future, the final restoration of the church, to its initial, early church position before decline occurred.

RESTORATIONS COMPLETION:

Tabernacle Church

2000's In natural progression, the Apostolic ministry will soon be restored with its associated truths of resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement. The gifts that will accompany this apostolic ministry will be miracles, healings and faith. While healings and miracles have accompanied the ministries of others throughout the century, one of particular note being Smith Wigglesworth, their full release is yet to come. Then too, the governmental authority and unity of the true church, lost when the Apostle John died 1900 years ago, will be restored.

Impossible? In our own power, yes. In God's power, no!

Let's now have a look and see if this pattern of church history reflects God's pattern for the church as expressed in Moses' Tabernacle.

APPLICATION TO TODAY'S CHURCH

An earlier chapter showed us how the Tabernacle applied to the individual, as we took a walk through it. But the pattern of the Tabernacle applies equally well to the development of the church and its ministries. Let's have a look. For our purposes here, we will take a more conventional approach to the Tabernacle, concentrating on the furniture it contains, comparing the furniture to the truths revealed through the various churches.

Sadly, truth has to be revealed through many different churches because of us! Our human nature grasps hold of a revelatory truth, gets comfortable in it, thinks it is the ultimate, and refuses to move on the next truth God desires to reveal. Hence the truism that the people at the forefront of the last revival are so often the biggest opponents of the next. This has also caused the growth in denominations, for each denomination tends to stop at the new truth revealed to it, forcing God to seek another group for His next revelation. He must really love us, to put up with us!

As the decline of the church took place progressively over a period of centuries, so the restoration of the church too, is a process rather than an event. As moving further into the Tabernacle brings a greater and greater revelation and insight into the glory of our God, so being open to the God's progressive revelations as a church bring us closer to Him. It is so sad to see how comfort and pride work in tandem to limit our walk, causing divisions and denominations to multiply. However, let's see the outworking of this, by comparing the Church's restoration to the progression of furniture in the Tabernacle.

THE TRADITIONAL CHURCH – Centred on the Brazen Altar.

The truth revealed to Martin Luther started the Reformation. The restoration of the church was based on the principle that God could not be 'bought' through works, which generally meant paying money to the church! His revelation of 'the just shall live by faith' (in Jesus) was centred on the hugely different principle of access to God being available through the final sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for all sin. Not through the dictates of a man centred church.

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

Yes, Jesus gloriously was the sacrificial lamb slaughtered on the ‘altar’ of Calvary. And shown in type 2,000 years earlier, when Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac on the altar at Mount Moriah, the site of Solomon’s Temple and very close to Calvary itself. Of course a ram was provided as a substitute at the last minute. Again a coincidence? No way!

So the traditional church was given this truth. But they stopped there, retaining many of the practices of the man centred church out of which they had come, such as hierarchy, ceremonials, infant baptism, etc. As do many churches, to this very day. The key truth that distinguishes the true church from the false church however - that the only way to God is through Jesus - was recognised, so the restoration of the church could proceed. The Brazen Altar was just inside the entrance to the Tabernacle. The only way to God is via the Altar, the blood sacrifice. The pattern was established. So the Reformation, the restoration of the church, could now commence.

THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH – Added the Washing Basin

The main additional revelation that sets the Evangelical Church apart from the Traditional Church is the truth of ‘believers baptism’. Through believers baptism the new Christian is symbolically cleansed and separated from the world, being set apart to God. This was the function of the Washing Basin in the Tabernacle, the place where the priest washed his hands and feet, before making a sacrifice or entering the Holy Place.

“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his heart to an idol or swear by what is false.” (Psalm24:3-4)

The Washing Basin was made out of mirrors, reflecting the mirror of the Word of God.

‘Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard – he will be blessed in what he does.’
(James 1:22-25)

Hence there is a greater emphasis on the Word, the bible, and on living a good clean life in Evangelical Churches than in the Traditional Church, where the Sacraments, creeds, etc. form the focal point. This has been illustrated several times in a very practical way to me. For when a Traditional Church starts to become more evangelical, the first major problem that normally arises between reformers and traditionalists is over believers’ baptism. It can and does split churches.

THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH – Added the Furniture from the Holy Place

Entry to the Tent: The ‘Baptism’ or ‘Release’ of The Holy Spirit

As described in the previous chapter, entry into the tent containing both the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, was restricted to the Priests in the case of the Holy Place, and the High Priest, then just once a year, in respect of the Holy of Holies. The tent was covered with sea cow skins, tinged blue and oily, a type or picture of the Holy Spirit. So to enter the Holy Place, the realm in which the Pentecostal Church operates, it is necessary for one to become the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament priest.

How do we do this? That is the great debate between the non-charismatic evangelical church who say that we receive all of God at conversion and those of charismatic/pentecostal persuasion, who believe that a second baptism or release is required in order to enter into the Holy Spirit or Holy Place experience. This is not the place to debate the arguments (the book isn’t long enough!) but I would suggest that both theologically and from practical observation and experience, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the New Testament equivalent to the priesthood of the Old. This baptism or

release enables us to participate in the revelations contained within the Holy Place.

It's a lot like buying a ticket to see a movie. To understand the movie, you must see it. To get in, you have to buy a ticket (the baptism of the Holy Spirit). Otherwise you only receive a second hand account from others, with the inevitable misunderstandings that that involves. Been there, done that! That is why I urge you to buy the ticket and enter new realms of spiritual experience, if you haven't done so already.

Holy Place Furniture

There are 3 items of furniture in the Holy Place, each reflecting an aspect of the beliefs and practices of Pentecostal Churches. In fact, Pentecostal Churches can be divided into 3 types, as individual churches tend to major on one of the three items of furniture.

a. Table of Showbread – The Revelatory Word of God (*Word - Inwards*)

The word of God can be read on different levels. The bible tells us that it won't make sense at all to an unbeliever and I can relate to that. Before becoming a Christian the bible was the most boring book around. After finding Jesus it started to make more sense as I sought to find out more about my Lord and Saviour. I really appreciated the Evangelical exposition of the Word. But eventually I wanted even more. As I came into the Spirit I started to gain a small level of understanding of the revelatory or underlying meaning of God's word.

“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”
(1 Corinthians 2:14)

The depth of understanding available is infinite, yes it's inexhaustible. This work therefore, is based on my limited understanding of the revelatory word of God. My understanding will grow as I grow in the

Lord. So as I have mentioned previously, it is not the final word. Only God has that!

‘For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.’(2 Corinthians 4:6)

The Pentecostal movement has brought with it new insights and understanding into the word of God, to those who are in the spiritual place to understand them. So for one group of Pentecostal Churches, the intricacies of the word are all-important, their major emphasis being on teaching programmes and the preaching of the Word.

b. The Golden Lampstand – Speaking of the Gifts of The Spirit (*Works - Outwards*)

The Lampstand, you will remember, burned oil, signifying among other things, the oil of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. With this anointing comes spiritual gifts.

‘To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.’(1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

Yes, the access to spiritual giftings is an integral part of the Pentecostal Church, one that identifies and separates them from Traditional and Evangelical churches. So we find within the Pentecostal movement, churches that major on spiritual gifts. A service is not complete if it doesn't involve tongues, interpretation, prophecy, words of knowledge, and sometimes healings. Praise and worship and the preaching of the word are likely included but the real success or failure of the meeting is judged by how well the gifts flowed.

**c. The Incense Altar – Speaking of Praise and Worship, and Prayer
(Worship - Upwards)**

An altar of course speaks of sacrifice. Since Jesus was the final sacrifice for all sin, our sacrifice must be something different. Our sacrifice is praise and worship.

“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name.”(Hebrews 13:15)

The incense that was offered on this altar speaks of prayer.

“Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne.”(Revelation 8:3)

So, a further differentiation, a further truth revealed to the Pentecostal Church, is the power of praise, worship and prayer. I have commented earlier on my own experiences and difficulties, coming from an Evangelical background into a fellowship where praise, worship and prayer are full on. There is a major difference to older style churches here, a newer revelation. But some Pentecostal fellowships overly major on praise and worship and/or prayer, so lacking in balance. These truths are the prime reason for their existence. Always seeking to break through into the “third heaven”, to the very presence of God, through these activities, relegating the gifts and the Word to minor roles.

The key for all those in the Pentecostal Church desiring to move on in God is to attain a balance between the three. To build inwardly through a deeper understanding of the Word, to build outwardly through works inspired by the Holy Spirit, and to build a deeper relationship upwardly with God, through praise and worship, and prayer.

THE CHARISMATIC CHURCH – The Revelations of the Holy Place into the Evangelical Church

Overall, there is little difference of revelation between the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements. There are differences in application however, because of the differing backgrounds of the people, and the situations in which they are applied. The Charismatic movement grew out of the desires of those in the Evangelical Church who hungered for more of God, yet did not want to lose the traditions of their own heritage. As the truths of Pentecost have permeated Charismatic Churches, differences of application have become less and less noticeable, the essential truths of the Holy Place being the same for all.

THE RESTORATION OF MINISTRY FUNCTIONS IN THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

It is most interesting to compare the unusual order of the furniture first listed in Exodus, not being the order they actually appear in the Tabernacle, with the 5 fold ministries (specific types of leadership or ministries within the church) listed in Ephesians 4:11. This illustration gives a practical observation of the biblical order of restoration of leadership ministries to the church in these days. The dates given are approximate times of general acceptance rather than of first appearance.

Tabernacle Furniture Exodus Chaps. 25-30	5 Fold Ministry Gifts Ephesians 4:11
Ark of the Covenant	Jesus or God (Jesus' Return?)
Table of Showbread	Apostles (1990's on?)
Golden Lampstand	Prophets (1960's on)
Brazen Altar	Evangelists (1920's on)
Incense Altar	Pastors (1900's on)
Washing Basin	Teachers (1900's on)

- 1. Ark of the Covenant:** Represents the Godhead. *Jesus* was, and still is, the "Mercy Seat" through whom all our sins can be forgiven. His return will be the ultimate fulfilment of God's plan of restoration for mankind. He gave these 5 ministry leadership gifts to the church through the Holy Spirit, to prepare the people for His return. They existed in the early church, were lost in mainstream churches as the

anointing of the Holy Spirit was rejected, and are progressively being re-established in those churches that have accepted the move of the Spirit.

2. **Table of Showbread:** The first ministry to be lost and the last to be restored is that of the *apostle*. We know that the Table of Showbread represents the Word. I, in my ignorance, always thought that the job of the apostle was to set up new churches, probably because that is what the Apostle Paul did. But when you think about it, the enduring contribution that Paul made to the church was the formalising of the major principles and doctrines of the faith. For the true job of the apostle is to pioneer and bring out the truths of God's word. We can therefore look forward to new understandings of the Word as the ministry of the apostle returns to the church.
3. **Golden Lampstand:** The *prophet* is the illuminator of the Word through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Illumination was of course, the function of the Lampstand in the Holy Place. A prophet prophesies in revelation, correction, confirmation and foretelling. While the apostle brings out principles relating to the whole church, the prophet interprets and applies these principles to specific situations – to a country, to a church, to an individual.
4. **Brazen Altar:** The Brazen Altar represents the sacrifice, the blood of Jesus. The job of the *evangelist* is to present this message of God's saving grace through the blood of Jesus, to the people. The evangelist encourages believers as well as challenging the lost.
5. **Incense Altar:** The Golden Altar as it is often called, was the final place of preparation for the priest before entering into God's presence. It represents praise, worship and prayer. This Altar typifies the *pastor*, whose job it is to prepare his people to enter into God's presence. To co-ordinate all the ministries for his congregation.
6. **Washing Basin:** The washing of the water of the Word. The *teachers'* job is to explain the apostles' principles to the people. The teacher

explains the scriptures, showing people how to cleanse and live their lives through their application.

All these roles are essential to the church, just as each item of furniture was to the Tabernacle. Each is an essential link in the full chain of God. It is interesting how God has gradually been lengthening his chain, adding links as His church is restored. The ministry of Apostleship is the last link to be forged before Jesus completes the chain by returning to rule and reign on the earth for a thousand years, as promised in *Revelation 20*. For there is no Darwinian ‘missing link’ in God!

THE TABERNACLE CHURCH – *Moving into the Holy of Holies*

‘When Christ came as the high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by the means of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.’ (Hebrews 9:11-12)

*‘Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. (v36)
‘You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.’ (Hebrews 10:19-23,36)*

Entering the Holy of Holies, being in the presence of God, being at one with God, is the ultimate objective for both the individual and the church. We can see from the scriptures above that entering the Holy of Holies is a

supernatural experience, and was even for Jesus. Through His entry, He has opened the way for us to join Him there also.

So here arises a problem. If Jesus has made the way for us to join Him in the Holy of Holies, to be in the very presence of God, how is that we haven't joined Him there yet? Let's look at the ***Ark of the Covenant*** to find out where we are heading. The Ark, where the presence of God dwelt between the Cherubim was only able to be approached once a year by the High Priest and then only after he had gone through a comprehensive purification procedure. When he finally entered, he had to quickly burn incense to form a cloud that would hide him from the full glory of God Almighty, in whose majestic holy presence he could not hope to survive. For even though he was forgiven of his sins, he still lived in a corrupted human body that would continue to deteriorate with age and eventually die. Yes, he had been forgiven, but still suffered from the consequences of sin, just as we do today. Forgiven but not perfect, just like you and me, well me anyway! My body tells me so, after a run particularly!

The Ark contained 3 items, which in turn relate to the three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place. First of all, the ***Gold Jar of Manna***. The 'gold' (speaking of God) jar contained manna, which God had supernaturally provided, 6 days a week, for the Israelites to eat during the forty years they were wandering in the desert. In the Holy Place, this relates to the *Table of Showbread* where God kept the 12 loaves of bread fresh for 7 days, the priests eating and replacing them after this time. The bread represents the Word of God, which we need to keep digesting on a regular basis by reading and studying our bibles. The manna however was supplied continually by God. Spiritual manna is the revelation of God. This golden jar of manna is symbolic of God's full revelation of Himself, available only upon attaining perfection.

The second item in the Ark was ***Aaron's Budded Staff***. When placed in the presence of God it miraculously produced buds, blossoms and almonds. The staff represented God's authority, the authority of His priesthood, of which Aaron was the first representative. It relates to The *Lampstand* in the

Holy Place with its branches, flowers, buds and blossoms. The lamp, symbolic of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, had to be attended to twice daily. So we need to continually top up on the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. Our ‘wicks’ also need to be trimmed daily, which speaks of ongoing daily repentance. The budded staff however tells us that upon perfection, we will walk in God’s authority in the full power of the Holy Spirit to fulfil the words of Jesus,

‘I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.’(John 14:12)

The final item in the Ark was the **2 Stone Tablets of the Covenant**. These were, of course, not the original tablets brought down the mountain by Moses. The originals were the personal work of God.

‘The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets.’ (Exodus 32:16)

They were ‘pure God’. But the ‘impure people’, had made a golden calf to worship because Moses had been away for so long.

‘When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hand, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.’ (Exodus 32:19)

God as represented by the tablets, could not live with sin. Moses was walking in the glory of the Lord so smashing them was an automatic reaction, for God’s glory would not coexist with sin. The people would certainly have been wiped out in an instant.

The second set of tablets (two copies of the same thing, not half on each. A copy each for the two covenant partners, God and man) were made by Moses but written on by God.

“The Lord said to Moses, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.”(Exodus 34:1)

This second set of tablets then, represented man (the stones) being made perfect by God. (the words). Moses made and God wrote upon the tablets. So, in the Holy of Holies we had the presence of the perfect God dwelling between the cherubim above the Mercy Seat, (Jesus) covering the Ark containing the stones, representing sinful man perfected by the fulfilled covenant. Everything fits together perfectly.

But back now to our comparisons of the present with the promise. The *Incense Altar* symbolises the way we are able to enter into God’s very presence, through prayer, praise and worship. The tablets in turn, symbolise perfected mankind. Once again we are able to walk with God

“in the garden in the cool of the day.”(Genesis 3:8),

returning to the ongoing relationship Adam and Eve had with God before they sinned. Only this time it will be both better and eternal, as our faith will have been proven whereas theirs was not.

Sound impossible? Well, it is in our own strength, but fortunately God is on our side! How? Well, there is a very interesting verse in Hebrews that at first glance looks like the writer has made a mistake, but its truth can now be seen in the light of the above.

*“A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant.”
(Hebrews 9:2-3)*

Now, we know that *The Incense Altar* was actually in the Holy Place, not the Holy of Holies, although it was near the entrance. So what is going on?

A significant change occurred between the Old and the New Testaments, happening at the time Jesus died.

“At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.....”(Matthew 27:51)

Now the incense from the Incense Altar can reach the Ark. So we have the opportunity to approach God’s dwelling place in the Spirit, to come before His throne through praise, worship and prayer, being protected by the cloud of incense, even though we have not yet fully attained perfection. This is the wonderful symbolic meaning of the Incense Altar. Jesus has prepared the way for us to enter to dwell in the Holy of Holies permanently by removing the curtain that restricted the access to one representative of the people, on but one day of the year. The stones in the Ark then, represent the people we will become when we permanently attain the perfection that Jesus has spiritually opened up to us.

To summarise, the 3 natural items of furniture in the Holy Place (where we are now) can be linked to the 3 supernatural contents of the Ark of the Covenant (what we are to become upon attaining perfection).

1. Our present revelation of God through His word is symbolised by the *Table of Showbread* and will be replaced by God’s full revelation of Himself as represented by the *Gold Jar of Manna* upon attaining perfection.
2. The spiritual giftings and authority we walk in, like *The Lampstand*, need to be regularly topped up. But upon perfection we will walk in the full power and authority of God as symbolised by *Aaron’s supernatural Budded Staff*.
3. Through prayer, praise and worship, as symbolised by *The Incense Altar*, we can enter into God’s presence for a limited time. When we are perfected we will be able to dwell in God’s presence permanently, as illustrated by the *Stone Tablets of the Covenant* (man perfected by God) dwelling in the Ark of the Covenant. Jesus has made this possible through His death on our behalf.

The application of the spiritual principles represented by these three items to our lives brings us to maturity – Christian, not age, that is!

I trust it has become readily apparent, that a single condition needs to be fulfilled for us to enter the reality of the promises of the Holy of Holies - that is, to attain perfection. Now we know we can't do that in our own strength, for many have tried, but not one has yet succeeded. Some have got closer than have others. I remember again my Auntie Ina, though in pain from arthritis in her later life, radiated the beauty of the Spirit. But it is obvious that there is yet another experience we have yet to go through before, in reality (experientially), we embrace what Jesus has already done for us positionally (judicially). This is best illustrated through the Feasts of the Lord, which are a separate study, and which themselves were centred on the Tabernacle.

In many of our studies we have looked at how God operates in ‘threes’. We know that we have experienced Passover, (the death of Jesus – The Outer Court - Salvation) and Pentecost, (the coming of the Holy Spirit – The Holy Place - Spirit). But we have yet to experience the third, final and most glorious element in God's perfect plan, that is Tabernacles (purification before the Father – The Holy of Holies - Submission).

The vital question is, can this be a ‘pre death’ experience or do we have to wait until we die to participate? We know that until now, this has been and still is a ‘post death’ experience. But will it necessarily always be so? The answer is no! If the church is to attain the promise of being the bride of Christ, dressed in pure white linen, something radical has yet to occur. For we certainly all need an extended cycle in the ‘washing machine of righteousness’ before our dirty linen becomes white! Something to change dramatically before we can consistently do the things that Jesus did, in greater numbers than He did, as promised! Yes, for the church to attain perfection, a radical change has yet to occur. There is still an exciting third experience in God, the coming of His Tabernacle Church awaiting us.

Variously known as the bride, the overcomers, the third age church, the apostolic church, and others, it consists not of a denomination but of

individuals 100% sold out to God, prepared to make every sacrifice needed, to see the establishment of God' s kingdom upon the earth.