

MEET ME IN THE DESERT

A SERIES OF TEACHINGS,
DEVOTIONS,
AND COMMENTARY
ON THE
TABERNACLE OF MOSES

THE REV. BILL BLOMQUIST

Meet Me in the Desert

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Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

*Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.*

*Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.*

*For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

Psalms 100, NIV

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YOU ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE

*Come, fill this temple with Your presence;
come, fill this temple with Your praise;
come, breathe upon these fiery pillars,
in the power of Your Name.*

*O Holy Wind blow through this temple;
forgive and cleanse me with Your grace.
I am Your holy habitation;
purify me in Your Name.*

*Jesus,
Jesus,
Jesus, You are welcome in this place.*

*Sweet tongues of fire fall upon us;
shake the foundations of this place.
Stir up a passion for the nations,
for every tongue and tribe and race.*

*Jesus,
Jesus,
Jesus, You are welcome in this place.
You are welcome in this place.
You
are welcome
in this place.*

About This Book

Herein is a summary of Sunday school teachings I taught based upon the Tabernacle of Moses. Thus, it is written in a conversational, devotional manner. I encourage the reader to read it slowly, taking time to pause, ponder, and pray through the text at the Lord's pace. Use your inspired imagination to picture what you're reading.

Why the Tabernacle of Moses? A number of years ago there was a song called, "Dance as David Danced." It was a Hebraic-sounding praise song that said, "When the Spirit of the Lord moves within my heart, I will dance as David danced." I wondered, "Where did David dance?" and opened my Bible to learn he danced around the Ark of the Covenant as it was being returned to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:16). Then I wondered, "What is the Ark of the Covenant?" "Where did it come from?" "Who built it?" "Why was it built?" - and so on down the line - all of which led me into what has become a lifetime study on the Tabernacle of Moses.

The technical information in these pages is secondary. My main hope is you will be able to flesh-out the pages of this book into your heart and mind, thus becoming more Christ-like. That being said, "Meet Me in the Desert" is best read on three different levels:

Read

Read it, enjoy it, and let it resonate with your heart. It stands alone as a devotional. You will find lyrics to songs/poems that speak directly to the truths being illuminated in each part of the book. Take time; linger on a word or phrase that strikes you at the moment. Take as long as you need. Make your time with this book a window of relationship between you and the Lord.

Mark

The second level is to work through the book, using it as a study guide; with your Bible open and everything. It will take a bit longer, but will come with great reward. Numerous Biblical references and my personal commentary will assist you

in this. You will discover how everything in the Tabernacle - its walls, tents, curtains, and ministry stations - reveal Jesus Christ.

If you have a study Bible, make use of the additional insights of its commentators. “Meet Me in the Desert” only scratches the surface.

Inwardly Digest

The third level of reading includes all of the above with the additional admonition to integrate the devotion into your daily walk with Christ - to actually *put into practice* the truths outlined in these pages. For example, in Chapter VII, “Using the Tabernacle as a Weekly Devotion,” I take the reader from one end of the Tabernacle to the other in a week’s time. Each ministry station has its own uniqueness and builds on the previous station in the journey into the Holy of Holies. By the end of the week you will have had an enriching experience with the Lord and will want to do it again and again! It is a powerful experience which I have practiced for years.

Finally, I invite you to pay close attention to the “insignificant” things - size, location, metals, accessibility, and so on - of the Temple. At first it may seem tedious but stick with it. As you get deeper into the progression, it will begin to connect with other things that you have learned and experienced throughout your Christian pilgrimage.

Paul wrote, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4, NKJV). The author of Hebrews writes, “In the volume of the book it is written of Me” (Hebrews 10:7b, NKJV). Everything about the Old Testament anticipates the day when God will send the promised Messiah. If the Tabernacle of Moses was the first temple of worship for the Jewish nation - which it was - then you can be sure the prophetic essence of Jesus the Messiah is embedded in every detail of the structure - which it is!

*May God reveal to you the Person of Jesus
in each step of the journey;
may you see Him symbolized
in new and rich ways;
may your life be marked
with the sweet fragrance
that can only come
from spending seasons of intimacy
with your Heavenly Father,
in the
Holy of Holies.*

I. An Ordinary Day in the Life of a Priest

*"This is what the LORD Almighty says:
'If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements,
then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts,
and I will give you a place among these standing here.'"*

Zechariah 3:7, NIV

As the first rays of sunlight beam across Sinai's jagged mountains, you rub the sleep from your eyes, push a chicken off your waist, and rise to meet the new day.

You put on your ephod, robe, and turban, notice a piece of pita left over from last night's dinner, pick it up, kiss your family goodbye, and rush out of the tent. The smoke of smoldering campfires hovers above the Bedouin neighborhood like a gray, translucent linen. A goat bleats. A rooster crows. An infant cries.

As you chomp on the pita, passing one tent-dwelling after another - each with its own family, livestock, and possessions stirring with the dawn of this new day - you can't help but see the temporality of it all. You are, after all, only passing through this desert wilderness. You look to the dust rising from your scuffling feet and wonder how long it will be until the cloud moves again.

Soon you arrive at the center of camp where a small, rectangular structure has been assembled. It sits at the heart of the twelve tribes of Israel. You silently gaze across the Outer Courts and Tent of Meeting. You see the softly lit, illumined cloud rising from the Holy of Holies into the morning sky like a silent, softly-swirling tornado.

In that moment, you again recall the mighty acts of Yahweh and how you were rescued from the bondage of Egypt by God's strong arm of deliverance. He has led you to this place through an abundance of mighty signs and wonders: the parting of the sea, rocks bursting with water, and the continued supernatural provision of manna which He provides so faithfully, each and every morning.

And there before you, just over that white linen fence, He dwells; silently churning in power, longing to have fellowship with you.

Working your way around the east side, you slip through the Gate and step into the Outer Courts, instinctively glancing ahead to the fiery Altar of Sacrifice. There is another priest there, weary from the night's ministry. His face brightens with your presence. His shift is over.

"Shalom." 'Peace.'

"Shalom."

You meet each other at the Laver, about twenty feet behind the altar, where you splash water over your face, hands, and feet to prepare yourself for the ministry of the day; where he splashes water over his face, hands, and feet to clean himself from the ministry done through the night. You exchange small talk. As you head up the ramp of the Altar of Sacrifice, he leaves the courts.

From the top of the ramp, you peer into the consuming fire and smoke rising from the glowing pit below. You lift the brass grid and hang it on a hook. It clangs abrasively into the new day. Pulling out a long tool, you stoke the fire. Raking through the coals, you notice the residue of last night's ministry: dried blood staining the sides of the altar and blackened bones and ash piled below. You toss fresh wood into the hellish pit until it becomes too intense to bear. You throw the brass grid in its place, creating a hollow, metallic sound that echoes through the courts like a hammer hitting a metal stake.

Below, just off the ramp and towards the Gate, you hear wrestling. You turn to see a family of five. Their garments show you they're from the tribe of Judah: a father, mother, two teen daughters, and a young boy trying to handle an unruly heifer.

"Shalom!"

Your first customers.

"Shalom. Bokah tov." 'Good morning.' You beckon them closer, walk down the ramp, and meet them at the base of the altar.

They approach cautiously. The father steps forward. He points to the sacrificial animal and begins a litany of the confession of sin - confessing both his own sin and the sin of his family.

After hearing confession, you take hold of the rope and draw the animal close to your side. With the animal unaware, you pull a blade from a leather sheath and thrust it into the heart of the beast. It screeches and lets out a howl heard through the courts. Its blood sprays across your face, forcing you to squint and turn away. The victim grows limp and falls to the ground, its blood forming pools in the desert sand. Within a few minutes you have skinned and filleted the slain victim, carried its head and other interior portions up the ramp and positioned them onto the fiery-hot brass grid, where the animal's remaining blood drips and sizzles in the fires below and its smoke rises and disappears into the sky above - all while the family is looking, sometimes looking away: offended, distraught, and teary-eyed.

You look down to the family and shout the words they are longing to hear: "God has received your sacrifice. You are forgiven!"

"Todah, todah!" 'Thank you, thank you!'

The absolution is received with clapping hands and joyful voices. The family from Judah hugs and wipes each other's tears, filled with the joy of forgiveness. As they pass out of the Gate they meet up with another family, this one from the tribe of Benjamin - a family of eight. The mother is holding a newborn and a younger pregnant woman struggles to keep the family's bleating goat at her side.

You glance to the pillar of fire, rising into the hazy sky from the back of the Tent of Meeting.

"Looks like it's going to be a long, long day."



As the sun blazes into midday, the heat becomes almost unbearable. Somewhere between your twentieth and thirtieth sacrifice, a whistling priest emerges at the Gate, makes his way over, and stands at the bottom of the ramp.

"Shalom!"

He is alert, perky, dressed with clean white robes and tightly wrapped tunic. He sees your bleeding hands, your face blotted with blisters and soot, and your robes saturated with blood and covered with clumps of animal fur.

His voice drops. "I'm here to relieve you."

You muster a trace of a smile. “Shalom.”

He points back to the Laver. “Why don’t you come down, get cleaned up, head into the Tent and change out the Table bread?”

You nod. “Sounds like a plan.”

You hobble down the ramp, cross the hot sand, and come to the brass pool of crystal clear water. You gaze into the mirrored pond to see your reflection and examine the residue of ministry smeared across your face. Pulling back your sleeves, you cup your hands, reach into the cooling waters, and cleanse your face, hands, and feet.

You leave the Laver, deeply refreshed, duck under the curtain of the Tent of Meeting and at once find yourself in a radically different world of darkness, softness, stillness, and serenity. Reflections of golden flames dance about you and the smell of fragrant incense fills the room with an ancient, other-worldly scent.

You have just stepped into the Holy Place.

As your eyes adjust, seven burning lamps radiating atop a four-foot high, magnificently sculptured Golden Lampstand slowly come into view. They have been burning through the night and need to be topped with fresh oil and have their wicks trimmed. You instinctively take the scissors and tongs and move from one lamp to the next, examining each lamp with care and diligence. Not all lamps are the same. Some need more oil; others less. Some wicks need clipping; others need to be pulled higher. One lamp needs an entirely new wick.

Afterwards, you step back and admire the seven freshly trimmed lamps atop each vine of the Golden Lampstand, each one bathing the interior of the small, tented room with a soft, pulsating light.

“My God,” you whisper, “You are awesome!”

Turning around, you see a golden table located opposite the Golden Lampstand. It is rimmed with two crowns of gold which reflect majestically in the lamplight. This is the Table of Showbread; a tiny, waist-high table with twelve loaves of pita, stacked within the bordering crowns of the Table. As you replace the old loaves with the new ones you again wonder why Yahweh needed the bread to be pierced with a sharp object before it had been baked.

“One day,” you mumble, “I’ll know what that means. One day...”

Back at the center of the Tent, and just at the bottom of a fifteen-foot high, wondrously embroidered curtain, is the smallest ministry station in the Tent. Barely eighteen square inches around by three feet high, the Altar of Incense, is rimmed with a golden crown which shines under the flickering light of the seven lamps. Drawing nearer, you lean over and bathe your face in its heavily scented smoke which rises day and night before the Holy of Holies.

You stoke the flame, toss an additional handful of scented spices upon its coals, and step back. You are now standing within a Trinitarian relationship between the Golden Lampstand, Table of Showbread, and Altar of Incense.

“I love this place!”

Now there - just behind the veil - is another place of ministry: the Holy of Holies. It's the actual dwelling place - the very seat of - the Lord Jehovah Himself. It's off limits, reserved exclusively for the High Priests. It's where Moses and God speak to each other as friends, face to face.

What would it be like to be able to pass through the curtain and slip into the Most Holy Place anytime of the day or night? What would you do if you were invited to enter in, to see the Ark of the Covenant in all its splendor and glory and to linger there, between the wings of the cherubim, in wondrous fellowship with God, just like Moses does?



Your prophetic daydream is abruptly pierced by a screeching animal being sacrificed at the Altar of Sacrifice. It's a lamb this time. You can tell by its cry.

“My God,” you look up. “Where has the time gone? I've got to get home!”

You emerge into the eye-squinting, blazing heat, hustle past the Laver and Altar and stealthily through the Gate and enter the bustling marketplaces of normal, every day life. The sun is a desert fireball, about to drop behind Mount Sinai.

Rushing home through the neighborhoods you pass by numerous groups of children playing hopping and skipping games with rocks. You see women and daughters cloistered around fires, preparing the evening meals. You pass groups of men, walking in deep conversations down the avenues of the tented city. They

notice your bloodstained, soiled garments and respectfully nod as you pass.

Soon you arrive home. A few chickens are pecking around the perimeter of the tent and your son is stirring a stew in the pot. He looks up and greets you.

“Abba, abba!” ‘Daddy, daddy!’

Your spouse looks up from within the tent where she and your daughter are playing a rope game with their fingers. They rise to greet you, faces brightening as they approach. You’re tossing your turban to the floor when you’re suddenly tackled, arms about your waist and faces buried deeply into your soiled garments.

“What is this about?” you laugh, holding your family tightly.

Your daughter’s voice is muffled but you can understand it. “We love it when you come home from Temple, abba!”

“You do?” You lean down and listen. “Why is that?”

She grows silent; her face still buried in your robes. She giggles.

You tap the top of her head. “I said, ‘Why is that?’”

Your daughter looks up, her eyes sparkling. “We love the way you smell, abba!”

“The way I smell?!” You laugh, “What are you talking about?”

Your wife draws near. “We love it when you come home from Temple. We can tell you’ve been with God. We can smell Him in your clothes.”

“And we love the fragrance of God upon you, abba.”



After supper, you settle in with your family in silence. Your kids are buried under blankets, the firelight flickering off their rosy cheeks. All the camps are quiet now. The day was long. And you are tired. You are hushed and humbled by the vastness of the star-lit sky.

Suddenly, like the sound of a mighty trumpet, a ram’s horn blares in the distance, then another horn - and then another!

“What is it, abba?” Your child stirs in her blanket.

You rise and face the center of town. The tribal neighborhoods have come alive with shouts of joy and excitement. The clanging of pots and pans are echoing throughout the desert valley.

“I’m not sure.”

Your family rises to join you as you peer down the slope towards the Temple.

“Look, abba - look!” Your son points ahead. “See it?”

You rub your eyes in amazement. The fiery pillar, the Shekinah Glory of God’s Presence, is growing two, three - no - four times its brilliance, illuminating the entire desert landscape with a spectacular radiance.

“Is it moving?”

Your wife peers at the pillar of Living Fire from behind your shoulder.

“I can’t tell. My eyes are playing tricks on me.”

Your wife is obviously startled. She whispers emphatically in your ear. “It can’t move now - not here, not today. I’m not ready to move. This is our home. Our children have lived here their entire lives. They know nothing else.”

You stare in disbelief. “I was wondering if it would ever move again. I mean, how long has it been - twenty years?”

Your daughter looks up to you, the reflection of the Shekinah pillar of fire reflected in her wide, darkened eyes. “Are we moving daddy?”

You think through the ramifications of the event, the logistics of the move: the camp broken down, supplies bundled up, toys and clothes in the chests, and food for the camels, donkeys, and goats.

Then it happens. The fiery pillar of the Lord’s Presence suddenly breaks away from the courts and heads straightforward into the open desert plain.

Within moments the desert is filled with the trumpeting of rams’ horns. Their sobering sounds slice through the atmosphere of indecisiveness with a rare and regal authority.

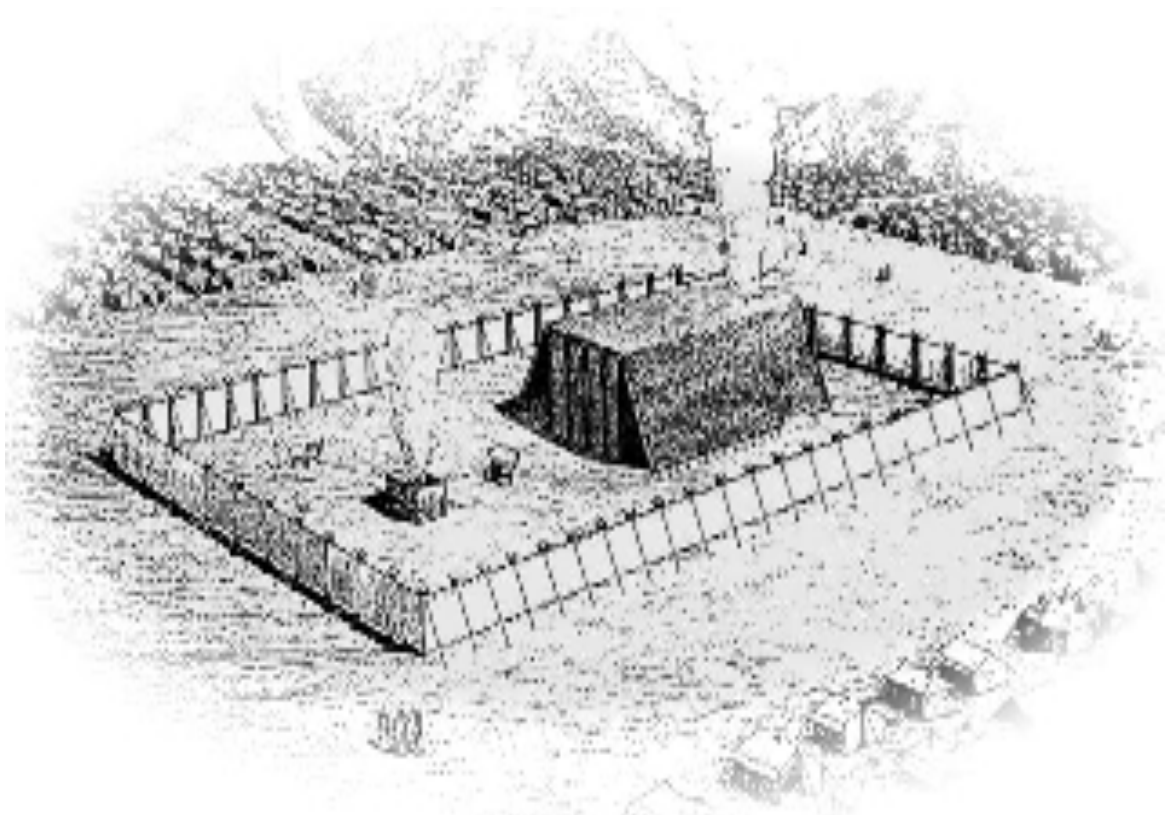
“That’s it. It’s official.”

God is on the move!



*Now whenever the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle,
the people of Israel would set out on their journey, following it.
But if the cloud did not rise,
they remained where they were until it lifted.
The cloud of the LORD hovered over the Tabernacle during the day,
and at night fire glowed inside the cloud
so the whole family of Israel could see it.
This continued throughout all their journeys.*

Exodus 40:36-38, NLT



*“So the Word became human and made his home among us.
He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.
And we have seen his glory,
the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.”*

John 1:14, NLT

II. Conception

*Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house,
testifying to what would be said in the future.*

Hebrews 3:5, NIV

The Tabernacle of Moses: ancient, barbaric, liturgical, portable. Bloody, fiery, brassy, eye-squinting, dark, mysterious, fragrant, ornate, royal. Skins, hooks, curtains, poles. Remembrance, foreshadowing, Shekinah dwelling.

Built from precise blueprints given to Moses over a period of two forty-day stretches, the Tabernacle of Moses was God's dwelling place on Earth for over four hundred years. It was modeled after the Throne Room in heaven (see Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4); scaled down to humanity and built so the children of God could worship Him.

It was the nexus between Heaven and Earth.

The Bible spends no less than fifty chapters on the Tabernacle; detailing its construction, rituals, duties and garments of the priests, and its method of transport. Within each measurement of the structure, from linen lengths to metals, from furniture to square footage, everything about the Tabernacle of Moses points to the Person of Jesus Christ.

Everything.

Commentators have even speculated that, once assembled with the twelve Tribes of Israel encamped around its perimeter; the massive Israeli camp actually formed the shape of a cross - with the Holy of Holies at its center.

As we will see, God's Passion is deeply and wondrously portrayed in the Tabernacle of Moses.

Holy Moses

It all began with Moses. Somewhere between 1300 and 1150 B.C., during a horrific time when Pharaoh was systematically slaughtering all male infants (in order to

manage the population of the Hebrew slaves), Moses was born. His mother, seeing he was a beautiful baby and seeking to protect her son, placed him in a wicker basket, pushed him into the swirling currents of the Nile, and watched her boy disappear. The basket was spotted, “drawn out” (the meaning of the name Moshe’, or Moses), and retrieved by women who were bathing off one of the porches of Pharaoh’s palace. Pharaoh’s daughter surmised it was a Hebrew infant, instantly fell in love with him, and decided to raise him as her own.

In an interesting twist, she summoned the help of a nearby “Hebrew woman” to nurse and wean the child. That woman happened to be Moses’ mother.

So Moses was reared in royalty, under the influence of Egyptian gods and goddesses. He learned its culture and spoke its language. As the years passed, he assisted in governing the Israelites.

The Israelites were a huge population of slaves that had originally settled in the land back when Joseph was sold into slavery some four hundred years prior. In those early days, Pharaoh was Hebrew-friendly. By Moses’ day, however, they had become the slave workforce of Egypt and regarded as the scum of the earth. Under the strong arm of Pharaoh, they were forced to build all manner of pagan temples - perhaps even the pyramids - all in an effort to satisfy the pride of Egypt. In their bondage they cried out to God.

And God heard them.

Moses’ heart was mysteriously stirred. He began to develop a strange compassion for those he would one day be leading. Once he tried to break up a squabble between a Hebrew and an Egyptian and, in a moment that he would never forget, wound up killing the Egyptian for the sake of his Hebrew brother. Of course, the Hebrew brother didn’t know that Moses was *his* Hebrew brother (stealthily dressed in Egyptian clothing and royal reputation). He ridiculed Moses’ actions and publicly spread his sin into the heart of the children of God. Conflicted and confused, Moses abandoned his plush life in Egypt and traded civilized Egypt, with all its creatures of comfort, for the bleakness of the Sinai Desert.

During his season in the desert, Moses learned its ways, its wildlife and the character of its terrain. He learned how to find water in the dry desert plain and he learned how to stay warm in the high-altitude blizzards, which are common in that part of the world.

Eventually he met other wanderers such as himself, who knew nothing of his

royal lineage. He yoked himself with them, herded their sheep, and married them. For a large portion of his life, that was his home, there in the desert. It became a very familiar place to him. Little did he know that God was grooming him in the desert for a very special task - not unlike the way He grooms us in our spiritual deserts.

One day while Moses was shepherding his flock in the foothills of Mount Sinai, he was drawn to a peculiar site: that of a bush being burned, but not consumed. Though terrified, he drew near, removed his sandals, and met God

There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.

Exodus 3:2, NIV

at that place. He was instructed and anointed by Yahweh to go back to the land of Egypt where he would lead the Hebrews out of bondage and into glorious freedom. God told Moses to return to the land of his past and bring them back to the place where the two were then meeting.

Moses didn't feel qualified for the task. He was eighty years old at the time and probably had a speech impediment (Exodus 4:10). Yet God assured him of His accompanying presence through a series of miraculous signs and wonders which would, in time, convince Pharaoh to release the Hebrew nation.

Yet, even with his brother Aaron at his side, Moses had a difficult time living into God's call for his life. The problem was that Pharaoh needed the Hebrews for commerce and would have no part of the plan. But God got His way and Moses eventually returned to the base of that same mountain - this time with two million men, their wives, families, livestock, supplies, and all their personal belongings. It must have been quite a sight.

God and Moses reunited on the mountaintop. Over a period of two, forty-day stretches they enjoyed fellowship. Two things emerged as a result of their time together: the revelation of the Law, or "Torah" as we know it, and a set of precise blueprints given for the construction of a portable worship center. This was the desire of God's heart: to have a people who would worship Him, and to have a place of dwelling in the heart of His people.

Welcome to the Tabernacle of Moses!

The Word Dwelt Among Us

The word “tabernacle” itself means “dwelling place.” The Tabernacle was where the God of the universe chose to dwell, or *tabernacle*, with His people.

This is our first foreshadowing of the promised Messiah. John 1:14, NKJV, reads, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The word for “dwelt” there is “tabernacled.” In the same way that God dwelt within the heart of the Tabernacle of Moses, so it was that Jesus came from heaven to dwell with us.

Furthermore, Paul describes our bodies as “tents” (2 Corinthians 5:1, 4). When we receive Christ and become born again, God takes up residence in our “tent.” He will remain dwelling there - in our heart’s temple - until the day when we will all be raised to dwell with Him. We will be in His presence forever, worshipping Him in the original Tabernacle - the same one which served as a prototype for the blueprints that Moses used in his construction!

According to the Pattern

The blueprints for the Tabernacle were meticulous. Each piece of wood was to be measured according to the pattern; each metal had to be chosen, hammered, and shaped according to the pattern; each linen length was to be dyed and folded, hung and draped according to the pattern. Everything from dimensions to the heights, even down to the ingredients of incense to be burned, was in the blueprints. It was all to be built according to the pattern (Exodus 25:9, 40).

*You must build this Tabernacle
and its furnishings
exactly according to the pattern
I will show you.*

Exodus 25:9, NLT

It took nine months to build it. Special men and women were consecrated for the oversight of the project (Exodus 35:30-36:1), while the Levites (the priests of the day) were appointed as head macho men (Numbers 3:58). They worked construction for the massive project. They, no doubt, had built many pagan temples in the past.

Now it was time to build one for God.

But it would be no easy task. Vast amounts of gold, silver, brass, fine linens, animal skins, and acacia wood (the hardest wood on the planet) were required to match the heavenly blueprints. While it was challenging, the Lord provided for

everything through a single nation-wide offering. He had made them wealthy for a reason (Exodus 3:22, 11:2; Psalm 105:37). He made sure, even before they left Egypt, they would have everything needed to build the Tabernacle.

Dedication Day

When everything was ready the Levites carefully placed the Ark of the Covenant and Mercy Seat onto the Sinai's hot, desert sand. They erected the fifteen foot gold-covered pillars and fastened an ornately embroidered veil to the gold hooks above. They placed the Golden Lampstand, Table of Showbread, and Altar of Incense in a triangular formation, surrounded them with gold-plated sides, columns, ornately-decorated ceiling and walls - and covered the whole kit-and-caboodle with four types of pre-dyed animal skins. From the outside it looked like a large, ugly shoebox. This area was known as the Inner Courts, or the Tent of Meeting.

Just outside the Tent of Meeting the Levites set a wash basin, made of hammered metal and lined with - of all things - looking glasses, onto the sand and filled it with water. This was called the Brass Laver. Further out, they dropped the cumbersome Altar of Sacrifice to the ground. When all the furniture was in place it took on the shape of a cross.

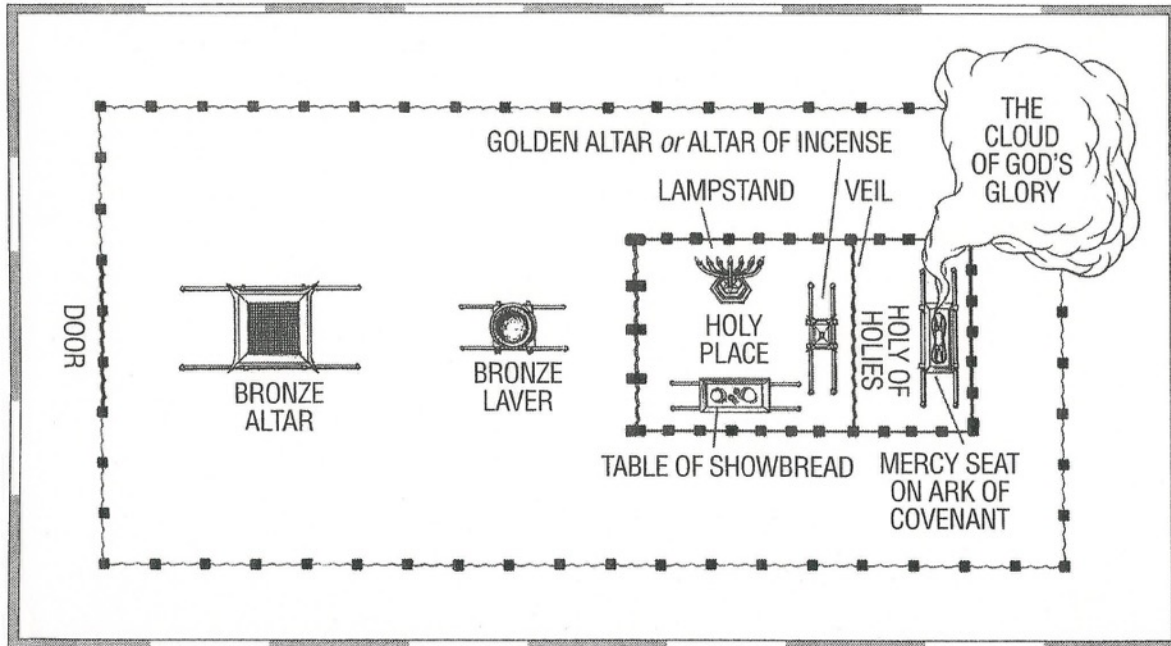
Again, everything built according to the pattern.

The next step was to raise a series of sixty posts which stood around the perimeter of the Temple. Attached to the posts was a seven-foot high wall of white linens which enclosed the Courts and separated the newly-formed sanctuary from the rest of the world. Once fully assembled, the Tabernacle measured a mere 75 by 150 feet; roughly half the size of a football field.

When the High Priests (perhaps Moses, Aaron, and sons) passed through the Gate they filled the Altar of Sacrifice with wood and, as they offered slain sacrificial animals onto its brass grid, "Fire blazed forth from the LORD's presence and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When the people saw this, they shouted with joy and fell face down on the ground" (Leviticus 9:24, NLT).

What a sight that must have been!

The fire was God's provision for the ongoing maintenance of the Temple flames. It fell in the Outer Courts, igniting the wood at the Altar of Sacrifice. From



there, holy coals were hastily carried into the Inner Courts, where they were used to light the fires at the seven lamps of the Golden Lampstand and at the Altar of Incense.

The priests returned to the place where the fire fell, collected a basin of blood from the animal slain at the Altar and anointed everything in the Temple. This event is significant on at least two levels. , it unites all activities in the Tabernacle with the blood of the slain. Secondly, it is a powerful foreshadowing of the Blood of Christ, through which we have access to the Father. It is through the mercy of the Slain that we have access to the Holy.

When the Temple had been fully anointed and consecrated to Yahweh a curious thing happened. It's reasonable to assume God was observing these events (construction, layout, anointing, and consecration) from high above and perched atop Mount Sinai. He had been watching and waiting for this exciting moment for ages! That's when the cloud began to drift off the mountain and make its way into the valley. Before the widening eyes of millions of men, women, and children of God, the ever-living God made His way into the dust-laden streets of commonplace culture. He passed through the Gate of the Outer Courts, entered into the dimly-lit environment of the Tent of Meeting, and came to rest between the uplifted wings of the Mercy Seat - filling that desperately dark place with the

Figure 1: The Tabernacle of Moses

everlasting, Shekinah Glory of God, shown as “The Cloud of God’s Glory” in Figure 1: The Tabernacle of Moses.

When the Hebrews witnessed this they most likely fell to their knees, raised their hands, and shouted praises to the God of their redemption. (Perhaps those in Heaven were even shouting as well!) It was the first time God had been with His people since Eden.

Following a Cloud

God’s dwelling was in the very heart of the camp, with the Hebrew tribes divvied up and encamped to the north, south, east and west of the spectacular pillar of fire. I have often thought of what it must have been like to live in the reflection of the Shekinah Cloud of God.

Growing up in Cape Canaveral, Florida, I’ve had the privilege of seeing numerous missiles lift off the launch-pads and rise into the sky. We always knew when a “shot” was scheduled because, in those days, prior to the launch, the lights were - as my mother would say - “on at the Cape”; huge lights which shone all around the rocket like spotlights on a baseball field. At the time of “blast off,” the lights went down and intense flames shot out from underneath the rockets. As they lifted into the sky, the flames would grow six to ten times longer than the rockets themselves! These “tails” were impressive in daylight, but everyone loved the night launches because they lit up our entire neighborhood with a soft orangey light! (A good surfer could catch up to three waves during a nighttime, Saturn V launch!)

With these images in mind, I can only imagine what it would have been like to witness God’s burning, churning illumination over the Hebrew camps, glowing silently through the wee hours of the night.

The “Cloud of Presence” was not stagnant, however. It moved. And when it moved, the assumption was that the nation would move with it. This is how God led His people around the desert for a generation

*Whether the cloud
stayed over the tabernacle
for two days or a month or a year,
the Israelites would remain in camp
and not set out;
but when it lifted,
they would set out.*

Numbers 9:22, NIV

before bringing them into the Promised Land. Back then, people were accustomed to following an unpredictable God who led them into unpredictable places for their own good.

Following the cloud was no easy chore, probably frustrating at best. Sometimes it stayed in one place for two days, a month - or even a couple of years (Exodus 40:36-38). Whenever God moved, it required a total disassembly of the Tabernacle, and a complete breakdown and journeying of the entire Hebrew community as well. Stakes were pulled. Schools were shut down. Schedules were interrupted. The entire camp was thrust into a spirit of transit, transition, and stress.

Portable Temple

This is why the Tabernacle of Moses was built to be portable. Everything was designed with the idea of “pilgrimage” in mind. In fact, the Ark of the Covenant, Altar of Incense, Table of Showbread, and the Altar of Sacrifice each had rings built into their sides with long staves, or rods, running through them. They could be covered with skins and shouldered within minutes of God’s moving.

There were two pieces of furniture, however, that did NOT have traveling staves built within: the Brass Laver and the Golden Lampstand. Historians have speculated these articles may have been wrapped in animal skins and actually placed inside the Altar of Sacrifice while in transit. If so, it would suggest that the symbols found in these two stations (sanctification and the Light of Christ) are deeply seated in the Cross - something we’ll look at later on.

When in transit, the entire Tabernacle - rods, linens, utensils, veils, and ministry stations - was covered with the skins of dead animals; non-impressive to say the least. Anyone watching the parading tribes would never imagine the glorious objects of brass, silver, and gold residing there, just under the animal skins and coverings. These treasures of divinity would have gone completely unnoticed.

Prophetically, I believe this speaks to the fact that the beauty and wonder of the majesty of God is reserved solely for those who believe in Jesus Christ. The intimacies of praise and worship are essentially unrecognizable to the rest of the world. The world sees only brick buildings. But the beauty of holiness is reserved for those who, by faith entering through the Gate (Christ), transcend what is seen to worship Him in Spirit and Truth.

To the outsider, Christian worship may seem bland and perhaps even

contrived. That's because the world is blind to the intimate splendor of His majesty - an intimate splendor reserved only for those who have given all for Christ and follow Him, day in and day out.

I would imagine that following the cloud was no easy task. The desert was filled with ravines, valleys, dangerous slopes, and extreme climates - not to mention wild beasts (like lions) and other animals. In all their travels, however, they were assured that God was with them because they could *see* the cloud. They *knew* He was in their midst, leading them as a faithful Shepherd into the Promised Land.

He was then - as He is today - "Immanuel" or, *God with us*.

Progression

A characteristic of a shepherd is the idea of "movement." Likewise, everything about the Tabernacle of Moses is about the idea of "progression," ascent, growth, and moving from glory to glory.

Yet the movement within the Tabernacle is different, somewhat surprising at that. For example, one might naturally assume the closer you get to the Presence of God the brighter things become. Yet, in our model, the absence of natural light is most pronounced in the Most Holy Place where God resides.

Another interesting progression in the Tabernacle is the movement from selfishness to selflessness. As we get closer to God, closer to the Holy of Holies, we move from "ministry to us" into "ministry from us" or "ministry towards others"; from "me-based" activities to "He-based" activities; from acquaintance to intimacy; tangible to intangible; and from the material to mystical.

You might think that our spiritual maturity would also increase as we lived deeper into the Tabernacle. But that's not the case. While the Temple does provide a template for spiritual maturity (discussed later in the book), it is not a ladder into spiritual nirvana. As a new convert to the Faith, I would look at people who were thirty years old "in the Lord" and think they had it all together. Today, some thirty-plus years later, there are times for me when things are definitely darker than lighter; times when everything has vanished and I am merely walking in blind faith; when the presence of the Spirit in my life can only be labeled as "His mysterious ways."

I guess, in that sense, you could say I am, by the grace of God, closer to God. That is encouraging when we find ourselves in darkened, dry places.

Remember, within the model of the Tabernacle of Moses, God dwells in, lives in, darkness. He meets us in our deserts.



*The Lord is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.
He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.
He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.
Even when I walk through the darkest valley
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.
You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.
Surely your goodness and unfailing love
will pursue me all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.*

Psalm 23, NLT

III. The Outer Courts

*Then make the courtyard for the Tabernacle,
enclosed with curtains made of finely woven linen.*

Exodus 27:9a, NLT

The Outer Courts made up the large, open-aired area of the Tabernacle of Moses. It was surrounded by a wall of finely-woven linen and accessible only by a single Gate. The Courts were a gathering place where everyone could have fellowship and present their offerings to the Lord.

It contained two stations of worship: the Altar of Sacrifice and the Brass Laver.

Heavy Metal

The Altar of Sacrifice and Brass Laver were both made from brass.

In Scripture, the significance of metals carry symbolic “weight,” if you will. Brass, for example, symbolizes “God’s judgment upon the sins of humankind” - like when He made the heavens as brass above Israel for their many sins (Leviticus 26:18-20, Deuteronomy 28:23) - meaning that their prayers could not pass through the wall of judgment until they humbled themselves and repented of their sin.

Other metals carry significance, too. Silver symbolizes the gift of redemption. Gold symbolizes royalty. Approximately 2.5 tons of brass, 3.7 tons of silver, and 1 ton of gold were used in the construction of the Temple. These three metals - brass, silver, and gold (judgment, redemption, and royalty) - were the core ingredients in the Tabernacle of Moses.

All the brass in the Temple is found here, in the Outer Courts, and nowhere else. This speaks to an essential function of the Outer Courts - that of revealing and removing barriers of judgment so the pilgrim could have fellowship with God.

Living Pillars

The Outer Courts had a single entranceway, the Gate, through which everyone passed. After passing through the Gate, the worshipper immediately found himself surrounded by sixty pillars with silver hooks which hung a white-linen fence around the perimeter of the Courts.

The significance here is two-fold. First, the sixty pillars represent the sixty generations between Adam and Jesus. Christians are oftentimes called, “pillars of faith” (1 Timothy 3:15).

Second, the pillars themselves were made of acacia, or shittum wood. Acacia wood was the only wood used in the Tabernacle. It is known to be the hardest wood in the world and symbolizes humanity. These wooden pillars were mounted in sockets of brass and had silver hooks attached to their “heads,” which hung the fine linens.

*I am overwhelmed with joy
in the LORD my God!
For he has dressed me
with the clothing of salvation
and draped me in a robe of righteousness.
I am like a bridegroom in his wedding suit
or a bride with her jewels.*

Here we have a striking example of redemption. The pillars were made from acacia wood (humanity) mounted in brass sockets (judgment) and crowned with silver (redemption). Although we stand in judgment, God has crowned us with redemption and clothed us with fine white linens, which is the righteousness of the saints (Revelation 19:78). As we come to Christ, Jesus exchanges our sin with garments of purity (Zechariah 3:4; Isaiah 61:10). From here on out, it’s not a matter of who we are, but in Whom we are clothed.

It’s like the old song says:

*I am covered over
with the robes of righteousness
that Jesus gives to me.
I am covered over
with the precious blood of Jesus
and He lives in me.
What a joy it is to know
my heavenly Father loves me so
and gives to me my Jesus.
When He looks at me*

*He sees not what I used to be,
but He sees Jesus.*

Here is a wonderful reminder that He no longer sees who we used to be. We've been made new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)! Although we may remember who we used to be, He has chosen not to. All He sees is a white linen of righteousness - the righteousness of Christ. It hides everything we used to be.

And it's all He chooses to see.

Church (the gathered Body of Christ)

The pillars also speak to the church, which glorifies God and His ministry within her midst.

Remember the words, "Lord, prepare me to be a Sanctuary"? The Bible says, each time we gather, a living sanctuary is created wherein God chooses to dwell. God lives and breathes within the Temple of His saints (sometimes referred to as "the Body of Christ" [1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:14-29; Ephesians 4:12, 25; 5:30; Colossians 3:15]).

The Apostle Peter writes, "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5, NIV).

Everything that happened in the Sanctuary - the sacrifices, fires, offerings, and fellowship - happened within the wooden pillars.

The Gate

As mentioned, there was only one way into the Courts, through the Gate. It was a narrow, single entryway, located at one end of the structure. We know that Gate to be "Christ" (John 10:7). He is the way to Eternal Life.

This couldn't be any more relevant than in this day and age. God has given us the free gift of salvation. It may be free to us, but it cost Him everything. Eternal life is free, just for the asking, and is found nowhere else but in Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

We all know people who believe any religion will get them to heaven

(perhaps you are one). They will say, “All roads lead to heaven,” or, “It doesn’t matter what you believe - just as long as you truly believe it in your heart,” and that sort of thing.

If that were the case, it would have been a whole lot easier for Jesus - and the Father as well. Crucifixion was a terrible, horrific way to die. No Father would allow it if it was simply to provide “an option” for eternal life. If Jesus didn’t have to die - meaning, if there was more than one way to heaven - believe me, He wouldn’t have. He did it because He had to, because He loves us, because there was no other way to get us.

The exclusivity of Christ - His exclusive claims and His exclusive sacrifice - flies in the face of a politically correct culture. When people say they believe in “other gates” or “alternative routes,” we need to tell them about the exclusivity of Christ. No one will get in through another gate. There is no other Gate. Just as there was only one Gate into the Outer Courts in the Tabernacle of Moses, there is only one to heaven, one Gate for the sheep.

Jesus said it Himself. “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6, NKJV).



Then one of the twenty-four elders asked me,
“Who are these who are clothed in white?
Where did they come from?”
And I said to him, “Sir, you are the one who knows.”

Then he said to me,
“These are the ones who died in the great tribulation
They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb
and made them white.

“That is why they stand in front of God’s throne
and serve him day and night in his Temple.

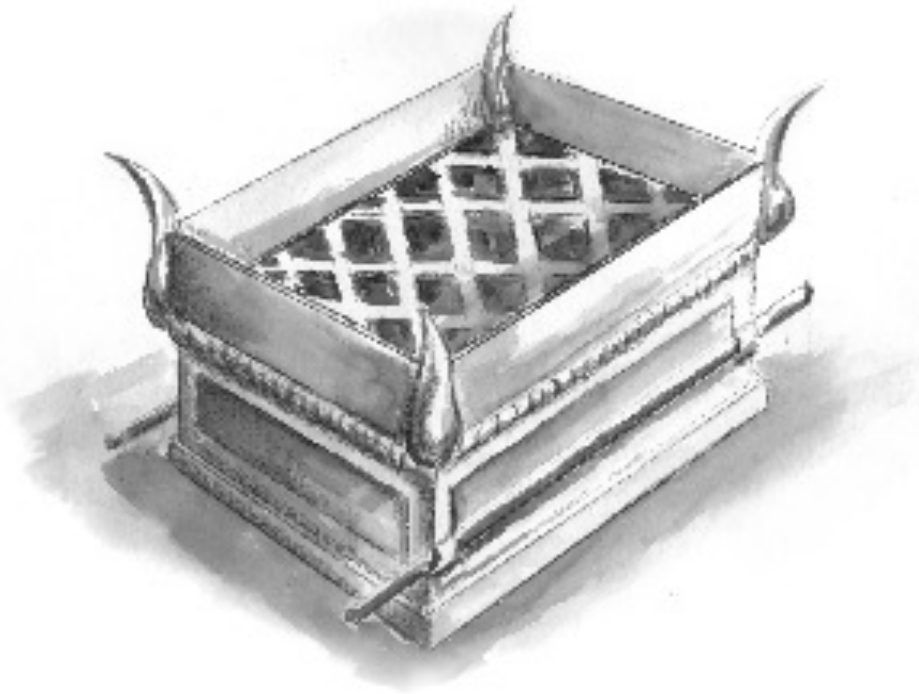
And he who sits on the throne
will give them shelter.

They will never again be hungry or thirsty;
they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun.

For the Lamb on the throne
will be their Shepherd.

He will lead them to springs of life-giving water.
And God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 7:13-17, NLT



*“Using acacia wood, construct a square altar
7½ feet wide, 7½ feet long, and 4½ feet high.*

*Make horns for each of its four corners
so that the horns and altar are all one piece.*

Overlay the altar with bronze.

*Make ash buckets, shovels, basins, meat forks, and firepans,
all of bronze.*

*Make a bronze grating for it,
and attach four bronze rings at its four corners.*

*Install the grating halfway down the side of the altar,
under the ledge.*

*For carrying the altar,
make poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze.
Insert the poles through the rings on the two sides of the altar.*

*The altar must be hollow, made from planks.
Build it just as you were shown on the mountain.”*

Exodus 27:18, NLT

A. The Altar of Sacrifice

*In fact,
the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood,
and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*

Hebrews 9:22, NIV

The first ministry station of the Outer Courts was the Altar of Sacrifice. Measuring approximately 7½ feet square and 4½ feet high, it was the first thing the worshipper saw as they entered through the Gate. The Altar of Sacrifice was the largest ministry station in the Tabernacle. And it was made of brass.

This was a most gruesome, hideous place. It burned with intense fires and was stained by the blood of thousands of sacrificial animals. A foot or so below the rim of the Altar was a fiery hot brass grid - not unlike a modern-day barbecue grill - on which the heads, stomachs, organs, and interior parts of slain animals were cast. Most Biblical evidence suggests the animals were slain and skinned at the base of the Altar. After filleting the animal, the priest would bring prescribed portions of the animal up to the fire and offer them before the Lord, where they would be consumed and turned to ash through the hellish flames below. However, there were also times when the animals may not have been slain at the base of the Altar, but may have been tied to the horns of the Altar and sacrificed across the burning flames (see Psalm 118:27, NKJV).

Day in and day out, these sacrifices were offered over the fires of forgiveness, their blackened fumes rising into the desert sky for all to see. Over the course of time (including the sacrifices offered at David's Tabernacle and the temples of Solomon and Herod), the smoke became a visible reminder of Eden's sin. It also provided a poignant foreshadowing of the crucified Lamb of God, who would one day be pierced and burned through the fires of crucifixion.

This was definitely not seeker-friendly worship - as it suddenly, and quite deliberately, confronted the visitor with their unholy stance before a holy God.

The Cross

It is difficult NOT to see the images of forgiveness and reconciliation reflected in

the blood-stained, sun-blaring brass walls of the Altar of Sacrifice.

We know that, “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22b, NIV) and Biblical history attests to this. In the Old Covenant of the Law, the Hebrews were spared from death by swabbing their doorposts with the blood of a Passover lamb (Exodus 12:12-13). Once the Temple system had been established, sacrifice after sacrifice had to be offered, time and time again, in order to remain in God’s favor.

Today we are living under a New Covenant - the Covenant of Grace. Like the Hebrews, we too are spared from death as we swab our doorposts with the blood of the Passover Lamb. But, this time, it is the precious Blood of the Lamb of God. His Blood needs only be shed once - which it was. We receive total forgiveness as we place our faith in the Blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:19-25)!

Hallelujah!

It’s both difficult and offensive to be so abruptly confronted with the old world notion of “sin” right off the bat. (Most of us would rather have God without the gore.) Yet Moses was obedient to the heavenly pattern and placed the Altar of Sacrifice here, at the beginning of the progression to the Holy of Holies to make a point:

“In order to get to Me, you’ve got to deal with your sin.”

My Rags for His Riches

Once when driving home from work, I noticed a roofing crew on a church. They were busy ripping off the old roof, laying tarpaper, smearing hot tar, and dropping stones. It had been a hot day and, by this time in the afternoon, the roofers had taken off their tar-stained shirts and had hung them on the crossbeams of the cross.

I was horrified. I slowed down and peered out the windshield. “Lord,” I said, “Look what those guys have done to Your Cross - they’re ruining it!”

That’s when the Lord said, “Don’t be so quick to judge. Take another look, a little closer this time.”

Suddenly, it all made sense. The Cross is meant to carry our filthy rags. It is

the one place where we can exchange our rags of tar and stench with the righteousness of Christ. Those roofers were doing just what they should have been doing. They were hanging their burdens on the ever-so-competent arms of the Cross.

Since then, whenever I've been hesitant to approach the Lord with soiled garments I am reminded of this picture and the role of the Cross in my life. Jesus died to take away my sin. If I withhold my sin, I rob Him of that which He came to steal.

For the Wrongs Done to Us

While Calvary was a crude place, it was equally beautiful. There is an amazing component to the Cross that remains unseen until after we have committed ourselves to its Way.

As we pass through the Cross, we not only receive forgiveness for our sins but also receive healing from the times others have sinned against us. Randy and Terry Butler's song, "At the Cross," wondrously speaks to this:

*I know a place, a wonderful place,
where accused and condemned
find mercy and grace,
where the wrongs we have done
and the wrongs done to us
were nailed there with Him,
there on the Cross.*

*At the Cross,
He died for our sin;
at the Cross,
He gave us life again.*

The Cross is so much more than my sin being removed and forgiven by God's grace. The Cross also serves as an avenue by which God's grace reaches into me and restores the wounded places in my own heart, places where I have been victimized by the sins of others.

I call this the wondrous "backside"

*But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace
was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.*

Isaiah 53:5, NIV

of the Cross. As we appropriate Christ's Blood to the doorposts of our hearts it becomes a glorious fountain wherein the sins that others have done unto us can also be forgiven, cleansed, and healed - all this from a crude, fiery instrument of death.

Hallelujah!

A Divine Doorway

While the crucifixion is essential, it is a doorway which is ultimately designed to lead us deeper into the Temple. In other words, we need the Cross - however, we are not meant to *remain* at the Cross. The Altar of Sacrifice is the first of *seven* ministry stations in the Tabernacle of Moses, each one building upon the other as we progress into the Holy of Holies.

Is the Cross important? Yes, by all means. Without it we could go no further. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can get to the Father but in Him (John 14:6). Yet, if we remain at the Cross we fall short of the majority of things Jesus died to give us.

I believe the Suffering Christ invites the grateful onlooker to move deeper into the Temple - to be washed in the Word, consumed by His glory, nourished by His sustenance, and commune with Him between the wings of the cherubim; to enter into His rest, there at the Mercy Seat. The Cross is the essential key into the doorway of deeper spirituality.

But it is only the first step.



*When you were dead in your sins
and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature,
God made you alive with Christ.
He forgave us all our sins,
having canceled the written code, with its regulations,
that was against us and that stood opposed to us;
he took it away, nailing it to the cross.
And having disarmed the powers and authorities,
he made a public spectacle of them,
triumphing over them by the cross.*

Colossians 2:13-15, NIV

FORGIVING GOD

*Forgiving God, I come before You now,
to offer You my sin and shame.
From Your Altar of Living Sacrifice,
shed forth Your grace to me.*

*O, I watched You die;
O, I beat Your face.
O, Your body crucified;
I live; You're disgraced.*

*Forgiving God, I must confess to You,
in word and deed, I've mocked Your Blood.
Transfer from me the death that I deserve,
onto the One on the tree.*

*O, I watched You die;
O, I beat Your face.
O, Your body crucified;
I live; You're disgraced.*

*Forgiving God, I stand in awe of You,
for by Your stripes, I am healed.
Clothe me, I pray, in Your robes of righteousness,
washed in the Blood of the Lamb.*

*O, I watched You die;
O, I beat Your face.
O, Your body crucified;
I live; You're disgraced.*



*“Make a bronze washbasin with a bronze stand.
Place it between the Tabernacle and the altar,
and fill it with water.
Aaron and his sons will wash their hands and feet there.
They must wash with water
whenever they go into the Tabernacle to appear before the LORD
and when they approach the altar
to burn up their special gifts to the LORD—or they will die!
They must always wash their hands and feet, or they will die.
This is a permanent law for Aaron and his descendants,
to be observed from generation to generation.”*

Exodus 30:18-21, NLT

B. The Brass Laver

*Make them holy by your truth;
teach them your word, which is truth.*

John 17:17, NLT

The Brass Laver was perhaps the most elusive ministry station in the Tabernacle of Moses. It was located in the Outer Courts, made of brass, and sat under the same blazing sunlight as the Altar of Sacrifice. Yet, its size, weight, or even precise location in the sand is unspecified in the Scriptures.

In the years to come, other temples would have multiple lavers, some of them measuring fifteen feet across. But our Laver was most likely the size of a large baptismal font, perhaps three to five feet across and about waist high.

The Laver lies in stark contrast with the Altar of Sacrifice. While the Altar of Sacrifice was a sharpened, symmetrical fire-box associated with pain, death, and suffering, the Laver, with its rounded rims and crystal-clear water, was a place of solitude, refreshment, and renewal for the priests.

The Word

The interior of the bowl-shaped Laver was lined with fragments of mirrors and looking glasses that came from a single offering given by the Hebrew women (Exodus 38:8).

When the Hebrews left Egypt God gave them vast quantities of brass, silver, and gold; precious gems, jewelry, art, ornate linens, coinage, and all manner of metals (Exodus 3:21; 12:35-36) - everything they would need to build the Tabernacle. In short, God made them rich for a reason: to build the house of worship. Of course, they didn't know why they had been blessed with such wealth until God revealed His plan. But when the call for a special offering, for a "building campaign," came, they gave freely to the Lord. This is a wonderful illustration of how God's plans are accomplished by His own gracious provisions, given through the people.

Ministry at the Brass Laver must have been an almost magical experience for

the priests. They could look into the basin and see a reflection of themselves. The mirrored reflections revealed where the waters of cleansing and renewal needed to be appropriated. In addition, the fragmented reflections of the looking glasses no doubt pierced through the water with an extraordinary, prism-likeness of the blue skies above.

This is a strong illustration of the role of the Word of God in our lives. James writes, "... don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey it, it is like glancing at your face *in a mirror*. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it" (James 1:22-25, NLT).

As we gaze intently into the Word (Laver), the Lord reveals where we need to be cleansed by the Living Water. We are cleansed and sanctified with the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26).

The priests approached the Laver before doing ministry and after doing ministry. All ministries were sandwiched between this ministry station. We, too, need to prepare ourselves before we minister. So often we jump into ministry - and out of ministry - without peering into the waters of the Laver. Ministry is messy. It can leave a sooty residue if we're not careful to appropriate the Word into the very fabric of our being.

That's why it is essential to be saturated in the Scriptures, peering into the water of the Word on a daily basis. When we spend time reading and studying the Word of God we are reminded of who we are in Christ, His glorious promises, and the assurance of our glorious future in heaven. We will be cleansed from spiritual smudge marks and refreshed in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we gaze into the very fountains of life we will be empowered, refreshed, and blessed, even in our bleakest, spiritual deserts.

As we make music we will sing, "All my fountains are in You!" (Psalm 87:7b, NIV).

The Spirit

"On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If

anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive” (John 7:37-39a, NIV).

Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as “Living Water.” Thus, ministry at the Brass Laver also speaks to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit - His infilling, His fruit, and spiritual gifts.

The power of the Holy Spirit cannot be underestimated. We have been born again into a spiritual world and nothing will empower us to be successful in our ministries but an ongoing dependence on the Holy Spirit. Many of us are highly skilled, well-read, and quite theologically astute when it comes to Christianity. Yet nothing but our relationship and co-existence with the Holy Spirit will enable us to bear lasting fruit for the Kingdom of God.

Paul was a wonderful illustration of this. He was a well-educated, savvy debater - a theological whiz-kid of an Apostle. Yet he knew the inherent danger of relying on his own power. He chose to know nothing but the crucified Christ (Altar of Sacrifice) and the power of the Holy Spirit (Brass Laver). To the church at Corinth he wrote, “I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:35, NIV). Sure, he could have dazzled them with his linguistic gifts, but he chose to kick back and present Christ in the power of the Spirit instead.

Later in life, Paul told the Ephesians to, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18b, NLT). The Greek behind this is a grammatical tense called, “the continuous present.” Paul was saying the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a continuous, ongoing experience - a way of life - in the life of a saint.

As we approach the Brass Laver we can expect Christ to wash us, fill us, and anoint us with the sanctifying Presence of the Living Water. Only at the Laver are we filled with the spiritual stamina to witness Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Only at the Laver will God cleanse us, equip us for ministry, and nurture our spiritual fruit. Only at the Laver are we saved through the washing and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:4ff).

We need Him today like never before. Even the most theologically astute

saint will dry up without intentional visits to the Laver.

Baptism

In addition to the Word and Spirit of God, the Brass Laver also serves as a symbol of Baptism.

*This water symbolizes baptism
that now saves you also—
not the removal of dirt from the body
but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.
It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

1 Peter 3:21, NIV

Liturgically speaking, we are saved as we pass through the waters of Baptism. Baptism is where we symbolically descend to the depths and rise into new life in Christ. We are cleansed, filled with the Spirit, and Calvary is forever sealed in our hearts.

We become adopted sons and daughters of God.

Orthodox or Progressive Theology?

In a culture where we are continuously bombarded with strange doctrines and popular Oprah and Madonna “theologies,” the Brass Laver serves as a litmus test for Biblical Orthodoxy.

In the last days, “false Christ’s and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible” (Matthew 24:24, NIV). At the same time, the genuine, ongoing, move of the Holy Spirit will be in full force, winning the world to Christ through anointed preaching, the displaying of miracles, and signs and wonders as well (Mark 16:15-18)! It’s no wonder that John tells us to test the spirits (1 John 4:13).

*As water reflects a face,
so a man’s heart reflects the man.*

Proverbs 27:19, NIV

This is how the Laver can be helpful in discerning the spirits: the activities of the Spirit must be contained within the trajectory of the Word.

The Laver symbolizes Scripture (Ephesians 5:26). Within its walls is a basin of water which is symbolic of the Spirit (John 7:37-39). Together they form a unique relationship of Spirit and Truth. The water (Spirit) is contained within the parameter of the Laver (Truth). If the proposed “new theology, new teaching, or new spiritual experience” flows within the parameter of the Laver - that is, if it is

contained within the theological/experiential content of the Bible - it may well be of God. If the so-called “revelation” promotes a non-Biblical experience, you can be sure it is not of God.



*Just as Christ loved the church.
He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean,
washed by the cleansing of God's word.
He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church
without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish.*

Ephesians 5:25b27, NLT

FALL ON ME

*Jesus,
Jesus, come and heal my soul.
Jesus,
Jesus, come and make me whole.*

*With Your wind,
breathe into my sin.*

*With Your rain,
cleanse me once again.*

*With Your fire,
make holy my desire.*

*In the stillness of this place,
fall on me.
Jesus, fall on me.
Jesus, fall on me.*

Jesus, fall on me.

C. Summary of the Outer Courts

*And Jesus Christ was revealed as God's Son
by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross—
not by water only, but by water and blood.
And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony.*

1 John 5:6, NLT

The Outer Courts provided ministry to the worshipper. It was where he received forgiveness and was cleansed before, and after, doing ministry.

The two ministry stations in the Courts (the Altar of Sacrifice and the Brass Laver) were as different from one another as night and day. One was harshly-defined, a hot box of ruthless slaughter with smoke, timber, and harsh jagged edges; the other was a stealthy place with rounded curves and indefinable parameters. One was characterized by the heart-wrenching cries of its slain victims; the other lay ominously silent, tranquil in peace and solitude.

Both stations are essential in appropriating Christ's ministry to His children. At His death (Altar of Sacrifice), Jesus forgives our sin and removes the sting of death; by His Word and Spirit (Brass Laver), He forms and fashions us into the image of God. One provides forgiveness, the other sanctification.

Peter had a good handle on the relationship between the Altar of Sacrifice and the Brass Laver when, on the day of Pentecost, he “said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins [Altar of Sacrifice]; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit [Brass Laver]’” (Acts 2:38, NKJV).

Blood and Water

The use of liquids was common-place at both ministry stations. The Altar is associated with blood; the Laver, with water. The Biblical relationship between blood and water is simply astounding.

John writes: “And Jesus Christ was revealed as God's Son by his baptism in

water and by shedding his *blood* on the cross—not by water only, but by *water and blood*. And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony” (1 John 5:6, NLT; italics mine).

The Psalmist writes, “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart” (Psalm 24:34a, NKJV). Likewise, the author of Hebrews writes, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22, NKJV). When our hands have been cleansed in the *water* and our hearts forgiven through the *Blood*, we are then ready to “draw near to God” and pass through the veil into the Holy Place.

Finally, a striking foreshadowing of blood and water is seen at the crucifixion of Christ. Jesus was led from Jerusalem and lifted high upon a cross in the heat of the day. (This speaks to the role of the Altar of Sacrifice - located in the Outer Courts, under the blazing heat of the noonday sun.) After He had given up His spirit, a Roman soldier “pierced his side with a spear.” That’s when an amazing thing happened: “Immediately blood and water flowed out” (John 19:34b, NLT).

Word and Spirit

Jesus calls His disciples to worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:23-24). Here, again, we see the unique relationship between the Altar of Sacrifice and Brass Laver.

We worship Him through the Spirit (the Living Water of the Laver) and in Truth (the crucified Christ who is the Truth, the Life, and the Way). Both stations are essential in our worship of our Heavenly Father.

I believe visits to both the Altar of Sacrifice and Brass Laver need to be made each and every day. I’m not suggesting returning to the Cross, time and time again, to get “re-saved,” or born again-again-again-again and *again*. No, Christ’s death was more than enough to secure our eternal salvation the first go ‘round. However, just by doing life, we tend to accumulate sins which routinely need to be taken to the Cross.

Likewise, with regard to the Laver, it isn’t necessary to be submerged in the Spirit - washed, cleansed, sanctified, redeemed, healed, anointed and delivered

from demonic oppression each and every day of our life. On the contrary, we only need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal *specific* areas needing His Spiritual attention for any given day. We have already been made clean by the Word spoken to us. “A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean” (John 13:10, NIV).

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

I surrendered my life to Christ in November 1977 on a beach in Central Florida. For me it was all about “giving in” or “surrendering” to the Lordship of Christ. I had been wallowing in mud and squandering my wealth for far too long and it was time to get on with the things God had planned for me.

So, late one night, sitting in the sand with the roar of waves in the background, I did it. It felt goofy. But I was just that desperate. I said, “God, I don’t know who you are or what you are. But I’ve heard it said that I need to invite Jesus Christ into my heart and I will be saved. So, I now invite Jesus into my heart. I guess that’s it. Amen.”

When I arose from that beach I had a sense that something “very right” had happened. Over the course of the following months I bought a Bible, read it every day, and began to see the beauty of my Lord Jesus Christ everywhere I went.

While things on the inside had changed dramatically, things on the outside were still the same: I still lived in the same beach house, still hung out with the same people who still had their same parties each and every night. For a while I had great satisfaction in having the strength to be able to be in the same room with them without sharing in the same old activities. As the nights wore on, however, there were times when I lacked discipline to stay the straight and narrow road.

“Where is your power, Lord?” I prayed.

Previous to my conversion I had experienced cult and occult power - some of which was frighteningly powerful. I knew God was bigger than Satan, yet - up to that point - I had not experienced the fullness of God’s power in my life. I grew increasingly frustrated and “backslid” more times than I care to admit. Where was this so-called “victorious life in Christ”?

Shortly thereafter I received a call from a friend who invited me to a

“church meeting” at the Quality Courts Hotel on A1A, in Cocoa Beach. I hitchhiked up and we met in the lobby. The moment we walked into the banquet hall I was literally overcome with something I had never experienced: the power of God’s love. I looked around in awe. People everywhere were laughing and hugging; the room was filled with electricity - and the band hadn’t even played yet!

As the worship began, the Presence of God filled the songs with a sweet fragrance of grace. It was thick, almost cloud-like. And, though the people leading music looked normal, like me (young, blue jeans, t-shirts, and long hair), their faces grew ablaze with the visible presence of God’s undeniable joy. I didn’t know any of the songs, but it didn’t matter. I felt that even if I sang the wrong notes it would still be “right” somehow.

At one point the worship leader strummed one chord and invited us into a time of free-form worship. As I observed, everyone around me began singing their own words and melodies in adoration to the Lord. It was beautiful. None of it was rehearsed, but it was the most wonderfully choreographed piece of music I have ever heard. Most people were standing, eyes closed and hands upheld. I was astutely aware of the sacredness of the moment and slowly dropped to my chair, burying my head in my open palms.

*Instead, one of the soldiers
pierced Jesus’ side with a spear,
bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.*

John 19:34, NIV

I heard behind me a man singing, in what I now know to be “tongues.” As he sang, my heart was strangely attracted, spiritually riveted to his voice. The more he sang, the more my being seemed to rock with the ebb and flow of his song. It was then that I began to experience the power of the Father’s love poured out to me through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

In the midst of it all I saw (in my mind) a vision of a door. It was cracked open about an inch and had intense white light pouring in from its sides, top and bottom. I gazed in awe and wondered how something so brilliant wouldn’t hurt my eyes. I leaned forward and tried to get a better look.

That’s when I heard God say, “Bill, you know I love you.”

I nodded intently. “Yes, Lord, I do.”

“And you know I will never love you any more or any less than I love you right now - right?”

“Yes, Lord, I do.”

“There’s nothing you can do to make me love you any more, or any less, than I do at this moment. You know that, right?”

“Yes. I do.”

“But, listen: I have more for you.”

“More? For me?”

“Do you want more of Me?”

(Did I want more of Him? By that time in my life I had already realized that everything in the world paled in the face of the love and knowledge of Jesus. I was a fully devoted, fully sold-out, Jesus Freak and wanted - *needed* - anything and everything He died to give to me. Did I want more of Him? You bet I did!)

“Oh yes, Lord,” I cried. “You know I - ”

And before I could finish the statement, the door flew open and I was immersed in the overwhelming light of Christ. In an instant, I saw the horridness of my sin - its effect and stain - completely and wholly swallowed up by God’s unconditional, holy love. I keeled over in my chair and sobbed as the love of God cleansed, restored, and empowered me in the depth of my being.

My friends surrounded me, laid their hands on me, and blessed me. I was finally experiencing the power of God, filling me from head to toe, giving me the power I needed to be a victorious follower of Jesus Christ.

The whole time this man behind me was singing away, praising God in his own tongue; his voice rising and lowering with the ebb and flow of the miracle happening in my heart. God was breaking my stubborn pride. In His unrelenting and undeserving mercy, He was restoring the years the locusts had eaten, giving me a heart of flesh for a heart of stone, and trading my sorrows for the joy of the Lord!

Afterwards I couldn’t wait to get home. I ran through the door, headed down the hallway, turned on the bathroom light and looked at myself in the mirror. The experience of God’s power had been so intense that I had to see if I had changed on the outside! In my reflection I saw the radiant face of a young man who had finally found what he was looking for - the peace and power of God in his life. The waters of the Laver had been poured out upon my heart, washing me clean of my

sin and filling me with the unimaginable power of the Holy Spirit.

I remember looking at myself in the mirror and saying, “Don’t you ever lose this!” And, today, some thirty years later - by God’s grace and His everlasting faithfulness - I haven’t.

A few years later I heard a song, “Your Love Broke Through,” by the late great Keith Green which described the event better than I could ever say:

*Like a foolish dreamer, trying to build a highway to the sky,
All my hopes would come tumbling down, and I never knew just why,
Until today, when you pulled away the clouds that hung like curtains on my eyes,
Well I’ve been blind all these wasted years and I thought I was so wise,
But then you took me by surprise.*

*Like waking up from the longest dream, how real it seemed,
Until your love broke through,
I’ve been lost in a fantasy, that blinded me,
Until your love broke through.*

*All my life I’ve been searching for that crazy missing part,
And with one touch, you just rolled away the stone that held my heart,
And now I see that the answer was as easy, as just asking you in,
And I am so sure I could never doubt your gentle touch again,
It’s like the power of the wind.*

*Like waking up from the longest dream, how real it seemed,
Until your love broke through,
I’ve been lost in a fantasy, that blinded me,
Until your love, until your love, broke through.*

That was my first visit to the Laver. And I have returned to it many, many times since then (remember Ephesians 5:18!). I praise God for the Outer Courts. It’s a place all about me - where I am saved, forgiven, and I am filled with the Spirit.

It’s All About Me

The Outer Courts is a place reserved solely for *us*. It is a place where we are saved, forgiven, taught Scripture, and filled with the Spirit. It is an essential piece in our progression into the Holy of Holies.

Some would say there is no room in the Faith to be selfish. They would say we are called to lay down our lives for the sake of another, to put to death the

things of the flesh, pick up our crosses daily and follow Christ into a life of simplicity and selflessness - all of which is true.

Yet, it is equally true that no priest could do ministry or enter the Tent of Meeting without personal preparation. If the priest did not appropriate ministry into his own heart there was a real price to pay.

The Apostle Peter says we are to “proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9b, NKJV). In order for us to proclaim His praises with power and anointed authenticity these “selfish” times in the Outer Courts are essential. Only when we allow Christ to work in our hearts will our testimonies to others carry weight.

It is here, in the Outer Courts, where God prepares us, by receiving personal ministry at the Altar of Sacrifice and Brass Laver, to minister selflessly in the Courts of the King.

The ministries of the Altar of Sacrifice and Laver are always there for us. Why not pause now - just for a moment - and appropriate these ministries into your heart? You may wish to commit yourself to the Lord for the very first time, or renew your vows to His love and service. Perhaps you need to ask God to fill you afresh with the power of the Holy Spirit. Here is a prayer that can guide you into His ministry. After the prayer, I invite you to linger in silence for a while, allowing the Holy Spirit to answer your heart’s plea with His magnificent love. He loves you and is preparing you for a great and mighty work!

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,
he is a new creation;
old things have passed away;
behold, all things have become new.
2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV*

*Almighty Father,
I come to You now through the Blood of Jesus.
I believe that You were crucified for the sins of the world -
including mine.
And I ask that You would forgive all my sin,
wash away all its residue,
and fill me with Your Holy Spirit.
Pour into my heart Your love
through the Holy Spirit.
Deliver me from the snares of the enemy
by the power of Blood shed at Calvary
and empower me,*

*through the water of the Word and the anointing of the Holy Spirit,
to live a victorious life,
pleasing to my God.*

*For I hereby repent of my sins
and receive You as my Lord and Savior.
In the Name of Jesus Christ I bless You.
Amen.*



*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.*

Hebrews 10:19-22, NIV

IV. The Inner Courts

*I will meet the people of Israel there,
in the place made holy by my glorious presence.
Yes, I will consecrate the Tabernacle and the altar,
and I will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests.
Then I will live among the people of Israel
and be their God.*

Exodus 29:43-45, NLT

When we leave the Outer Courts and enter into the Inner Courts, everything changes. We enter a whole new world.

We've come in from blazing sunlight into a darkened, shaded environment. As our eyes adjust, we find ourselves standing in a small room, with ornately decorated linens lining the walls and ceilings; where flickering lamps illumine and dance across the sculptured gold surfaces of the Lampstand, Table of Showbread, and the Altar of Incense.

The very essence of our ministry has changed as well. Here, we have no need to be restored, cleansed or forgiven; indeed, no need to receive any ministry whatsoever. We are no longer preoccupied with our own ministries, but consumed with His. There is nothing more for *us* here, outside the joy of pleasing Him. It is no longer about "me." From here on out it is all about "He."

Welcome to the Tent of Meeting!

The Tent of Meeting

The Tent of Meeting was a structure resembling a tall shoe-box, some fifteen feet high. It was completely enclosed by thick and wondrously decorated curtains, linens, and skins. The tent was divided into two rooms. About two-thirds back there was a second veil which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies.

A striking feature of this first room in the Tent of Meeting, or the Holy Place, is the absence of all natural light. The only source of illumination in the Holy Place was the seven oil lamps sitting atop the Golden Lampstand. In fact, using the

Tabernacle of Moses as a model, we learn the closer a person gets to God the *darker* things become.

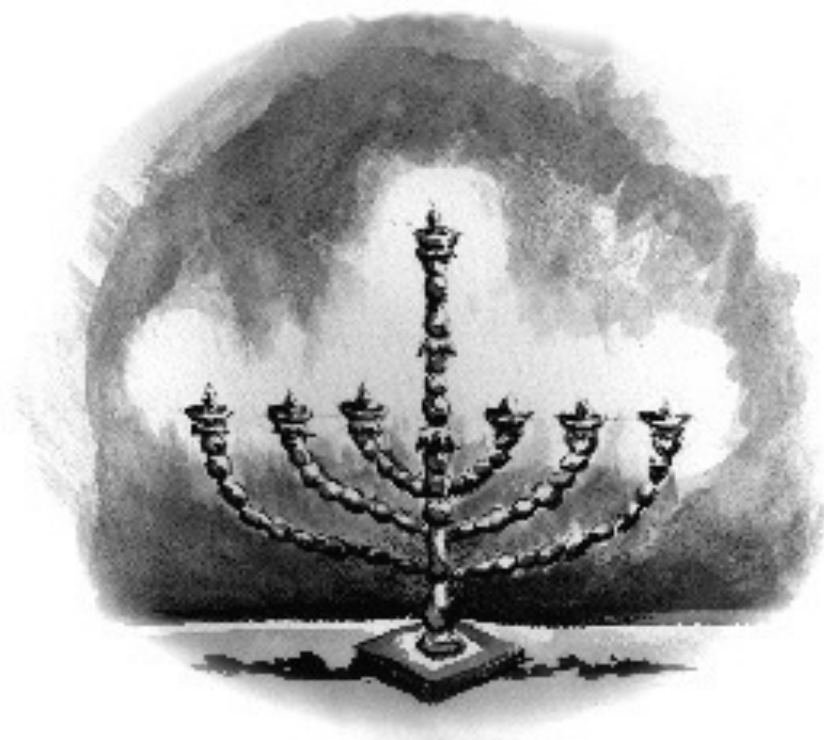
The majority of the gold used in the construction of the Tabernacle of Moses lies within this small room. The Golden Lampstand (to the left, and parallel to the wall) is made of pure, sculptured gold. Both the Table of Showbread (to the right) and the second altar, the Altar of Incense (up against the curtain leading into the Holy of Holies), are made of acacia wood and covered with hammered gold.

This room reeks of royalty, and rightfully so. We have moved closer to the King. By virtue of having moved through the first set of columns, through the veil, and into this place, we have crossed an enormous threshold; a threshold that, in my mind, carries the significance of “conversion.”



*It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord.
He was sitting on a lofty throne,
and the train of his robe filled the Temple.
Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings.
With two wings they covered their faces,
with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew.
They were calling out to each other,
“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven’s Armies!
The whole earth is filled with his glory!”
Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations,
and the entire building was filled with smoke.
Then I said, “It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man.
I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips.
Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.”
Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal
he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.
He touched my lips with it and said,
“See, this coal has touched your lips.
Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven.”
Then I heard the Lord asking,
“Whom should I send as a messenger to this people?
Who will go for us?”
I said, “Here I am. Send me.”*

Isaiah 6:18, NLT



*“Make a lampstand of pure, hammered gold.
Make the entire lampstand and its decorations of one piece—
the base, center stem, lamp cups, buds, and petals.
Make it with six branches going out from the center stem, three on each side.
Each of the six branches will have three lamp cups
shaped like almond blossoms, complete with buds and petals.
Craft the center stem of the lampstand with four lamp cups
shaped like almond blossoms, complete with buds and petals.
There will also be an almond bud beneath each pair of branches
where the six branches extend from the center stem.
The almond buds and branches must all be of one piece with the center stem,
and they must be hammered from pure gold.
Then make the seven lamps for the lampstand,
and set them so they reflect their light forward.
The lamp snuffers and trays must also be made of pure gold.
You will need seventy-five pounds of pure gold
for the lampstand and its accessories.
Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern
I have shown you here on the mountain.”*

Exodus 25:31-40, NLT

A. The Golden Lampstand

*"I am the vine, you are the branches.
He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit."*

John 15:5a, NKJV

Rising from the sandy floor of the Tent of Meeting was a lampstand that looked much like a modern day menorah. It was just over three feet high and made of seventy-five pounds of pure gold. It had beautifully sculptured flowers, blooms, and buds decorating its main shaft and its three vine-like arms, to either side.

Resting atop each arm, or branch, of the Lampstand were seven oil lamps. They burned "through the night" and illuminated the Holy Place with enough light for the priests to carry out their ministry. It also had tongs, clippers, and other utensils which the priests used during the trimming of the lamps. The lamps, sitting atop the seven golden vines of the Lampstand, provided the light under which all ministry was performed.

The Branch

Isaiah writes with regard to the coming Messiah, "In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious..." (Isaiah 4:2, NIV).

Other prophets describe Christ in tree-like language as well. Jeremiah declared the Messiah, rising from the lineage of David, as a righteous Branch (Jeremiah 23:5 and Zechariah 3:8). The well-known passage from Isaiah, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1, NIV), is often read at Christmas. (I have often reflected on the interesting fact that Jesus, the Branch of Heaven, entered into the world on a wooden manger and left the world on a wooden cross - both objects symbolizing the hard "wooden ways" of this fallen world.)

Additionally, Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, NIV).

Jesus stands gloriously in a darkened world and proclaims Himself as its Light

(John 8:12, 9:5). Additionally, He speaks of the church as being lifted high, like burning lamps, “giving light to everyone in the house” (Matthew 5:15b, NIV).

The Golden Lampstand gives us an amazing picture of Jesus and his relationship to the branches. We can do many things on our own, without abiding in the Vine - yet none of them will bear lasting fruit. But, as we remain grafted to Him (Romans 11:16-24) and His Word, our works will take on eternal significance. In addition, as we abide in Him, we can ask anything we want and it will be given to us (John 15:7).

God wants us to bear fruit - fruit that will last. But that fruit will only be as enduring as our connectedness in Christ.

You're a Shining Star

Let us now turn our gaze to the oil lamps.

Atop each “branch” of the Golden Lampstand was an oil lamp. The seven lamps were most likely made of clay and filled with pure virgin olive oil which burned through a wick. Together the lamps provided a united radiance that lit up the Holy Place.

In the lamps we find a vivid illustration of the “lighted” witness and ministry of the Body of Christ in the darkened world. Scripture says, “We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves” (2 Corinthians 4:7, NLT). Beautiful, isn't it? Whether or not Paul is reflecting upon the symbols found in the Tabernacle of Moses, we can't be sure. Yet he does equate us with clay lamps, formed from the earth (Genesis 1) and filled with the treasure of the Holy Spirit, who is often referred to as “oil” in Scripture.

Later in his life, Paul wrote to the church at Philippians and reminded them they were shining stars in the midst of a darkened “crooked and perverse generation” (Philippians 2:15b, NKJV). (Remember the Tent of Meeting was a dark place with no natural light!)

“...You shine like stars in the universe.”

Philippians 2:15c, NIV

Thus, we are to be reflectors of God's majestic glory, the glory of the Vine. The end result will be that the world will see God burning through us, and they will

know that this power is greater than ourselves.

Trimming the Wicks

One of the duties of the priest was to examine and maintain the lamps - trim the wicks, fill them with oil, polish them, etc. He had special utensils - scissors, tongs, cloths, etc. - which he used for the task. The lamps were made to burn a white-hot flame “as one light” into the room. Thus, the priest examined each lamp carefully and trimmed it into its potential.

When the priest approached a lamp which was low on oil, he’d fill it with purified olive oil. The oil had been hammered and filtered numerous times in order to secure its absolute and utmost purity. This oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. In a similar way, one of the ministries of Jesus, our Great High Priest, is to fill his people and church with the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist said, “I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!” (Mark 1:8, NLT).

After filling each lamp with oil it was then time to examine the wicks. Wicks went either of two ways: either they were not burning enough or they were burning too much. If the lamp was barely burning he’d take tweezers and tug on the wick a bit, just enough to get it out in the open. Conversely, if the wick was too long, then he would take the clippers and trim it back so it would burn like all the others. The wicks themselves were never meant to burn. They were designed so the pure olive oil would burn *through* the wicks.

*I am the true vine,
and my Father is the gardener.
He cuts off every branch in me
that bears no fruit,
while every branch that does bear fruit
he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.*

John 15:12, NIV

This is a poignant illustration of the role of the Holy Spirit, burning *through* the lives of Spirit-filled Christians, for the entire world to see.

Like the priests of old, the Vinedresser, who is our Father, examines us and prunes us into our potential. This pruning may involve the clipping of attitudes; judgment, pride, envy - or other impurities preventing us from burning pure for His ministry. Or, pruning could also involve a certain “tugging” to pull us out of our shell and into the purposes for which we were made.

For example, sometimes people think they’re not educated enough, not

good enough, not ready enough, not sinless enough, or not “whatever” enough to get into a ministry at church. In this case, the Vinedresser might suddenly “pull you/tug you” into a ministry (without giving you time to really think about it). It may happen as you are approached by someone at church asking you to consider doing something around the church. Those opportunities could well be the work of the Vinedresser, pulling you out so that you would shine all the brighter. It’s a good thing!

On the other hand, there are times when we need to be pruned back, occasions where we are simply burning out of control. Spiritual burn-out happens when we get so caught up in “doing ministry” we don’t realize we’re burning in the power of the flesh and not in the power of the Spirit. This happens particularly with new Christians. In their new-found fervor of “finding Christ” they immerse themselves in so many activities - Bible studies, fellowship groups, social outreach ministries, ushering, Vestry, men’s/women’s groups, etc. - that they literally burn out. Some even leave the church. I’m reminded of a poem that goes like this:

*Mary had a little lamb
A tender, happy sheep
It one day gave its life to Christ
It died for lack of sleep!*

Another way our wicks warrant the clipping of the Vinedresser happens when our private lifestyles are incongruent with our public witness. In both these cases, Jesus, the Great High Priest and Vinedresser, lovingly trims us to burn in sync with the rest of the lamps. In Scripture, trimming is called “the discipline of the Lord.” It usually happens through situations, events, or people who impact us in such a way that we are convicted, humbled, and brought back to the flames of our First Love.

As a young man I spent about a year living on a Kibbutz, in Israel, as a cotton farmer. I was in my early twenties, recently converted, and fully ablaze with the fire of God. (Being “ablaze with the fire of God” is a wonderful thing - yet being ablaze with the fire of God without having *the wisdom of the Lord* can be quite smoldering indeed, as it fills the tents with a smoldering smoke which make others around you gag.)

In those days I prided myself upon being a linguistically-gifted punster. I was “off the charts” with my wittiness and always needed to have the last laugh no matter what. Humor, of course, is wonderful and can be quite uplifting. But my

humor was biting and sarcastic to the extent that I no longer cared about the negative impact my humor would have on others, only that I got people laughing. It was a dangerous place.

One day I went into town and was hanging around with some friends at the Jerusalem bus station. I was in rare form that day, thoroughly impressing everyone, including myself, with my remarkable gift of saying anything I could just to get a laugh. Everything was going quite well until I noticed one of the girls with us didn't seem as impressed with me as she should have been. She stood there, leaning against a column, arms folded with a soured smirk on her face. To my amazement, I couldn't even get her to crack a smile. In my effort to justify myself I poured it on all the more, pulling out all "stops" in my efforts to make her laugh at my wonderful humor.

It didn't work.

During an unplanned pause in my clever monologue, she took a deep breath, pulled herself away from the post and approached me. She was in her mid-twenties and from Holland. I can remember both her broken English accent and the intense look of righteous anger in her eyes as if it was yesterday.

"You think you are very funny, don't you?"

I remained silent; but inwardly agreed with her. Yes, I do.

"Well, let me tell you," her eyes opened to reveal a beautiful heart of compassion, "You are not."

I froze. I had just seen the Vinedresser.

She continued, "You may think you are funny. But you are not. You are grievous to me and to the Lord. Our Lord Jesus is not amused by what you have to say."

I was immediately humbled. "You're right."

She was right. And I *knew* it. I regained my composure, apologized and thanked her. She turned and walked away.

Once seated on the bus I sat in silence for a very long time, examining the looseness of my tongue and the damage I had caused others by my prideful, flippant behavior. The last thing I would ever want to do is to grieve the Lord - or

grieve one of His children.

That incident is definitive as to what it means to be “trimmed” by the

*“My son,
do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,
and do not lose heart when He rebukes you,
because the Lord disciplines
[trims the wicks of]
those He loves,
and punishes everyone He accepts as a son.’
Endure hardship as discipline;
God is treating you as sons [and daughters].
For what son is not disciplined by his father?”*
Hebrews 12:5b7, NIV

Vinedresser. It was as if Jesus saw me burning out of control - so much so that the room was filled with a “Bill-stench” and not the sweet fragrance of God - and He reached slowly for the clippers. Using the sweet, sincere voice of my sister in the Lord, He trimmed me into a place where He would once again shine through me.

And I bless God for that. It reminds me that He still cares and He still loves me.

A Unified Witness Around the Globe

After the priest trimmed the wicks, the entire Lampstand gave off a unified illumination which, though comprised of seven lamps, shone as one light.

This is a powerful symbol of the Church’s uniform witness of Christ around the globe. Jesus loves His church and prays for us all the time. He walks in the midst of the flames of the seven churches (Revelation 1:12, 13, 20, and 2:1) and maintains our worldwide witness of Christ. His prayer for us was, “that they may all be one,” a single, unified Church, giving glory to the Father for all the world to see (John 17:20-24).

One of the amazing things about the Body of Christ is that you can go anywhere in the world and you will experience a certain spiritual resonance with about every Christian you meet. The same Spirit burning in the saints in Uganda burns through the saints in Australia. Almost anywhere you go in the world there will be Christians. And they are all illuminating their neighborhoods, villages, towns, cities, and nations with the same Light of Christ!

Tongues of Fire

The lamps atop the Golden Lampstand are also parabolic of the “tongues of fire” which landed atop the heads of the 120 followers of Christ in the Upper Room

(Acts 2:3). It blazed through that room like a mighty wind and rested atop each person there. Their hearts were ignited with the fire of God and within a few weeks thousands and thousands of people were converted and bore witness to the amazing work of God in Jesus Christ.



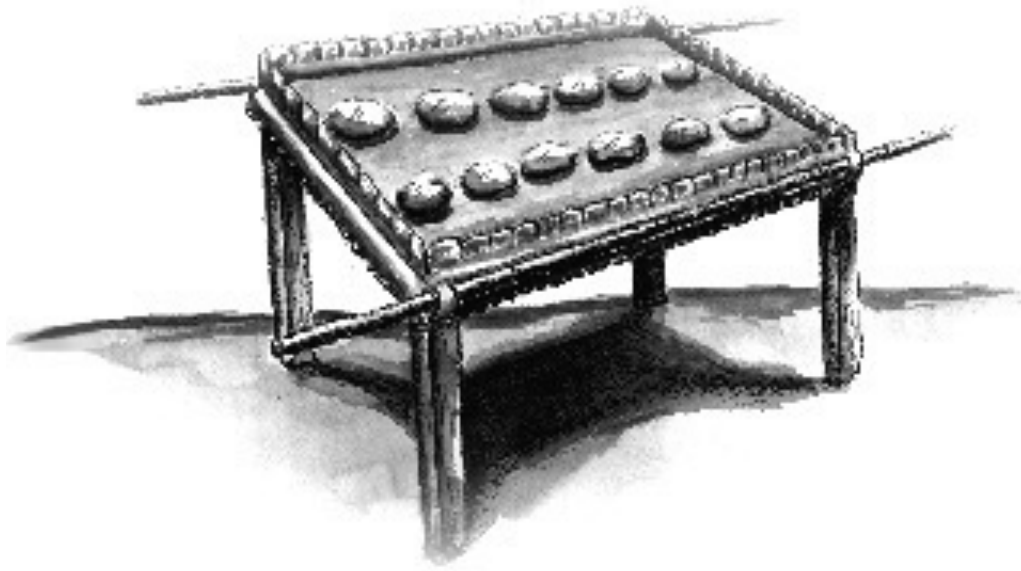
*“You are the light of the world.
A city on a hill cannot be hidden.
Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.
Instead they put it on its stand,
and it gives light to everyone in the house.
In the same way, let your light shine before men,
that they may see your good deeds
and praise your Father in heaven.”*

Matthew 5:14-16, NIV

**YOU O LORD KEEP MY LAMP BURNING
(PSALM 18:28)**

*You, O Lord,
keep my lamp burning.*

*My God, turns my darkness
into light;
into light.*



*“Then make a table of acacia wood,
36 inches long, 18 inches wide, and 27 inches high.
Overlay it with pure gold and run a gold molding around the edge.
Decorate it with a 3-inch border all around,
and run a gold molding along the border.
Make four gold rings for the table
and attach them at the four corners next to the four legs.
Attach the rings near the border
to hold the poles that are used to carry the table.
Make these poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with gold.
Make special containers of pure gold for the table
—bowls, pans, pitchers, and jars—
to be used in pouring out liquid offerings.
Place the Bread of the Presence on the table
to remain before me at all times.”*

Exodus 25:2330, NLT

B. The Golden Table of Showbread

*Jesus said, "I tell you the truth,
Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did.
And now he offers you the true bread from heaven."*

John 6:32, NLT

Located just across from the Golden Lampstand and not more than seven feet away, was the Table of Showbread. This small table was made from acacia wood and covered with hammered gold. The table measured one and a half feet wide and three feet from end to end. It had two golden rims, or crowns, within which the bread was laid.

On the Table were twelve loaves of pita-shaped bread which were laid out, most likely in two standing columns, "showing" the bread in the light of the oil lamps; thus, the name: "Table of Showbread." Each day, the priests' duties included refurbishing the Table with new bread, thereby assuring all offerings before the Lord were fresh. As the priests worked the Table, they most likely exchanged conversation and enjoyed fellowship with each other.

The Table of Showbread foreshadows Jesus in many, many ways. Here are a few illustrations:

Kingly Royalty

The Table of Showbread, as well as the ministry stations that followed (Altar of Incense and Ark of the Covenant), were made from acacia wood and then covered with gold.

Acacia wood, as we've learned, is the hardest wood on the planet and is a symbol of humanity. Gold, on the other hand, speaks to royalty and kingship. This speaks to Christ as being fully man (acacia wood) and fully God (gold). Jesus Christ is the Son of Man and the Son of God.

Around the rim of the Table were two golden crowns, which also speak to

the dual natures of Christ, fully man and fully God. The first crown was given at His death: it was a crown of thorns. The second was given by God at His glorification: a golden crown of glory which adorns Him and establishes Him today as the authoritative King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Communion | Eucharist

Once I was at a church when the Pastor shared that we were going to have Communion “the way they did it in the early church.” The instructions went something like this:

“We’re going to pass around this big basket of bread. When it gets to you, break off a piece of it and pass it on to your neighbor. Then, get with your neighbor and have Communion. While you’re eating your bread, I want you to enter into fellowship with the brothers and sisters sitting around you. Ask them what God is doing in their lives, share with them your struggles, and pray for one another. If you need more bread, just ask for it. Through it all I want to invite you to engage in genuine, Christian fellowship, both with Christ and with one another.”

And so it was. He blessed the bread, I grabbed a chunk, and we all enjoyed fellowship around the “breaking of the bread.” It was beautiful. By the end of forty-five minutes, people were laughing with each other, crying with each other, and praying for each other. We were having true fellowship at the Table of Showbread.

The Greek word for fellowship, *koinonia*, far exceeds casual friendship. In true *koinonia*, people can sense God and the miracle He has wrought in the person with whom they are sharing. It is exciting to share the common experience of the sacrifice of Christ with a brother or sister in the Lord. Times of *koinonia* are oftentimes energizing, joyful, and safe - with the essence of heaven laced therein - a depth of relationship that is unknown to anyone who is not a Christian. The activities of the church as described in Acts 2:42 reflect what true *koinonia* looks like in the real world.

But even *koinonia* can be abused.

The church of Corinth exchanged their *koinonia* for a party. Not only did they add wine to their gatherings but they were getting drunk at church. Paul was ruthless in his response. He reminded them of the total sacredness of Holy

Communion and admonished them to examine themselves before taking it. If they partook in Communion without first examining their hearts (ministries accomplished, no doubt, in the Outer Courts) they could drink God's judgment upon themselves and might even die as a result of their Sacramental flippancy (1 Corinthians 11:27-30).

I knew a woman raised in the Dutch Reformed tradition and when they took Communion, *they took Communion*. Three weeks out the Pastor would say, "In three weeks we will be having Communion. Prepare your hearts." Two weeks out he would say, "In two weeks time we'll be participating in the Lord's Supper. Prepare your hearts." A week before Communion would happen, "Get yourselves right before God!"

The result? When they took Communion, people were ready; they had prepared their hearts before the Altar of Sacrifice and Laver. The significance of the symbolism of the Bread and Wine took on a whole new meaning, a far greater richness. They were receiving the Gift in a manner worthy of the life and death of our Lord Jesus.

Living Manna

Jesus is perhaps most clearly seen in the Table of Showbread with regard to the self-described "Bread of Life." He said that anyone who eats "this bread" would live forever (John 6:51).

Back then, the priests were the only ones who ate the bread. Today, of course, under the New Covenant, we have all been declared priests unto God (Revelation 1:6) and, during the course of our desert pilgrimage, we gather at the Table of Showbread numerous times for nourishment, sustenance, and fellowship.

During the forty years in the desert, God miraculously provided food for His children with the supernatural food of angels. "Manna" was a mysterious food which tasted a bit like the coriander seed. The word "manna" literally means, "what is it?"

Each morning God provided just enough manna to make it through the day. When the Israelites woke up, they would go out, gather the flakey substance, which formed on the ground like dew, and bring it back to the campsites where it would be ground, fried, baked, and prepared in numerous ways to be eaten. A daily

provisions-worth of manna was provided each day, except on Friday. On Friday, a double portion of manna was collected, one for Friday and the other for Saturday. This was God's assistance in helping the Israelites to take a day off for the Sabbath Rest.

I often think of this when I say the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread..."

If the desert sun rose above a certain height (or perhaps when the temperature got too hot), the manna was rendered useless. So it behooved the Israelites to get up early each day and collect the day's provision before it withered. This speaks to the importance of rising early to seek God's daily provision through having a morning quiet time with the Lord - a time to commune with the Living Manna before the cares of the world kick in and melt away our precious time with the Lord.

As the manna sustained the Hebrews in their journey through the desert, so does the Sacrament of Holy Communion sustain us in our walks with Christ. Communion empowers us, gives us hope, and reminds us of the life of Christ and the future Hope. As a priest, I have the opportunity to ask God to bless bread that will spiritually nourish our congregation. When I distribute the elements, I sometimes hand the piece of bread to the communicant and say, "The Bread of Heaven; food for the journey."

Finally, it's interesting to note that there were certain occasions wherein offerings of *wine* were presented before the Lord at the Table of Showbread! To our knowledge, the wine was never consumed but poured out into the desert floor before the Lord (Numbers 28:7).

*All the believers
devoted themselves
to the apostles' teaching,
and to fellowship,
and to sharing in meals
(including the Lord's Supper),
and to prayer.*

Acts 2:42, NLT

Known By the Scars

Our final observation about the Golden Table of Showbread has to do with the bread itself.

There were twelve loaves, or cakes, of bread lying atop the crown-rimmed Table of Showbread. The number twelve is loaded with symbolism throughout the Bible: twelve sons of Jacob, twelve tribes, twelve apostles, twelve gates to the

New Jerusalem, and so on.

The bread was yeast-less. Jesus told us to be careful of the “yeast of the Pharisees” (Mark 8:1416).

Prior to molding the loaves and placing them into the fire, the priests were instructed to take a sharp object and pierce the bread (Leviticus 24:5). Thus, when the loaves were pulled from the ovens, they were marked with the scars of the furnace. The foreshadowing here is stunning - as it is prophetic of the day when Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, would be pierced for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5; Psalm 22:16).

Shortly after the crucifixion of Christ, a Roman soldier approached Jesus with the intent of breaking His legs. This cruel act hastened the process of death and guaranteed the bodies would be off the crosses by sundown, in order to celebrate the Jewish Sabbath. When the soldier came to Jesus he saw that He was already dead, so instead, he pierced Jesus’ side with a spear. From His side poured blood and water, which we looked at in our exploration of ministry in the Outer Courts.

Jesus was pierced, baked in the fires of hell, and laid out in a cave before the Father - not unlike the bread here, at the Table of Showbread. When He rose from the dead and returned to heaven, the scars of His redemptive work (hands, feet, and side) remained, for all eternity to see. Those same scars will earmark the glorious return of Christ as well. He will be known by His scars. Scripture tells us that when Israel meets their Messiah they will look upon “the one they have pierced and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son” (Zechariah 12:10, NIV).

“If someone asks him, ‘What are these wounds on your body?’ He will answer, ‘The wounds I was given in the house of my friends’” (Zechariah 13:6, NIV).



*“I am the living bread that came down from heaven.
Anyone who eats this bread will live forever;
and this bread,
which I will offer so the world may live,
is my flesh.”*

John 6:51, NLT

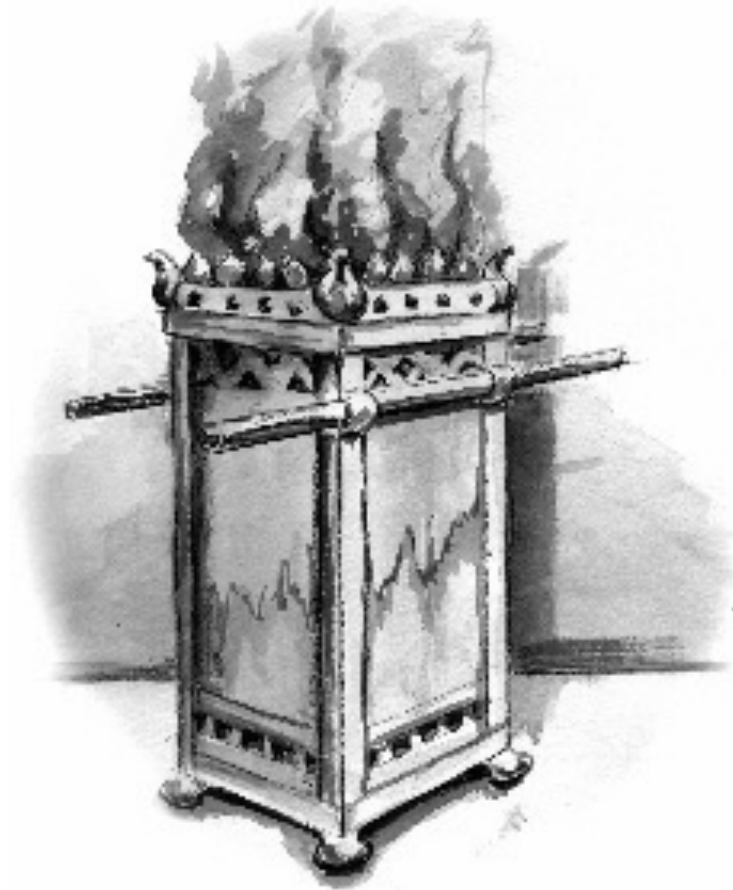
Meet Me in the Desert

I PREPARE MY HEART

*I prepare my heart,
I prepare my mind,
to receive the precious flesh and blood,
in bread and wine.*

*Poured out on the Cross,
nourishing my soul,
is my Lord and Savior Christ who died,
and makes me whole.*

*Is my Lord and Savior Christ who died,
and makes me whole;
make me whole.*



*“Then make another altar of acacia wood for burning incense.
Make it 18 inches square and 36 inches high,
with horns at the corners
carved from the same piece of wood as the altar itself.
Overlay the top, sides, and horns of the altar with pure gold,
and run a gold molding around the entire altar.
Make two gold rings, and attach them on opposite sides of the altar
below the gold molding to hold the carrying poles.
Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold.
Place the incense altar
just outside the inner curtain that shields the Ark of the Covenant,
in front of the Ark’s cover
—the place of atonement—
that covers the tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant.
I will meet with you there.”*

Exodus 30:16, NLT

C. The Golden Altar of Incense

*In every place of worship,
I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God,
free from anger and controversy.*

1 Timothy 2:8, NLT

Let's take a quick look back to where we began, as it has everything to do with where we are now:

- ❖ We have been nourished by the Living Manna, Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, and experienced the sweetness of *koinonia* at the Golden Table of Showbread.
- ❖ We have worshipped the Light of the World, shining through His Church in the Golden Lampstand.
- ❖ We have received cleansing, refreshment, and empowerment from the Living Water at the Brass Laver.
- ❖ We have received complete forgiveness of our sins and have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb at the Altar of Sacrifice. In our study of the second Altar of the Tabernacle of Moses, the Altar of Incense, we need to begin here, at the first Altar, the Altar of Sacrifice.

The Two Altars in the Tabernacle of Moses

The two altars of the Tabernacle provide a necessary tension and balance in the overall scheme of things. Both altars are needed to get into the Holy of Holies. Below is a table illustrating the fascinating differences and similarities between the two altars. I invite you to linger here for a moment and consider the significance of these two altars.

	Altar of Sacrifice	Altar of Incense
Location	Outer Court	Inner Court
Size	Largest	Smallest
Materials	Wood and Brass	Wood and Gold
Purpose	Atonement	Prayer
Ministry	For my behalf	For His behalf
Scents	Burning animals	Burning incense
Energy	Aggressive work	Gentle ease
Other	Public in Light	Private in Darkness
Commonalities	Blood, smoke, and fire	

My Father's House - A House of Prayer

Let's leave the noon-day heat and slip through the veil into the Tent of Meeting.

Take some time to let your eyes adjust.

To the left is the Golden Lampstand providing you with light to see; to the right, the Table of Showbread. Directly before you, at the base of a thick veil of royal hues, is the Altar of Incense; its golden sides shimmering under the dancing lights of the gold menorah.

As you approach it you notice a perpetual outflow of scented incense, rising from its tiny grill and miniature fire-pit. The fragrance is filling the dimly-lit, tented room with thick exotic fragrances before being absorbed within the hanging ceiling and surrounding curtains and linens.

This is, perhaps, the most important piece of furniture in the Tabernacle. Its location certainly speaks to this. It's closest to the Ark of the Covenant, situated at the very heart of the Temple.

This was the place of prayer and intercession; a place dear to the heart of the Father.

In the story of Jesus and the money-changers (John 2:13-22 and Matthew 21:12-17), Jesus became so outraged at the free-market activities in the Temple Courts (that would have been Herod's temple) that He flipped tables, toppled kiosks, and violently insisted no human institution - moneychangers, priests, scribes or otherwise - would prohibit God's children from having access to

their Heavenly Father.

At the climax of His teaching He proclaimed: “My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of ‘robbers’” (Matthew 21:13, NIV).

A “house of prayer.” How beautiful, how revealing! God so longs for us to draw near to Him through prayer. He so yearns to have fellowship with us that He actually becomes upset when human-made barriers prevent others from entering into His Almighty Presence.

*“These I will bring to my holy mountain
and give them joy in my house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house will be called
a house of prayer for all nations.”*

Isaiah 56:7, NIV

The Bible says that as Jesus gave up His spirit, the veil which divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was ripped in half (Matthew 27:51), signifying there were no more barriers between the Creator and His creation. He invites us to “come boldly to the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16, NKJV).

Smaller is Bigger

Drawing nearer and peering into the center of the Altar of Incense, a couple of things capture your attention.

First, its size. This is the smallest ministry station in the Tabernacle. Measuring a mere eighteen inches square and standing only a few feet high, it stands in stark contrast to the first Altar (the Altar of Sacrifice), which was a whopping 7½ feet square and 4½ feet tall.

This speaks to the fact that humility is a key component as one approaches the Lord in prayer.

Only By the Blood

Secondly, you’ll notice a smudge of blood there: a dried droplet smeared across the Altar’s golden crown. The blood was placed there by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement and taken from an animal which was sacrificed for the sins of the people. It connects the ministry of prayer with the sacrifice of Christ and signifies our prayers are merited solely through the Blood of the Lamb.

Strange Fire

Like the first Altar, a perpetual fire of smoldering embers burned silently at the base of the Altar of Incense.

This is the same fire which fell from heaven when the Temple was consecrated, back at Dedication Day. It was a holy fire, directly from the heart of God. Its flames were used to ignite all fires in the Temple.

Although the flames were lit sovereignly, it was up to the priests to keep them fired up. This speaks to our responsibility to keep ourselves in places where our flames remain strong.

There is a story that the Reverend Nicky Gumble shares on the Alpha course about a pastor and a man who were sitting before a fireplace. The man was sharing that he had lost the fiery passion he once had for the things of the Lord. In short, his love had grown cold and he didn't know how to get it back. Without saying a word, the pastor took a fire-poker, leaned over and pushed a smoldering ember back to where the flames were strongest. Within moments the ember caught fire and recaptured its flame.

In a similar way, Paul encouraged Timothy to “fan the flame” that burned within his heart (2 Timothy 1:6). In essence, he was exhorting his young disciple to maintain the flame of the Holy Spirit in his heart - a flame which had originated from God and settled onto Timothy at some point in his youth. Today it's no different: God may have sent the fires which burn in our hearts, but it's up to us to keep them fired up in the Presence of Christ.

God didn't like fires He didn't originate. He called them, “strange.” He only accepted offerings (of animals and incense) from fires which He Himself had initiated. While “strange fires” from other sources may have been more convenient for the priests, or practical (coals from nearby campfires or refuse dumps, for example), they were an abomination before the Lord God Almighty (Exodus 30:9).

That is because it takes a holy fire to come before a holy God.

The sons of Aaron learned this lesson, first hand. At one time they presumed to bring a fire of their own origin before the Lord. They were immediately killed for doing so (Leviticus 10:13) - and they were High Priests, Moses' nephews! To God, it didn't matter who they were, or who their father was. He had warned

them: ministry performed unto the Lord had to be exercised within the obedience “of the Lord,” or it would be rejected as “strange fire.”

Today, many sincere (but deceived) Christian leaders are seeking to do the same thing - offer

*Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu
took their censers,
put fire in them and added incense;
and they offered unauthorized fire
before the LORD,
contrary to his command.
So fire came out from the presence of the LORD
and consumed them,
and they died before the LORD.*

Leviticus 10:12, NIV

strange fire before the Lord. But the offering of “progressive theologies” (the mixing of religious belief, politically correct doctrines, and other attempts to sneak under the back side of the Tent of Meeting without following the rules) is just as much as an abomination today as it was back then. They are fires of man’s imagination, not of God’s initiation. Whenever I hear of another “strange fire” being offered to the Lord I am both humbled and thankful for the continued promise of God’s steadfast mercy which, in this day and age, triumphs over judgment (James 2:13b).

Holy Smoke!

The psalmist writes, “May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice” (Psalm 141:2, NIV).

A wonderful, precisely-measured mixture of incense (gum, resin, onycha, stacte, galbanum, and pure frankincense) burned within the golden walls of the Altar of Incense. The incense itself was to be “salted and pure and sacred” (Exodus 30:34-38). Its fragrance rose from the altar and filled the Holy Place with a mystical, other-worldly fragrance which, no doubt, permeated the curtains, veils, and ceilings - indeed, the very garments of the priests - with rich, musky aromas.

We all know people who seem to always be in the Presence of the Lord. If they had their way they’d linger for hours in prayer, intercession, and abiding conversation with the Lord. There is something beautiful about them! They have - for lack of a better word - an attractive “fragrance” about them that simply cannot be hidden.

I think non-Christians - people living outside the white-linen walls of the Temple - can smell it too. They may not be able to articulate it as such, but they will

“Pray continually.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17, NIV

recognize “something” about a person - a certain gentleness, a translucent countenance, a deep spiritual contentment. They can smell it with their spiritual sniffers.

Paul says it like this: “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphant procession in Christ, and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the fragrance of death; to the other, the fragrance of life” (2 Corinthians 2:14-16, NIV).



*“And when he took the scroll,
the four living beings
and the twenty-four elders
fell down before the Lamb.
Each one had a harp,
and they held gold bowls filled with incense,
which are the prayers of God’s people.”*

Revelation 5:8, NLT

AT THE THRONE OF GRACE

*As we move into Your presence,
we offer You a sacrifice of praise;
knowing that our prayers like incense,
will be received at the Throne of Grace.*

*And we worship You, worship You.
We stand beside our great High Priest.
Yes, we worship You, worship You,
Almighty God, Yahweh our King.*

*Coming to the Holy of Holies,
we tremble at Your Mercy Seat.
Our crowns reflect Shekinah glory,
as we lay them at Your feet.*

*And we worship You, worship You.
We stand beside our great High Priest.
Yes, we worship You, worship You,
Almighty God, Yahweh our King.*

D. Summary of the Inner Courts

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,
and has made us to be a kingdom
and priests to serve his God and Father—
to him be glory and power for ever and ever!
Amen.*

Revelation 1:5b6, NIV

We have experienced God's majesty in the Inner Courts, the glorious Golden Lampstand which illuminates the Light of Christ from the sculptured Vine; the crowned Table of Showbread which is an eternal memorial to the Living Bread of Life and the King of Kings; and the Father's fragrance which can only be known as one lingers in the Spirit and lifts up sweet prayers to God.

The Inner Courts were a wonderful place to be. A priest could linger here, completely engaged with the mysteries surrounding him, and lose all track of time. This is where the priest served. This is where he performed his ministry. This is where he offered back everything that had been offered to him.

*How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD Almighty!*

*My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh cry out
for the living God.*

*Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young—
a place near your altar,
O LORD Almighty,
my King and my God.*

*Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you.
Selah*

*Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;
I would rather be a doorkeeper
in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.*

Psalms 84:1-4, 10, NIV

Boldly Moving Ahead

The priests of old knew nothing beyond this point. At this time in the Progression, it was commonplace for him to take a final glance at the Altar of Incense, turn away from the Table of Showbread, and revere the Golden Lampstand one last time before leaving the tranquil beauty of the Holy Place for the harsh, desert elements of the Outer Courts.

Yet there was another room, a deeper place of ministry, located just behind the Altar of Incense. It was called the Most Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies. Access to the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat was concealed by a magnificently decorated veil and reserved for the High Priest alone - and even then, he could only enter in once a year.

We know, of course, from Scripture, that is no longer true. The moment Christ was crucified, the thirty foot high veil of Herod's temple was torn in half: "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split" (Matthew 27:50-51, NIV). This supernatural tearing forever grants us (who are spiritual priests called by God to offer spiritual sacrifices) access to the Throne of God anytime of the day or night.

Hallelujah!

*Seeing then that we have a great High Priest
who has passed through the heavens,
Jesus the Son of God,
let us hold fast our confession.
For we do not have a High Priest
who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,
but was in all points tempted as we are,
yet without sin.
Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace,
that we may obtain mercy and find grace
to help in time of need.*

Hebrews 4:14-16, NKJV

It's wonderful to know God doesn't take us this far just to turn us away. He likes us. He wants us, He beckons us to go deeper. The invitation to draw near to the Throne of Grace is ever extending, never ending. What a joy it is to know we are forever summoned to fellowship with Yahweh in the Courts of the King!



*But you are a chosen people,
a royal priesthood,
a holy nation,
a people belonging to God,
that you may declare the praises of him
who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

1 Peter 2:9, NIV

V. The Holy of Holies

*“For the inside of the Tabernacle,
make a special curtain of finely woven linen.
Decorate it with blue, purple, and scarlet thread
and with skillfully embroidered cherubim.
Hang this curtain on gold hooks
attached to four posts of acacia wood.
Overlay the posts with gold, and set them in four silver bases.
Hang the inner curtain from clasps,
and put the Ark of the Covenant in the room behind it.
This curtain will separate the Holy Place
from the Most Holy Place.”*

Exodus 26:31-33, NLT

A single curtain marked the division between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. It hung from gold-covered columns of wood and attached at the top with gold hooks. Slipping through the veil and into this Most Holy Place was a sacred and hallowed event.

Darkness

What’s striking about the Holy of Holies is that it was very, very *dark*.

Remember, in this model, the closer one gets to God the darker it becomes. The Holy Place was dark too, yet the oil lamps bathed the room in a soft light. Here, in the Most Holy Place, there was no natural light. If not for the Presence of God, enthroned on the Mercy Seat between the wings of the cherubim, it would be completely darkened.

I believe this speaks to the complete mystery of the Godhead. There is nothing earthly about Him. He is completely Other.

I’ve mentioned the Israelites were led by a pillar of cloud by day and a fiery pillar by night. The Holy of Holies was where the base of the magnificent pillar of fire rested. From here, the fiery pillar passed upwards through the ceiling of the Tent of Meeting and rose into the desert sky where it could be seen for miles all around. That cloud - the lighted Presence of the Almighty - was “based” here, in the Most Holy Place. It illuminated the intimate room with a mysterious, other-

worldly radiance that we call God's "Shekinah Glory."

The term "Shekinah" isn't a term used every day. The word itself is not even recorded in Scripture. In its most basic definition, the "Shekinah" can be defined as the living, lighted, fiery Presence of God. It was a supernaturally illumined manifestation of Presence, not unlike the phenomenon of Moses' burning bush. "There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up" (Exodus 3:2, NLT).

Me, He, and We

Entrance to the Holy of Holies signifies an entirely new paradigm of ministry.

In the Outer Courts, ministry was all about "me": my forgiveness and my cleansing and so on. In the Holy Place, it was ministry to "He": to His glory, His fellowship, and His intercession.

Here, in our final stage, it's all about "we": meaning, "God and me."

To Be or Not to Be

As mentioned, the High Priest had access to the Holy of Holies only once a year. (However, Moses was often found here, speaking to the Lord whenever he wanted, face to face, as a person speaks to a friend [Exodus 33:11]). This was a significant event and, as you might imagine, took quite a bit of "liturgy" to get in.

The progression from one end of the Tabernacle to the other wasn't a walk in Eden. It constituted a well-defined sacrifice of time and duty. It was, in the truest sense of the phrase, "a sacrifice of praise." In fact, from clothing himself in the morning, to performing the numerous liturgies throughout the Temple - even to the disrobing after returning home - everything was about the intentional consecrating of life to the ministry of Yahweh. This was especially true for the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. By the time he arrived here, after a long day of blood, water, oil, bread, and fire, he would have been completely exhausted.

That's the beautiful thing about being in the Holy of Holies: everything is finished! Sin has been forgiven, healing has happened, wicks have been trimmed, lamps have been filled, bread has been replaced, and prayers have risen. There is

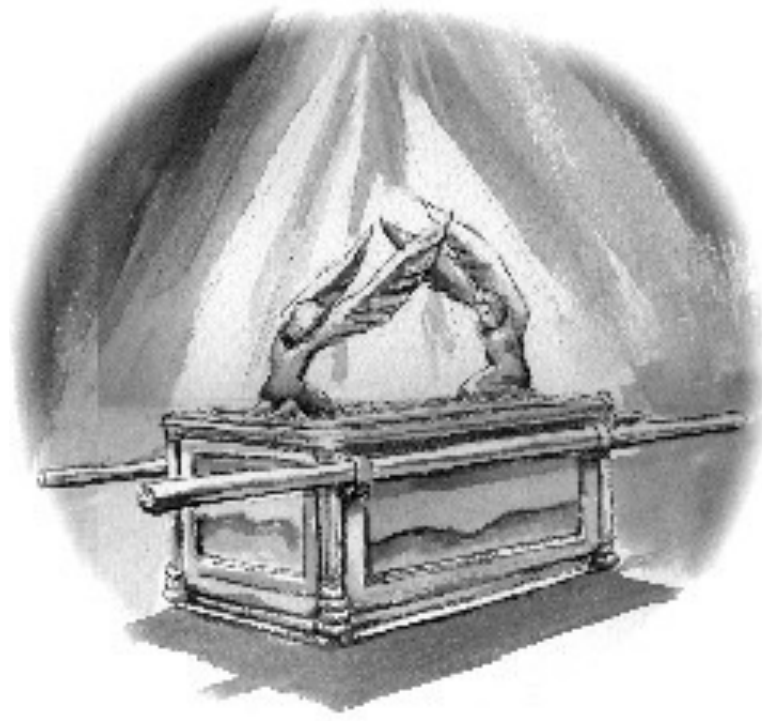
no more work to be done, no more ministries to do, no more expectations to fulfill, nothing else to achieve, no more *anything at all*.

We have entered the Sabbath Rest of God where in the Presence of the Great I AM, the only thing left to do is “be.”



*Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven,
and the same voice I had heard before
spoke to me like a trumpet blast.
The voice said,
“Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this.”
And instantly I was in the Spirit,
and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it.
The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—
like jasper and carnelian.
And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow.
Twenty-four thrones surrounded him,
and twenty-four elders sat on them.
They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads.
From the throne came flashes of lightning
and the rumble of thunder.
And in front of the throne were seven torches with burning flames.
This is the sevenfold Spirit of God.
In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass,
sparkling like crystal.*

Revelation 4:16a, NLT



*“Have the people make an Ark of acacia wood—
a sacred chest 45 inches long, 27 inches wide, and 27 inches high.
Overlay it inside and outside with pure gold,
and run a molding of gold all around it.
Cast four gold rings and attach them to its four feet,
two rings on each side.
Make poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with gold.
Insert the poles into the rings at the sides of the Ark to carry it.
These carrying poles must stay inside the rings;
never remove them.
When the Ark is finished,
place inside it the stone tablets
inscribed with the terms of the covenant,
which I will give to you.*

Exodus 25:1016, NLT

A. The Ark of the Covenant

*In the year that King Uzziah died,
I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted,
and the train of his robe filled the temple.*

Isaiah 6:1, NIV

The Ark of the Covenant was a small box about 4 feet long and 2½ feet across. Like the Table of Showbread and Altar of Incense, it was made of acacia wood, covered with hammered gold, and sported a royal crown of molding around its rim, pointing again to Jesus being fully human and the King of Kings, fully God.

Inside the Ark were three objects: the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments, signifying the standards by which God judges His people; Aaron's rod which budded, signifying the miraculous ways God redeems His people; and a pot of manna, signifying God's sure provision for His sojourners as they faithfully follow the cloud into the Promised Land.

These three objects speak strongly of the persons of the Holy Trinity: God as Lawgiver, Holy Spirit as Miracle Worker, and Jesus as the Living Manna and Bread of Life. All three have distinctly different roles and personalities; all three cloistered in One unified Embodiment and enthroned here, within the wood and gold walls of the Ark of the Covenant.

Heavenly Echoes

I am continuously amazed at Moses' uncanny obedience to build the Tabernacle according to the heavenly pattern.

I know he must have had questions about the blueprints. For example, "Why was it important to pierce the unleavened bread before baking?" Or, "Why was it important to have two crown-like rims of gold around the perimeter of the Table of Showbread?" Or, "Why did You put the ugliest ministry station, the Altar of Sacrifice, right out there in the open for everyone to see as they came in through the Gate - and why did it have to be so gruesome?"

Yet, in spite of the questions, Moses was obedient. Because of his obedience

we, some 3,000 years later, can see Jesus in the details of the Tabernacle. I bless him for his obedience!

While there are prophetic and poignant illustrations of Jesus laced throughout the Tabernacle of Moses, perhaps the most interesting insight is that the blueprints of the Tabernacle reveal the scaled-down version of God's Temple - the very Throne Room of heaven itself.

"Here is the main point: We have a High Priest who sat down in the place of honor beside the throne of the majestic God in heaven. There he ministers in the heavenly Tabernacle, the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands" (Hebrews 8:12, NLT).

Everything inside the Tabernacle of Moses is a scaled down duplicate of the "real deal" in heaven! For example, the Book of Revelation describes a fiery sea of crystal before the Throne. The Tabernacle had a crystal-like sea called the "Brass Laver." When the sun shone through its liquid and reflected off the mirrors, you can be sure that it resembled the crystal sea in heaven. The Book of Revelation details Jesus Christ, walking in the midst of the seven churches, encouraging and admonishing them as He passes from one flame to the next (Revelation 13). Likewise, the duties of the priest were to move from one lamp to the next, trimming and pruning wicks and "vine dressing" the burning lamps at the Golden Lampstand. In heaven, numerous angels and archangels proclaim "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:8b, NIV). Here, in the Holy of Holies we have two glorious angels, sculpted out of pure gold; wings stretched tip to tip and paying homage to the ever-burning, ever-churning Shekinah Presence of God, located on the Mercy Seat, between the wings of the cherubim.

Everything about the Tabernacle of Moses - even down to the duties of the priests - revealed, "... a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven" (Hebrews 8:5a, NLT). That's why it was crucial for Moses to heed God's warning: "'Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain'" (Hebrews 8:5b, NLT).

Aren't you glad that Moses built the Temple according to the heavenly pattern? His deliberate obedience to God's will is still bearing fruit to us, hundreds of generations later.

Our Promised Land

Like other ministry stations, the Ark had rings with long staves, or poles, on each side which remained intact so that, whenever God moved, the Levites could rush in, cover and shoulder the vessels, and follow the cloud to the next place of rest.

Here we are reminded of God's prerogative to move the sheep (us) around as He pleases. Jesus is the Great Shepherd. Like the shepherd who goes ahead of his sheep seeking pastures filled with promise, God's plan is to get us there, safely and securely. He executes that plan with corresponding actions that cause us to move on when we see the cloud heading into the next desert plain. We are a people on the move.

God moves in mysterious ways that we - by virtue of our mortality - can never see and rarely understand. Yet, we can be sure He is engineering everything to meet the glorious Day when, at the end of the age, we will all be gathered at the Promised Land for the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

God in a Box

In the fictional film *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the Ark of the Covenant was coveted for its perceived power. The Nazi's sought to capture the ancient artifact because they thought having it would be like having a genie in a bottle, a magic wand that would grant them anything they wanted.

Biblical history notes the same regrettable error: the Ark of the Covenant was perceived by rival nations to be a supernatural power-box which could be used to conform to the power of its possessor. The nations didn't realize the secret of the Israelite's success had little to do with possessing the Ark and everything to do with continuing obedience to the God of the Ark.

All they knew was that whenever the Hebrews marched into battle with the Ark, they were victorious. Under that misconception, we have the sad story of the Philistines who stole the Ark from the Hebrews (1 Samuel 5) only to return it for all the trouble it had caused. Everywhere they brought the Ark, holy chaos ensued.

The Philistines had many pagan gods. They stored the idols to their gods in a room. When they captured the Ark of the Covenant they thought it was "just another god" and placed it there, in the same place as all their other gods. They

put it next to Dagon (most likely a fertility god of harvest) and, within a few days, the powerful idol had crashed to the floor with its head busted up and distanced from its body. (A great illustration of presenting a “strange fire” before God and exemplifies, “Every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” [Philippians 2:10-11, NIV].)

Nothing unholy can remain in the Presence of the Holy.

They took the Ark from there into a town where everyone got hemorrhoids. It soon became apparent that it may have worked for the Hebrews, but for the Philistines, the “magic god-box” was nothing but trouble. Shortly thereafter they made arrangements with the Jews for its welcomed return to Jerusalem.

Our God is “His own God.” He has a personality, a will, and “a Life.” And He doesn’t like being misrepresented as “just another god” - or even as our “higher power.” When we try to box God in to fit our desires, holy chaos erupts.

Likewise, when we seek to use Him to satisfy our wills, desires, dreams, and personal prosperity, we get nothing but disappointment. While it is true that He gives us the desires of our hearts (but be careful here: see Romans 1:24) that is only a perk of our radical, sold-out obedience to His Lordship over our lives. I know many of us are guilty of using the Almighty as a magic wand: the one who will make me successful, the one who will bring me that perfect man or woman, or the one who will get me where I need to be. But this is all about Him: His will, His sovereign purposes on Earth, and the glorious destiny awaiting us, with Him.

An Awesome Friend

The Holy of Holies was where the Judge and Maker of the Universe resided. It was a fearful place. A friend of mine used to say that being in the “fear of the Lord” was a “knee-knocking, trembling, hit-the-ground-with-your-face-in-the-sand-begging-for-mercy kind of experience.”

Here was the One who shook the heavens with His voice, stripped the bark off cedar trees in Lebanon *with His breath*; the One who laid bare the foundations of the earth simply with a blast of His nostrils (Psalm 18:15b). He gave the earth a

*“You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being.”*

Revelation 4:11, NIV

complete facelift in the days of Noah, opened a sea bed at the Exodus, and swallowed up thousands of men, women, and children who were worshipping the statue of a golden calf. His mere Presence alone shook the holy mountain and placed holy terror in the hearts of everyone who witnessed it.

And if you looked at Him, you would die.

And this is where He resided; here, in the Holy of Holies. And He wanted Moses to go on in there with Him, and be His “friend.”



*The LORD reigns;
Let the peoples tremble!
He dwells between the cherubim;
Let the earth be moved!
The LORD is great in Zion,
And He is high above all the peoples.
Let them praise Your great and awesome name—
He is holy.*

Psalm 99:13, NKJV

YOU ARE MY KING

*In the beauty of Your holiness,
and the splendor of Your majesty,
in the glory of Your presence I bow.*

*In the beauty of Your holiness,
and the splendor of Your majesty,
in the glory of Your presence I bow
and I sing:*

*You are my King;
You are my King.
And with everything I have
I'll honor you.*

*You are my King;
You are my King.
And with everything I am
I'll worship you.*

You are my King.



*“Then make the Ark’s cover
—the place of atonement—
from pure gold.*

It must be 45 inches long and 27 inches wide.

*Then make two cherubim from hammered gold,
and place them on the two ends of the atonement cover.
Mold the cherubim on each end of the atonement cover,
making it all of one piece of gold.*

*The cherubim will face each other
and look down on the atonement cover.
With their wings spread above it, they will protect it.*

*Place inside the Ark the stone tablets
inscribed with the terms of the covenant,
which I will give to you.*

Then put the atonement cover on top of the Ark.

*I will meet with you there
and talk to you from above the atonement cover
between the gold cherubim
that hover over the Ark of the Covenant.*

From there I will give you my commands for the people of Israel.”

Exodus 25:17-22, NLT

B. The Mercy Seat

*Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings*

Psalm 17:8, NIV

The Mercy Seat consisted of a lid, about an inch thick, which fit firmly within the crowned rim of the Ark of the Covenant. It had two sculptured angels on either side, their wingtips stretching across the center of the seat.

While the Mercy Seat appeared to be three separate pieces (two angels and a lid) it was built as “one piece” from a single piece of solid gold - a rich illustration of the Holy Trinity: one God, three Persons.

The Mercy Seat is, above all else, a *seat*. While I have found no Scriptures to indicate Moses actually used the Seat as a seat, the significance is no less diminished. The Mercy Seat was a seat, a place of mercy, a place of rest. It is a place for us to slow down and take a deep breath; a place to peacefully linger, get away from the hustle and bustle of the outside world and get some well-deserved peace and quiet. A place to be embraced by our Father. It is our Sabbath Rest, a place where all roles and expectations are safely discarded. It is a sacred space where we can be still and know that He is God.

*“So he returned home to his father.
And while he was still a long way off,
his father saw him coming.
Filled with love and compassion,
he ran to his son,
embraced him,
and kissed him.”*

Luke 15:20, NLT

It is a place where we can finally be safe.

The Power of Propitiation

Up against the side of the Mercy Seat was a familiar site: a smudge mark of dried blood. You may remember similar smears of consecration marked the sides of the Altar of Incense, Table of Showbread, and the other ministry stations in the Tabernacle.

This is a reminder that our worship is only made possible through the Blood of the Lamb - and that God is only accessible through Christ's propitiatory work at

the Altar of Sacrifice (i.e., Calvary). Jesus is the propitiation of our sin.

The word “propitiation” is a theological term meaning to appease, to placate, and to make satisfaction before a holy God. God is righteous and holy. He is the terrible and Almighty Spirit who will judge both the living and the dead on that great and glorious Day. To come before Him without the Lamb’s identification would be spiritual suicide - an act provoking the very judgment of God. Through Christ’s Blood, however, God’s wrath toward sin has been rerouted and thus, we know nothing but His amazing grace and mercy.

The ancient story of the first Passover powerfully illustrates the power of blood, as the angel of death “passed over” (averted judgment) houses marked with the blood of lambs. “...when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on *you* to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:13b, NKJV). The blood acted as a shield of propitiation over God’s people.

Another story illustrates this: When John Glenn, the first American to orbit Earth, began his descent in the Mercury 6 capsule, everyone at mission control was glued to his headset. There was much concern regarding the tremendous heat generated on the outside of the capsule at re-entry. Could the spacecraft make it through the hellish fire without disintegrating into fiery fragments?

As expected, all communication “blacked out” between Canaveral and the falling fireball. During that eerie silence, the earth’s gravity pulled Glenn faster and faster through the atmosphere with tremendous velocity. It was, no doubt, a bumpy, heated ride for the space pioneer, but after a tension-filled period of radio silence, Glenn’s voice reemerged on the radio, bringing great sighs of relief to the folks at Canaveral.

“The propitiation shield is doing its work. I’m fine.”

This is an insightful example of propitiation. As we place our faith in Christ’s Blood, we are shielded from the fires of judgment. That’s where God’s mercy comes in. Through the power of the Passover Lamb, God’s mercy is both realized and appropriated. Thus, for Christians, an encounter with the Living God has more to do with His grace, love, and mercy and less to do with His Law, hatred of sin, and its eternal judgment.

An encounter with God means to enter into the Sabbath Rest.

The Art of Being

In my imagination I have seen Moses, frazzled and hassled by the tasks of the world, making a beeline past the Altar of Sacrifice and Laver, flipping up the curtain of the Tent of Meeting, buzzing by the Lampstand, Table and Altar of Incense, ducking through the veil and plopping down on the sandy ground, exhausted and strung-out, before the Ark and Mercy Seat - many, many times.

We can do that, too.

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16, NKJV). The Mercy Seat is the one place where we can get alone with God, rest in Him, and be fully known by the unconditional grace of the King.

*"Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."*

Psalm 46:10, NIV

This is so much easier said than done. We may struggle a bit, get antsy, feel the need to do something - *anything* - but we need to still ourselves and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10). He longs to embrace us with His compassion and mercy.

We would do well to incorporate this model into our personal spirituality. When we arrive at the Holy of Holies, we need to intentionally divest ourselves of our baggage (anything that breeds of fault, expectation, anxiety, or failure) and learn the age-old art: the art of *being*.

*"Be still before the LORD,
all mankind,
because he has roused himself
from his holy dwelling."*

Zechariah 2:13, NIV

After all, we are human beings.

In this place, which is so saturated with the Spirit, let our words be few. Let our hearts overflow with gratefulness and awe-filled adoration. Let us receive the Love of our Father.



*Jeshua's clothing was filthy as he stood there before the angel.
So the angel said to the others standing there,
"Take off his filthy clothes."
And turning to Jeshua he said,
"See, I have taken away your sins,
and now I am giving you these fine new clothes."
Then I said, "They should also place a clean turban on his head."
So they put a clean priestly turban on his head
and dressed him in new clothes
while the angel of the LORD stood by.
Then the angel of the LORD spoke very solemnly to Jeshua and said,
"This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies says:
If you follow my ways and carefully serve me,
then you will be given authority over my Temple and its courtyards.
I will let you walk among these others standing here."*

Zechariah 3:37, NLT

BE STILL

Be still, and know I am God.

Be still, and know I am God.

*I will be exalted
in you;
in you.*

Be still, and know I am God.

Be still, and know I am God.

*I will be exalted
in you;
be still.*

*I will be exalted;
I will be exalted;
I will be exalted
in you;
in you.*

Be still.

Be still.

Be still.

C. Summary of the Holy of Holies

*You have come to Mount Zion,
to the city of the living God,
the heavenly Jerusalem,
and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering.
You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children,
whose names are written in heaven.
You have come to God himself,
who is the judge over all things.
You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven
who have now been made perfect.*

Hebrews 12:22-23, NLT

The Holy of Holies was a place unequalled in royalty, mercy, and light. It was the physical dwelling, the tabernacling, of Yahweh - the place where Heaven and Earth swirled as one within the living Shekinah of God, a darkened place of mystery and revelation, righteousness and mercy, judgment and grace.

This is where He lived. This is where He calls us to be.

A Glorious Balance

Within the two places of ministry, The Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat, the delicate balance of God's nature is revealed. Though they are two distinct pieces of furniture, they work together as One.

The gold-plated wood of the Ark is balanced with the pure gold of the Seat, suggesting that Jesus and the Father are One, seamless and fitted within the other.

The Ark speaks to the Law; while the Seat speaks to God's mercy. God's character includes both righteousness and mercy. Here is a glorious balance between the two covenants: Old Testament and New Testament.

The Ark of the Covenant speaks to God's Old Covenant standards of

righteousness, holiness, the Law, judgment, and ensuing punishment - the overall unattainable moral and spiritual expectations that God imposes on creation.

The Mercy Seat, on the other hand, speaks to God's New Covenant of mercy, His accessibility, His amazing grace and compassion, His protection and shelter, His friendship and intimacy, and His all consuming availability through the Blood.

Both New and Old Covenants define the Everlasting, God Almighty. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, regardless of which covenant we happen to be in (Hebrews 13:8).

"Holy, Holy" or "Pappa, Pappa"?

Knowing that you will "be" in the Holy of Holies is certain to cause a bit of anxiety. It comes with the knowledge that you will be standing before the massive, all-consuming, Living Fire of God who is both Almighty Lawgiver and Merciful Father; both your King and your "abba."

The word "abba" is more than just a Swedish band from the 70's. It is a barely definable term of endearment which rolls the American English "daddy," "father," "pappa," "needful sustainer," "protector," and "unconditional lover" all into one. Jesus prayed to the Father as such and told us to do the same (Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).

So, the question is, "When we pass through the veil and stand before God, do we say 'Holy, holy, holy' or 'Abba, abba, abba'?"

How does one posture him or herself within the Holy of Holies? Do we hit the dirt and join the glorious company of angels, casting our crowns before the glorious One seated between the wings of the cherubim and cry "Holy, holy, holy"? Or do we bypass all the formalities, skip into the Throne Room, hop atop the Mercy Seat, jump into the arms of our Heavenly Father where we are safe and say, "Abba, abba, abba"?

Am I His loyal servant or His beloved child? Short answer: both. He is both, and you are both. He is God *and* Abba; Almighty Father, Abba God, Father God, and Father Almighty - depending entirely on what the Holy Spirit is doing within the particular season of worship.

That's why in church you'll see people jumping with their hands up and

others kneeling humbly with tears of gratitude running down their cheeks. Once here in the Most Holy Place, your worship solely depends on what the Spirit is doing in your life. In seasons of weariness, hurt and wounding, you will cry, “Abba.” In seasons of victory, strength, and blessing, you’ll proclaim, “Holy.”

We can’t foreknow what will be revealed in the Most Holy Place until we have entered into the Most Holy Place - it would be presumptuous to think we could. Like the song goes, “Come, now is the time to worship; come, now is the time to give your heart. Come, just as you are to worship; come, just as you are before your God, come.” (Come, Now is the Time to Worship, Brian Doerkson.)

The best we can do is to enter in without any expectations (other than the expectation to meet God) and see what happens. We need to just go on in there and be ourselves.

A Final Word

By now I hope that you have caught on to the overriding idea of progressing through the Tabernacle of Moses. Beginning with the Altar of Sacrifice, each station builds upon another until the Holy of Holies - not unlike, beginning Sunday, each day of the week builds to the weekend.

I pray this material encourages you to flesh-out the progression in your walk with Christ. In my own experience, the Spirit has guided me all around the Tabernacle of Moses. Sometimes I am in one place for just a couple of hours. Other times, I am in the same place for months. Yet, I find comfort in my Shepherd King, who leads me around the Temple in His good timing. He knows what I need. He is Love. I have learned to trust the still, strong Voice.

Let’s take a final look at where we have been:

- ❖ We have entered his courts with praise and thanksgiving at the Gate (Psalm 100).
- ❖ We have received forgiveness of sin at the Brass Altar of Sacrifice (Hebrews 10:19).
- ❖ We have been cleansed by His Word and Spirit of Truth at the Brass Laver (Hebrews 10:22).

- ❖ We have ministered unto the Father of Lights at the Golden Lampstand (James 1:17).
- ❖ We have ministered unto the Lord in sacred community at the Golden Table of Showbread (John 6:35).
- ❖ We have ministered unto the Spirit through prayer and intercession at the second altar, the Golden Altar of Incense (Revelation 5:8).
- ❖ We have worshiped His all-consuming majesty at the Golden Ark of the Covenant (John 1:14).
- ❖ And we have communed with our Heavenly Father at the Golden Mercy Seat (Luke 15:20).



*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,
baptizing them
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always,
even to the end of the age.”
Amen.*

Matthew 28:19-20, NKJV

VI. Living Paradigms: Doing Life Based on the Tabernacle

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

Romans 12:2a, NIV

Now that we have gotten familiar with the essential make-up and symbolism of the Tabernacle of Moses, we can begin to flesh this out by integrating its truths into our lives. When we overlay the truths and template found in the Tabernacle it opens up a whole new way of life. It can teach us how to pray, illustrate our place in the Body of Christ, and give us a deeper appreciation of Church.

There are two big ideas associated with the idea of Living Paradigms that we will explore further: “progression” and “filters,” or spectacles. Let’s take a look at the idea of progression.

Progression is everywhere in the Tabernacle of Moses: progression from the Outer Courts into the Inner Courts, progression from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place, progression from one ministry station to the next, and progression out from the Holy of Holies, back out through the Temple, past the Gate, and back into your neighborhood.

Our progressions can be described using words such as “Christian journey,” “earthly pilgrimage,” or “spiritual formation.” All are equally synonymous with this idea of progression.

While it’s tempting to think otherwise, I am not using the word “progression” in terms of upward spiritual mobility, though there is a place for that (Hebrews 5:12-14), but in the general sense of *movement*. Therefore, in this model, arriving at the Holy of Holies is not the all in all. It is not the last rung on the theological ladder, so to speak. Each place of ministry of the Temple has its own levels of maturity built within it. Each station is an end in itself.

The idea of movement is essential to a healthy, growing Christian. It is

natural to move from glory to glory with regard to our walks with God. It would be unnatural for a Christian to remain in the same place with the Lord for her entire life. One of the jobs of the Holy Spirit is to keep us naturally progressing into spiritual maturity.

The other big idea is this: using the Tabernacle of Moses as a filter through which life is experienced; like a pair of spectacles through which everything is colored and hued.

This is one of those mystical, right-brained sorts of things that may not come naturally for some. All the same, using the Tabernacle as a filter is extremely beneficial in labeling and defining spiritual things as we “do life.”

I began doing this back in the 1980’s and am amazed by its deepening effect in my life today. I can honestly say that, from my personal prayer days and spiritual growth, to the way I counsel and pray for others; from the ordering of my work week, right down to how I create a song list for a worship event, the Tabernacle grid has, by far, been the most influential tool through which I have learned to define my relationship to the Lord and articulate my faith to others.

For example, the other night a young Chinese couple told me they had just received Christ. They were so happy and were glowing with the excitement of receiving God’s forgiveness and grace. That sort of personal ministry happens in the Outer Courts at the Altar of Sacrifice and Brass Laver. So, as I listened through the filter of the Tabernacle, I was able to empathize with them, responding with language that met them “where they were.” As they shared how they came to Christ I could actually envision them dancing in the Outer Courts, filled with the joy of forgiveness and the refreshing waters of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah writes, “He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10, NKJV). We’ve seen that the robes of righteousness speak to the white linens adorning the sixty columns and hanging around the perimeter of the Temple. These new robes are given to us as we receive Christ at the Altar of Sacrifice.

It wasn’t difficult to see my two friends were very much enjoying the gift of Christ’s ministry found in the Outer Courts!

This morning our Pastor was preaching on the need to discover one’s ministry and get into service. What was he doing? He was inviting us to step from the “me-

centered” climate of the Outer Courts and into the darker, selfless areas of the Tent of Meeting.

I invite you to keep these words, “progression,” and “filter” at the back of your mind as you continue. But, be careful, you will never see anything else the same again...

A. Spiritual Growth

*So all of us who have had that veil removed
can see and reflect the glory of the Lord.
And the Lord—who is the Spirit—
makes us more and more like him
as we are changed into his glorious image.*

2 Corinthians 3:18, NLT

As a pastor, part of my job is to seek to pinpoint where people are in their faith and encourage them to press in, deeper in Christ. The Tabernacle filter assists me in this.

I can often get a ballpark location of where people are simply by listening to how they pray. When I hear language that is by and large “me-centered,” I know I am speaking with someone who is living, by and large, in the Outer Courts. For me, this influences everything: how I respond and, perhaps more importantly, how I can encourage them to move into a deeper, integrated walk with Christ.

A person’s words reveal where their heart is. While you can’t decisively discern where a person is in their positioning of the Tabernacle, you can get pretty close. It seems many American Christians tend to spend a lot of time in the Outer Courts. Much contemporary Christian music is also Outer Court centered as well. It speaks to “my forgiveness,” “my Jesus,” or “me not being the man I once was.” This isn’t a bad thing - as the Outer Courts are necessary.

It only becomes a bad thing when we choose to stay there.

Conversely, when I hear a person speaking in language (or exhibiting behavior) that is by and large “other-focused” and selfless, I know I am speaking with someone who has passed through the veil and is ministering somewhere in the Tent of Meeting.

This is where striking a balance is essential. If I’ve ascertained a person is overly-consumed in praising their Heavenly Father, (and that, to the neglect of obvious personal issues) I gently lead them from the Ark back to the Laver. Or, I might encourage them to hang out at the Mercy Seat to be still and feel God’s unconditional acceptance.

(Weirdly enough, a lot of broken people are experts at avoiding their issues under a cloak of spirituality and “busy” worship.)

Conversely, if I find myself speaking to a person “years old in the Lord,” yet still consumed with the forgiveness of their sins, I encourage them to get into some sort of ministry, something where they are out there serving others. I mean, it’s not as if they can never return to the Outer Courts!

We have all been called to progress from infant-hood to adulthood. Even after we are born again, it is natural to move from milk to meat in Christ (Hebrews 5:116:3). As newborn babes in Christ, we are much like infants, completely dependent upon others to meet our nourishment and needs. This is a very “me-centered,” Outer Court, season of life - and well it should be - as it is foundational for our adulthood. But if we stay there, we will become immature, perhaps even anemic. And God desires that we grow into the fullness and knowledge of His Son.

Jesus told Peter, “When you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go” (John 21:18, NIV). As we follow Christ, we will naturally move in a progression from serving self to serving others.

The Tabernacle filter is a remarkable tool in identifying where people are in the faith, and fostering balance into their walks with Christ.

One’s “Office” of Ministry

Another pastoral insight regarding the overlaying of the Tabernacle of Moses upon the Body of Christ falls in the category of helping articulate ones Spiritual gifts and ones lifetime office of ministry.

The Church is composed of many members, each of whom has been endowed with a particular spiritual giftedness. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that each of us has been given spiritual gifts and called into particular ministries. I believe that the most important gift is that of the Holy Spirit. I further commend that since the gifts of the Spirit are grounded within the Holy Spirit and the Spirit lives in us, then, one may conclude that we have the potential of having all the gifts of the Spirit: prophecy, administration, tongues, interpretation of tongues, mercy, discernment

of spirits, teaching, compassion, miracles, and right on down the line. Thus, God has the prerogative to pull any gift of the Spirit in any given situation as He deems fit, even if we have “never done that before.”

Once I was in a church where everyone was waiting on the Lord in hushed, reverential silence. In that holy hush my heart began to beat quickly and I knew that God wanted me to stand up and share a prophetic word. I was petrified. I had never done anything like that in my life and I for sure wasn't going to start then!

I argued. “You know that's not my gift, Lord.”

All the same, the silence got longer. No one knew it, but they were all waiting for me, or so I thought. I asked the Lord for a sense of what He was saying. I got a little something, but it was way too amorphous in my head to step out in faith with it. “Forget it.” I made the snap decision to remain seated.

It was just then that the man next to me began to wrestle in his chair. After a moment he stood up and humbly spoke to the congregation. While his words were different, the gist of what he was sharing was precisely what was spinning around in my heart.

I learned a wonderful lesson that day. *God gives us the privilege of doing ministry.* If we take it, it's all the more edifying for us. If not, no big shakes. He simply moves on and looks for someone who will be obedient to His gentle nudging. Either way, God's work advances, with or without us.

That brings us to a second lesson of the filter: we have the spiritual capacity to be used by God at any ministry station, bar none. And God will move us around His Temple as His needs arise.

Having said that (and hearing this may bring relief), you have been wired in uniquely beautiful ways. There is only one you. And you have access to people's hearts that no one else has. Your particular personality, sense of humor, conversion, and anointing are one of a kind, totally unique. Thus, while you have access to all the gifts of the Spirit (and should expect to work outside your gift-mix from time to time), you will eventually find yourself settling on the regular usage of only two or three gifts in particular.

I believe we also have the responsibility to be good stewards of the gifts God has given. We need to spend time and money to nurture our gifts. If your gift is hospitality, for example, it could be an appropriate thing to enroll in a cooking

class. If your gift is teaching, why not take an education course? If your gift is healing, fly across the country and attend a conference, buy a couple of books, hang out with people who heal - that sort of thing.

This is called fanning the flame. It's easy to forget to do that. Paul writes to young Timothy, "This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:67, NLT).

When a person has become seasoned in his or her gift they eventually move into the "office" of that gift. They become known as the gift they have been given. For example, my friend Betty Tapscott has years and years of fruitful service in the area of healing. She is known by her office, as a healer. Billy Graham is an "evangelist." His name has become synonymous with the spiritual gift God has given him. When you get to this level of ministry you have arrived at your "office of ministry."

What does this have to do with the Tabernacle of Moses? The Tabernacle is an identification tool with one's particular office of ministry. We each have a passion for a particular ministry station, a place where we love to linger. When you have found that, you can invest yourself into the symbols of that particular ministry station.

Get Back to Where You Once Belonged

I have been asked, "How do I know the location of my spiritual office? Where is my station of ministry?"

I believe one way to pinpoint the location of a person's spiritual office lies within the trajectory of their first significant encounter with Christ.

Most people can pretty much pinpoint a time when God got real for them. I believe that something within that spot - the Christ-encounter, the experience, power, culture, music, ritual,- of that "conception moment" contains spiritual DNA which marks the future trajectory of that person's entire ministry. The challenge is to get back to that spot and look around.

My friend, Doug, is a priest who is an off-the-charts fanatic with regard to the liturgy of the Church. Whenever he hears anything about Sacramental theology, the Communion of Saints, the Altar, candles, incense, and the like, his face comes

alive with a childlike joy. This fascinated me. One day I asked him about his first encounter with the Lord. “How did it happen? Where did it happen?”

Without hesitation, he broke into a story of the time when he was in Europe, walked into an old stone cathedral, and found himself in the midst of a “high church” service. He looked at the stained glass windows, saw the smoke of incense rising, and heard the chanting of the Eucharistic prayers, and was overcome with the awesome Presence of God. Even though he couldn’t understand a word of the liturgy, Jesus entered his heart as he received Communion.

Today, as a parish priest (and now Dean of a Seminary), he has found his spiritual office. Today, some three decades later, he is still ministering from that same place.

Billy Graham encountered Christ at an evangelistic tent revival. It was outside and had the excitement of people “coming forward” to receive Christ. Today, some fifty years later, nothing has changed. He is still there, ministering from the place he was called.

My first experience with Jesus happened when a praise band was on the stage, people were singing in the Spirit, and the power of the Holy Spirit was all over the place, converting hearts, baptizing people in the Holy Spirit, and healing. For me, nothing has changed. Over thirty years later, I’m still there, ministering out of that same place.

How does this fit in with the Tabernacle? The spiritual office of my priest friend deals with the Sacramental nourishment of His people. It is located at the Table of Showbread. Billy Graham’s life call is about calling people to repent of their sins by receiving Christ. His spiritual office of ministry is at the Altar of Sacrifice. Likewise, while I have an appreciation for Sacraments and seeing others come to Christ, my particular office is centered on teaching the Bible and equipping others in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. I love to see the Spirit healing, restoring, delivering, and setting people free. I am a real Laver Man.

I could go on and on, but you’ve gotten the picture. We all have life callings which correspond to a place of ministry as outlined in the Tabernacle of Moses.

At this time I invite you to take a moment to reflect on your own spiritual journey. If you are active in your church, see if those activities can be traced back to the “place” of your first encounter with Christ.

If your ministry is connected with your first encounter, think of ways you can “fan into flame” your activities. If you find yourself longing for another place that is more in line with where you began, ask God if He would move you into a ministry station where the realized passion of your first love can be used for His ministry. Be brave to discover the “good deposit” lying within and then faithfully invest in the good work He has called you, from the very beginning, to do.

B. The Living Church

*“As you come to him, the living Stone
– rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him –
you also, like living stones,
are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood,
offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God
through Jesus Christ.”*

1 Peter 2:45, NIV

As members of the Body of Christ, we are one living temple - a dwelling place of Christ. When we gather, we are called the Body of Christ. There is a real corporate “templeness” about us which becomes evident in our church seasons and liturgy.

Each one of us is a tabernacle of the Lord unto ourselves. We carry about the aroma of Christ from the Altar of Incense, the holy fear of an awesome Creator from the Holy of Holies, and the grateful awareness of our freedom from sin, found at the Altar of Sacrifice. Throughout our lives the Lord has us visit and revisit various ministry stations in order to engineer His total work of redemption and holiness deeper into our hearts.

Currently I am in a place where God has cautioned me to watch my tongue. (I guess I didn’t get it right the first time!) In all I say I am watchful that my words are encouraging and edifying. To my way of thinking, my wick is being trimmed at the Golden Lampstand. By God’s grace, my words will eventually reflect the purity of God.

You may have been in a season where you found yourself on intercession teams. For years, all you did was eat, drink, and sleep prayer. Yet, today, God has brought you into a place of deep refreshment in the Holy Spirit. This movement of God’s people in, around, and through the stations of the Living Church is natural and to be expected.

This also occurs in a corporate sense - the Body of Christ worldwide. Through the ages the Holy Spirit has highlighted particular truths of the Kingdom of God to the world as it has needed to hear it.

For example, when the soldiers returned from WWII they were emotionally distant from their children. The children (known as baby boomers) grew up without

a knowledge of intimacy with their fathers. As the boomers grew into their adolescence and adulthood, there was an essential piece missing in their hearts: that God is our Father.

Thus, it was no accident that the Spirit of God showered the worldwide Body of Christ with assurance of the Fatherhood of God and the experience of being adopted into the family of God. I remember those days. Everything was about the Father's unconditional heart for His children and the "Spirit of Adoption": songs, conferences, books, Bible studies, art, etc.

Looking back on those days I think you could say that the Holy Spirit led the Body of Christ into the Presence of the Father, located at the Mercy Seat, in order to minister to her needs and assure her of everlasting Fatherhood.

To Everything, "Turn, Turn, Turn"

In Ecclesiastes 3, we are reminded that seasons turn and weave their way through our lives. We are also reminded that there are purposes for the seasons of our life.

The idea of seasons is very important in the denominational element of the Church. Within the Orthodox, Catholic, and most Protestant churches, the annual calendar year is divided up into six sections, or church seasons: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Each liturgical season comes complete with its own colors, prayers, readings, music, and ecclesiastical protocol which symbolize the meaning behind the season.

Advent has a preparation theme and forces us to prepare for the Second Coming of the Lord. Its colors are blue or purple and it is four weeks long. Here we have an illustration of the priests who prepared to minister to God in the Holy Tent.

Christmas' theme is the arrival of Christ to redeem the world and speaks to His birth in our hearts. Contrary to culture, this season is twelve days long. Its color is white. This may speak to the revelation of God's Shekinah Presence and Cloud, nestled between the wings of the cherubim at the Ark of the Covenant and Mercy Seat.

Epiphany follows. Epiphany is all about "light" and is the time we consider the Light of Christ revealed to the non-Jewish people. We're called to shine His light and this season challenges us to do that. Its color is green to symbolize growth. The fire reminds us of the fires which burned in the Tabernacle of Moses,

most vividly in the glory of the Golden Lampstand.

Lent is a forty day stretch of time which takes us through the Passion and Death of Christ. We are reminded of the tremendous cost of Calvary and to pick up our crosses to follow Him. The color is purple, for penitence. The Altar of Sacrifice is the place where we consider the horrific death of the Passover Lamb of God.

Easter follows with a fifty day celebration where we feast on the benefits of Christ's resurrection from the dead and enjoy fellowship with the risen King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Its color is white. This season can be affiliated with the feasting and fellowship around the Table of Showbread.

Fifty days later, Pentecost celebrates the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and the beginning of worldwide mission in the Name of Christ. The color for Pentecost Sunday is red, signifying fire and power, with the rest of the season turning to green, symbolizing our growth in the Spirit. The filling and experience of the Holy Spirit is evident in the waters filling the Brass Laver. It is also hinted within the pure-virgin olive oil in the clay lamps resting atop the vines of the Golden Lampstand. The call to go into the world and witness to others is to fill it with the sweet fragrance of Christ, which is a wonderful by-product of the prayers offered at the Altar of Incense.

So the church calendar keeps us ever moving, ever traveling around the next bend of the desert-journey, not unlike the pillar of fire. It moves us around the year with a steadiness and concentration that forces us to keep moving on in our faith and deeper in our spirituality.

Personal Liturgical Calendar

The Liturgical Year provokes reflection, reflection on ones *own* spiritual pilgrimage. Let's return to the elements of the Liturgical Year and look at them now from the perspective of our personal spiritual journey.

Our journey begins with Advent, and the preparation of the heart to have Christ birthed within. We hear about Him, yet know Him not. At Christmas, we experience His birth and worship the Lord at the Nativity. Epiphany marks the point where the rays of the Christ child penetrate our hearts; God is revealed and grows in our hearts' home; the stable of our heart.

Lent gets us in touch with the sacrificial side of things. We align our spiritual

deserts and wilderness times with Christ's determination and, for the joy set before us, the Cross, set our eyes upon Jerusalem. We are raised as new creations in Christ at Easter and are filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, where we are empowered to live victorious lives in Christ.

All these things happen - sometime, somewhere - in the saint's life.

When speaking about the personal implications of the Liturgical Year, my friend and discipler, the Reverend Mike Flynn says, "Don't get hung up on the right sequence. I was in Advent for thirty-one years and then had Christmas and Pentecost at the same time. A month later I had Good Friday, big time!"

Thus, the Liturgical Year safeguards us from becoming stagnant and produces a stable and well-balanced community of faith - something for which our culture desperately longs. It reminds us that we are a pilgrim people, a Bedouin tribe, moving its way across the desert until safely arriving at the Promised Land.

The Wonder of Liturgy

As an Anglican priest, I can say that we pride ourselves as being a liturgical church. That means that our order of worship is fairly predictable, covers the ministry of the Word (Scripture, teaching, and prayers) and the Eucharist (the ancient rite of Holy Communion). These liturgies were the structure of worship in the early church and have their roots in synagogue worship.

The word "liturgy" means "the work of the people." As in the days when the priests had to sacrifice, trim, and fill, it takes a liturgical person real work to come before the Lord in service and worship.

On a normal Sunday people arrive into the Outer Courts in a vast array of dispositions. Right off the bat we sing songs about the Lord's sacrifice and grace. It builds faith, provides perspective, and reminds everyone why they are there. We then hear the reading of Scripture. That follows with a sermon on how to get the waters of the Word into our daily lives. We affirm our belief in the Creed, confess our sins, receive absolution for our sins, and offer prayers to God. After the Peace, we light candles on the Altar. We share bread and fellowship around Communion.

There are times, just after Communion when the atmosphere is sacred. I can look out on the congregation and can tell some of us are worshipping God in the Holy of Holies.

The components of our service are easily linked to the various ministry stations of the Tabernacle of Moses. We have the Outer Court ministries entering into His Gates with songs of praise and thanksgiving, and hearing the Word read and preached. In the liturgy of the Word, we are reminded of our redemption in Christ, we receive cleansing through the Word, and we are built up as the Body of Christ.

There are a number of churches that begin their service with the Confession of Sin and Absolution. This is closer to the model of the Tabernacle than the order of worship of the Episcopal Church.

After the Peace, church changes. We pass through the veil, light candles, and head directly to the Table of Showbread (Holy Communion). As I mentioned, occasionally the presence of God is so thick at the end of Communion that the world completely slips away and we're caught up in adoration to the Father, which means we've arrived at the Holy of Holies. When that happens, it's wonderful!

The next time you go to church, I invite you to superimpose this template over your worship experience. Even if you worship in a free, non-liturgical format, you'll be able to overlay the blueprints of the Tabernacle of Moses with where you are in the service.

C. Teach Us to Pray

*Once Jesus was in a certain place praying.
As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said,
“Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”*

Luke 11:1, NLT

We were made to pray, to have fellowship with God through conversation and pouring forth the cries of our hearts.

There are numerous models of prayer. The ACTS model (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication) is a wonderful way to pray on track, with a purpose.

Jesus Himself was a man of prayer. He woke early and got away from the campsite to have conversations with His Heavenly Father. When He'd return, He'd have new vision, renewed power, and a deeper sense of who He was and what He had been called to do. Once His disciples came to Him and asked Him how He prayed. The answer to that question is what we know today as “The Lord’s Prayer.”

Prayer Daze

True confessions: I don’t particularly like to pray. But I love being in relationship with Jesus. Up until a few years ago I hadn’t equated the two (if you can believe that). When I prayed I focused so intently on the right words and protocol that the living relationship part of it simply vanished.

I couldn’t believe that people actually liked to pray. Back then, to me it was a real waste of time.

Since then I’ve learned to think of prayer as the continuation of a lifelong conversation - and I love it! Just like in any other relationship, it takes its own ebb and flow. If I make a mistake or even express a human emotion (heaven forbid!), I can be sure He has heard me and can relate to my every feeling.

Prayer is not the end of communication with the Lord, but the means. In the past I had envied people who could pray all the right ways and say all the right things to the point that I was left discouraged and didn’t even want to try. Now I

have come to realize that, in their prayers, they are not concentrating so much on the prayers in and of themselves, but on the Person to whom the conversation is directed.

That being said, many of us, especially those of us young in the faith, need some sort of guide when we pray. Like a toddler learning to walk, we need a guiding hand to lead us around this big world called “the Kingdom of God.” Aside from the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:515), I know of no better blueprint for praying to God than the Tabernacle of Moses.

Models

I am going to assume that by now you are fairly well-versed in the progression and the meanings behind the seven ministry stations of the Tabernacle. So let’s have some fun and experiment with a couple of models that you can use in your conversations with Jesus.

Each of these prayer models either follow the full progression, a partial progression, or simply remain at one place in the Temple. In this short prayer, see if you can identify each place of ministry. I’ve laid it out so each line is another place. Ready? Let’s try it:

*I praise you, Lord!
Forgive my sins,
and cleanse me today, filling me with Your Living Word.
As I gaze upon Your glory,
provide me with the nourishment
to be a living prayer for You.
For I worship You, God Almighty
and bless You for Your mercy.
In Christ’s Name and in the power of His Blood,
Amen.*

How did you do? Did you notice how the prayer model led us piece by piece into the Holy of Holies: from the Altar of Sacrifice right on to the Mercy Seat? If so, we’re ready to move on. If not, go back and read through each line. The progression found in this prayer is identical with the stations as studied earlier in the book.

Jesus Take the Wheel

If we are praying the way we were made to pray, we won't be praying at all. It will be the Spirit of God praying through us.

Paul says it best, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:26-27, NIV).

That means once we set our feet in the Outer Courts and seek to approach the Lord in prayer, the Holy Spirit will lead us into the areas that HE thinks need prayer. We may have our list, our model, our liturgy, but it is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to override our agenda and replace it with God's agenda. Thus, there will be times when our prayers may be concentrated on one particular area, or cluster of areas, in the Temple.

I take a monthly prayer day and, with this in mind, I have learned to free myself of any agenda I might bring with me. Of course, I have a general idea of what I need to talk to God about. But the timing, order, wording, and emotions of those prayers I resign to the Spirit before I even hit the road. Knowing the symbolism around each ministry station of the Tabernacle of Moses has been extremely helpful in my spiritual conversations.

Prayers Made Easy

Most of us, however, simply struggle to pray aloud. We struggle with what to say. We don't want to be irreverent. We want to honor God. Yet, once we get past the first, "Thank you, Jesus for this day," we are at a loss for words.

I would suggest the Tabernacle is a wonderful lens wherein you can pray effective prayers in about any situation.

Scenario #1: You have been asked to lead the opening prayer at a weekly Bible study. At first you cringe - what do I say?! Then you think: Bible study, the Word, the Living Water. You draw on your studies of the Tabernacle of Moses. You think, "Laver" and recall the placement of the Laver in the Outer Courts Temple, its prisms of looking-glasses reflecting through its refreshing water. The Spirit

reminds you of its symbolism: that of washing, revealing, and cleansing. You breathe deep. You have enough to go on. What you pray to open the Bible study goes something like this:

*Lord, we thank you that You have gathered us in this place tonight.
We thank you for Your amazing gift of eternal life which unites us.
I pray, Lord, that as we open our Bibles
and peer into Your Word,
that Your Spirit would speak through our leader.
Help us to see ourselves in the Word
and equip us with everything we need to do to minister to You.
In Christ I pray.
Amen.*

This prayer was intentional. It centered us in the Outer Courts. Once we got to the Laver, the Spirit gave the words to reflect both the symbolism of the station and the Father's will.

Scenario #2: You have arrived at the end of a wonderful worship event. You kneel before the Lord and lift up your prayers of gratitude and blessing. Your prayer may sound something like this:

*Father, I bless You!
You have clothed me in robes of righteousness
and made me worthy to come into Your Presence.
I honor You.
As I gaze upon Your glory, I declare that You are a Holy God!
I exalt You and say,
'You are my God and worthy, O God, King of the Universe,
to be praised forever.'
I lift You high upon the throne where I will give You glory,
not only now, but throughout my entire life.*

This is a marvelous example of a prayer from the Holy of Holies. Notice there are no needs expressed here, only honor to the King.

Scenario #3: Each Sunday morning at our church the ministry team (priests, worship team, acolytes, healing team, readers, etc.) stand in a circle, hold hands, and pray for the service that follows. When I am asked to pray, I will pray something like this (in this prayer I have made the guess-work easy by putting the

ministry station in parenthesis):

*Lord, thank you for bringing us here today to be forgiven
(Altar of Sacrifice)
and filled with the power of Your Word
(Brass Laver).
I pray that as we minister to You this morning
(in the Tent of Meeting)
that we would become invisible and You would be made visible
(a reference to the darkness in the Tent,
alighted only by the Golden Lampstand).
May Your fragrance fill this place
(Altar of Incense)
and may people who don't know You
place their trust in Your Mercy
(Mercy Seat)
and in the work of Your Son
(Altar of Sacrifice).
Amen.*

Other days I have sensed that we had prepared ourselves and were ready simply to worship God. On an occasion such as this my prayer would be simply:

*Lord, how awesome You are.
You are Holy.
Amen.*

VII. The Weekly Progression

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him
and praise his name.*

Psalm 100:4, NIV

You may have noticed here are seven pieces of furniture in the Tabernacle of Moses and seven days in a week. By overlaying one piece of furniture upon each day of the week, it makes for a wonderful devotion, which is certain to enhance your relationship with Christ. The devotion can stand alone as a Bible study, or as a weekly path. Each day, the idea is to meditate on the significance of Christ found in that day's particular ministry post. Make everything you do, every conversation you have, every phone call, e-mail, or "down time" you engage in, be wholly centered on the Messianic significance of the day. Over the years, you will develop a most significant appreciation for the ways of the Lord!

You start the week in the Outer Courts: Mondays and Tuesdays are "me" days. On Monday, stay at the Altar of Sacrifice. Get in touch with your sin and the tremendous price God paid for you to be free and forgiven. Appropriately the Blood of Christ to every surface and depth of your heart: past, present, and future. Call Tuesday "Laver Day." Attend a Bible study where the Living Word can work in you the mind of Christ. Receive prayer for those spiritual smudge marks. Ask the Holy Spirit to wash and cleanse, to fill and restore, and empower you to do anything He wants, to prepare you for ministry during the rest of the week.

*And forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven
those who sin against us.*

Matthew 6:12, NLT

Wednesdays through Fridays are "Tent of Meeting" days, or "we" days. You have three days here and three ministry stations to visit. I like to mix this up. Usually, the order in which I visit the ministry stations, the Lampstand, Table and second Altar, is determined by my schedule, and week to week it's never the same. For example, if I have a lunch appointment on Thursday, I will choose that day as my "Table of Showbread Day." During that time, I will "be there," with all the symbolism and nuance thereof, as I enjoy food and significant conversation over bread. Through the years, however, I have fallen into a routine: Wednesday is the

Lampstand, Thursday is the Showbread, and Friday is the day I tend to spend in prayer, perhaps even fasting, at the second Altar. I have presented the devotion in that sequence here, but it doesn't have to be that way for you. Mix it up! Go backwards if needed! Don't get legalistic about where you should be; let the Spirit lead you.

By the weekend, you will have worked through the stations and you can kick back and simply "be" in the Holy of Holies. You've passed through the veil into the Sabbath Rest. The Sabbath day is a day of rest where you enjoy the Presence of God and find comfort in His all-loving companionship; no more work, no "should-have-been's." It's all been done. It will just be a great day to "be" with your Heavenly Father. Sunday, of course, is more of the same, as it is impossible to separate the Ark from the Seat. For me, Saturday is more of a "Daddy Day." As I putter around and do my "honey do's," I am aware that my Father is hanging with me as well. Sunday then becomes a "Holy Day" where I find God "tabernacling" within the white linen robes of the saints, where He is worshipped in the splendor of His majesty.

Monday comes and you can start the whole thing over again. I invite you to try it for a week. I know that as you live into these devotions, you will be blessed! Take them one day at a time and allow the Lord to speak to you through the devotional template of the Tabernacle of Moses.

With each day of the progression, you'll see *My Prayer for You This Day*, *Themes*, *Readings*, and *Guidance* - all of which are there to direct you and not limit you or wear you out! For example, you'll see many Scripture references under *Readings*. Just read one or two on any given week as the Spirit leads.

Are you ready to walk through the week? Let's go!

Opening Prayer for Your Devotion

Using the Tabernacle as a prayer guide, start each day of the devotion with a prayer:

*I enter into Your Gates this day
in praise that You will meet me in my desert.*

Forgive,

cleanse,

fill,

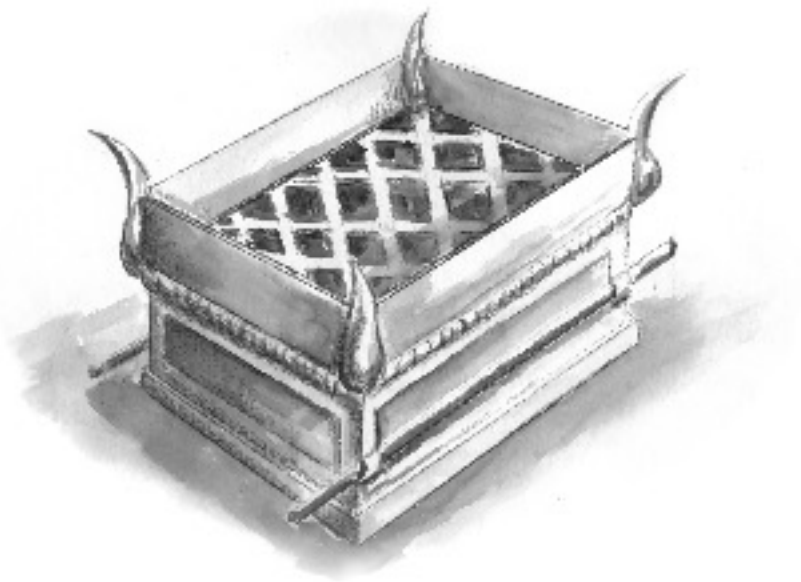
illumine,

nourish,

and hear my prayer;

*I adore You, my Merciful God,
and worship You for ever and ever. Amen.*

A. Monday:
| Outer Courts |
The Brass Altar of Sacrifice



My Prayer for You This Day

*As you awaken,
I pray the Holy Spirit
would bring you into His Gate with thanksgiving
and into His courts with praise!
Rise and rejoice -
for He has been waiting for you!*

As you approach the place of the Cross -

*a place where you will be
both confronted and comforted
by the Lamb who was slain
from the foundation of the world -
I pray you would understand
both God's judgment upon the horrific nature of your sin
and - in that same instant -
the unending reservoir
of grace and forgiveness,
flowing forth from the generous heart of Calvary,
into the hearts of all who call upon the Name of the Lord.*

*I ask God also to free you
from all manner of bondage, behavior, and resentments -
through which,
if either entertained or encouraged,
would further enslave you from perfect freedom.
By the power of the Cross,
and the Blood which was shed at Calvary,
be severed from all cords of sin and death,
in Jesus' Name.*

*Finally, I pray that,
as you receive God's forgiveness and deliverance
into the barren places of your heart,
you would also arise
with the grace to extend forgiveness
to those who have caused you pain,
to those who have pierced your side with their actions
and have hammered your wrists and feet
with all manner of false accusations
and judgment.*

*In the Name and power
of the Blood of the Lamb.
Amen.*

Themes

Today's themes speak firstly to the entrance rites of praise and thanksgiving, then to the themes of Christ's sacrifice and personal forgiveness.

Readings

Psalm 100:4	Isaiah 53:46	Mark 15:33-39	Colossians 1:13
Psalm 84	Psalm 51:15, 14-17	Galatians 3:13,14	Colossians 2:13-15
John 10:9	Hebrews 9:19-28	1 Peter 2:24	
1 Peter 2:15	Philippians 2:68	Romans 6:23	

Guidance

Awaken with the excitement of meeting God. You know the end of the story - unconditional love and fellowship waiting for you in the Holy of Holies. Sure, there are some steps to take, some ministry to do before you arrive; all in due time. For now, be content to enter through the Gate with a season of simple, heartfelt, thanksgiving - thanksgiving for His attributes and for the marvelous things He has done.

Then, as you move deeper into the Outer Courts, approach the Altar of Sacrifice with reverence and intent. Imagine yourself offering an animal to the High Priest for your sin and the sin of your family. Hear its bleating cries as it's slaughtered and thrown on the fiery grid. Jump ahead thousands of years and see yourself at the foot of the Cross, the blazing heat of the noonday crucifixion. Hear the hammering of nails and the cries of the Son of God in your stead. Receive your forgiveness.

Ask God to reveal any current issues of sin and ask Him to forgive them with the all-sufficient Blood of Christ. Rediscover your need for a savior, reclaim the promise of propitiation, and praise God for the sweet forgiveness that covers all your sin.

If you are like me, you will have a couple of areas that you know will need to be brought to the Cross. Yet, I invite you to still your heart and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the items about which He wishes to speak. You may be surprised. We tend to confess behavior to God, but He looks deeper than that. By giving Him free reign

over our heart's terrain, He will bypass the behavior and reveal the underlying issues of our hearts.

As you kneel beneath the Cross and gaze upon the Passover Lamb of God consider, "What sins are currently between the Lord and me? What areas in my life (from my thoughts to my relationships) might I need to invoke the Blood of Christ?" Confess your sins and be assured of God's forgiveness.

Throughout the day, intentionally recall the tremendous cost of your sure redemption. As it has been said, it may be free to us, but it cost Him everything. Be humbly mindful of that. In all you do today, choose to carry the attitude of gratitude. Revel in His amazing grace. You may want to fast, showing God that you are sincerely grieved and that you have a humble and contrite spirit.

The Spirit may surface opportunities today for you to forgive, or be forgiven by, others. Walk intentionally into these opportunities, knowing they have been orchestrated by the High Priest, Jesus Christ, here, at the Altar of Sacrifice.

B. Tuesday: | Outer Courts | The Brass Laver



My Prayer for You This Day

*I pray this day,
that your heart would be filled with rejoicing and delight
because of the wonderful work
the Father has bestowed upon you
through the Holy Spirit!*

*I pray today
He would nurture and mature you in Christ,
through His Living Word;
and that,
as you set yourself down
to read, study, and inwardly digest the pages of Scripture,
you would be refreshed, cleansed,
and sanctified in your heart, mind, and soul
by Jesus, who is the Living Water.*

*I also pray that God would wash you anew
through the power of the Holy Spirit;
that you would be filled
with all might and spiritual authority
to do the work He has given you to do.*

*I pray that
He would fall upon you - even now -
and bless you with the gifts
you have so longed for and desired.*

*Finally, I pray He would empower you
to walk in the fullness of the Spirit,
and you, at the end of this day,
would be enthused, encouraged, and empowered
for the work of your ministry.*

In the power of His Name.

Amen

Themes

Today's themes center on sanctification and empowerment. Cleansing, anointing, purification, the mind of Christ, and spiritual refreshment are given through the Holy Spirit and Scripture.

Readings

Acts 2:37-38	Psalm 51:2	Ephesians 5:25b-27	Malachi 3:14
Psalm 24:36	1 Corinthians 2:10	1 John 5:68	John 15:3
Isaiah 1:16-18	Titus 3:47	John 7:37-39	Romans 5:5
Psalm 51:6-13	1 Peter 3:18-22	Ephesians 5:18	
Revelation 22:15	John 4:10-14	James 1:21-25	

Meet Me in the Desert

Guidance

Today can take many directions. You've been forgiven (yesterday) and today is about the wonderful things that happen as you get before the Word of God. Make the Word be the focus of this day. Read Scripture in a richer manner, allowing the Lord to take every word to the depths of your soul. As you pray through the day, pay particular attention to the Word in songs, verses on your day-timer or calendar; make a point to listen to a pod cast of an esteemed Bible teacher or preacher - all with the understanding that the Holy Spirit will cleanse, wash, and anoint you as your medium of choice reflects your soul through the Living Water.

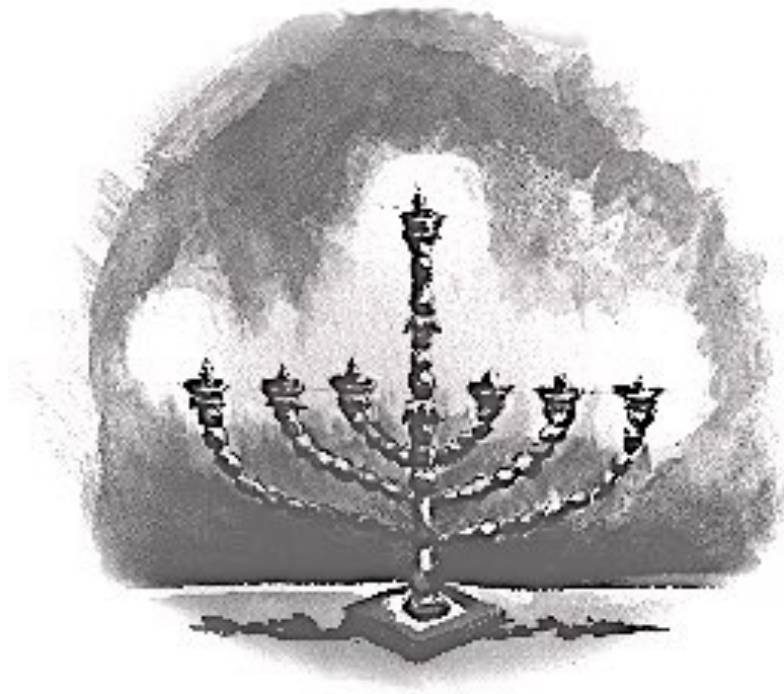
Take some time in the afternoon to get alone with God. Ask Him to pour out the love of the Father through the Holy Spirit throughout your heart (Romans 5:5). As He does this, it won't be long before you will see the reflection of your heart's impurity in the reflection of His Word. Go with it. It may be ugly at first, but as these hurtful memories, experiences, or other events surface, He will at once heal you with the Living Water! (Those things aren't worth holding onto anyway, as they have the potential to breed judgment, bitterness, and even physical infirmities in the future.)

What happens in the Outer Courts on Monday and Tuesday will give you everything you need to move deeper into the "tents of the righteous" for the rest of the week.

Seek to avoid the temptation to wallow in past failures or sin. You received God's wonderful forgiveness yesterday for that. Today, however, you are a new creation in Christ. Old things have passed and everything has become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Rush to the streams of life and be cleansed from the residue of the old life. Those same shortcomings may surface here at the Laver, yet with an entirely different purpose. Yesterday they were forgiven; today they will be healed.

Bring to Him your very being (i.e., thoughts, motives, patterns of behavior, addictions, etc.) which, up to now has remained a stench in your tomb, before the stone was gloriously rolled away.

C. Wednesday: | Inner Courts | The Gold Lampstand



My Prayer for You This Day

*Father, You have called us
to burn as one body with You
that the world would be filled
with the light of Your glorious majesty.*

*As we arise this day,
we pray You would enable us to shine like stars
in the midst of this crooked and corrupt generation.*

*Trim us to Your purity,
polish us to Your righteousness,
and fill us with a unified witness of the Living Vine,
for the entire world to see.*

*We also ask that You would fill our hearts
to burn with Your holy prerogative,
Your missionary desire
to advance Your ministry into the darkest corners of the earth.
Give us prophetic clarity in how we can best
serve the efforts of others in their ministry;
how we can best assist those You have called
into public service.*

*You are the Light of the World.
Amen.*

Themes

The themes for the rest of the week switch from receiving ministry to ministry flowing forth from you. You will experience fulfillment, of course, in the doing of ministry, but the central motivation of it all will be for Someone else.

Today's themes are centered on the things that need to happen so ministry can happen. This is "behind the scenes" ministry at its best.

Readings

Isaiah 4:26

Revelation 1:12-20

John 15:15, 8, 12, 16

John 8:12

1 Peter 2:9

Matthew 5:14-16

Psalms 18:28

Acts 2:14

Ephesians 4:16, 11-16

Acts 6:17

John 17:20-26

Guidance

Welcome to the Inner Courts! Today you'll be standing before a beautifully sculpted piece of gold that shines forth with the very radiance of Heaven. In all you do,

revel in His majesty and radiate the Light of Christ.

Be looking for the Light of Christ in people everywhere you go. Observe carefully; it may not be so evident at first! And be aware that, in turn, you too may become a light to those you meet today. Live into that role. In every “darkened tent” seek and reveal Truth, allowing nothing deceitful or shadowy to happen in or around your presence.

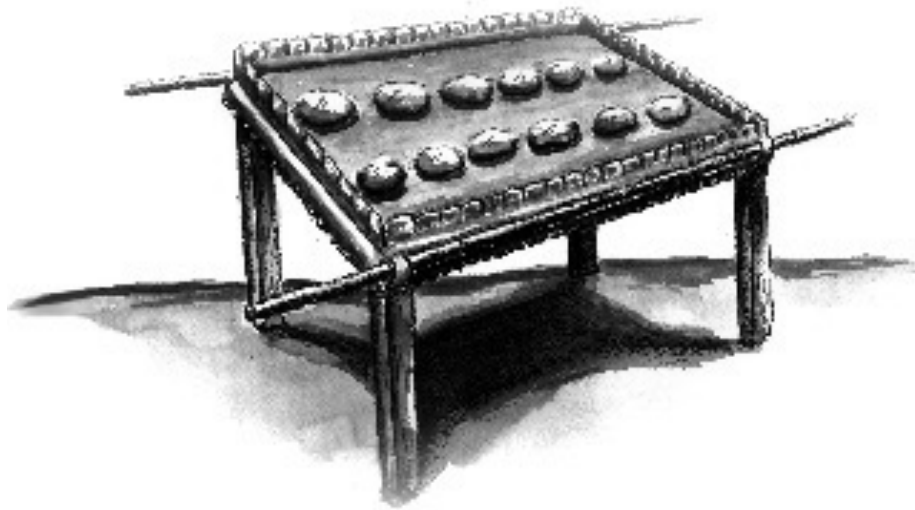
This morning, as you awaken, enter through the Gate with thanksgiving. As you pass the Altar of Sacrifice and Brass Laver, thank the Lord for what He did there on Monday and Tuesday. Slip through the veil into mystery and stand before His ever-searching, ever-revealing, ever-illuminating rays. Allow His Spirit to penetrate your darkness. Let the lamp of His eye search you and know you, completely and deeply. Gaze in holy wonder at His splendor and holiness. Become transformed from glory to glory as you dare to stare into His eyes of fire.

As you go about the day, seek to participate in activities that will further Christ’s ministry. For example, if you are engaged in administrative tasks for a Bible study, the scheduling of a worship band, programming a youth retreat, or the crunching of numbers for the church, be diligent about the work to the “nth” degree, knowing your work will bring about events wherein others will bring glory to His Name. Shine light into every corner; leave no stone unturned. God has anointed you to create light under which His ministry can happen.

God may give you uncanny insight as to whom you could ask to participate in a current project you’re working on. He will show you their potential and equip you with whatever it takes to make them a team player. Likewise, there may be a person on the team who is not on the same page as the rest of the crew. Today may be your day to speak the truth in love, and redefine the parameters of the original call.

As you get into the afternoon or evening, a curious thing may happen: you may find the master Vinedresser trimming your wick. In that vein, regard any hardships or frustrations of the day simply as the “discipline of the Lord,” knowing that His pulling and clipping is all about your loving Father affirming your gifts. He loves to see His passion burn through you and does all He can to make you shine as you were created to do.

D. Thursday:
| Inner Courts |
The Gold Table of Showbread



My Prayer for You This Day

*Lord God,
as we arrive at the Table of Showbread,
we are, this day,
again reminded of the mystery,
“Christ in us.”
As we gaze upon the pita,
we remember
the One who was baked and pierced for our transgressions;
and we are reminded
that we are actual members of that same Body.*

*Holy Spirit,
we ask that You would
create “divine appointments” with others,
that our conversations
would reach deep into hearts
and be nurtured by the Living Manna,
Jesus Christ.
In the mystery of the Word made flesh,
change our water into wine,
and speak to the Body of Christ
through the Body of Christ.

In the Name of the Bread of Life.
Amen.*

Themes

Today’s themes are all about ministering to God through the provision of nourishment to others: Holy Communion and the joy of fellowship with the Beloved.

Readings

Psalms 23:56	John 4:31-38	Zechariah 12:10,11
John 6:30-35	Hebrews 10:23-25	John 19:32-37
Matthew 26:26-30	Psalms 133	
1 Corinthians 11:23-33	Zechariah 13:6	

Guidance

Are you ready for some “soul food”? If so, today is your day!

Today is the day in the week where you will want to keep your antennae up when attending anything “social” - especially with other Christians. In conversation, give yourself permission to share on a deeper level. Reveal a bit more than is seen on the surface, assured that God will take your words and use them to nurture others. Likewise, seek your own nourishment through what you

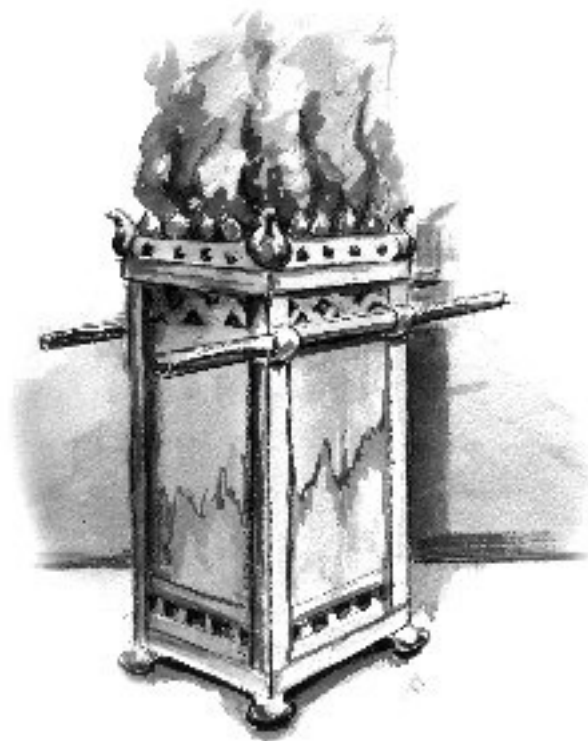
hear from others. The Body of Christ is a mystical conglomeration of individual souls. God uses the Body to nourish the Body; He speaks to us, ministering unto Himself, through the Body. Allow that to happen.

When I have the opportunity to have coffee, lunch, or schedule another “food” meeting on a Thursday, I immediately take it - even if it involves considerable sacrifice. I simply choose to know God will somehow be ministered to during our gathering. During our time, God always changes the water of our conversation into wine. Even an IHOP can be transformed into a God-ordained nurturing station for body, mind, and soul! Through our time together, I am most always fed by the bread of fellowship, even in children. I know that all believers in Jesus are mysteriously united in the Bread of Life (who was pierced for our transgressions, baked through crucifixion, and raised as the Light of the World). It is through His gift that edification and fellowship happens.

Through the day, be on the lookout for any themes that may run common through different people. As mentioned, God often speaks *through* us, *to* us; just another wonderful thing that happens as we minister to the Living Manna.

Finally, why not cap off the day by finding a local church or Bible study to celebrate Holy Communion? At the end of the night, you’ll drop into bed having been nourished - and having nourished others - with the Living Manna.

E. Friday:
| Inner Courts |
The Golden
Altar of Incense



My Prayer for You This Day

*Heavenly Father,
we consecrate ourselves to You this day
as a sacrifice of prayer and intercession
unto the almighty throne of grace.
We ask You the same question that Your disciples asked You:
"Teach us to pray."
Fill us with Your Spirit that we may know how to pray;*

*that we would lift up prayers and petitions unto You;
not according to our will, but in accordance to Your holy will.*

*We ask specifically,
that You would create for us a special, intimate time with You,
sometime during this day
- a time of Your own choosing -
where we would hear You say,
“come away from the hustle and bustle of the day
and spend a few precious moments with Me,
lifting up holy hands in the temple of the Lord.”*

*Speak with us,
share Your desires,
lay Your dreams upon our hearts.
As we receive them,
we will bless them
and offer them back
as a sweet fragrance unto You.*

*Fashion us, O Lord, this day,
to be a house of prayer.
Amen.*

Themes

The themes of this most humble, second Altar deal with prayers, intercessions, and meditation within intimate conversation with God.

Readings

Isaiah 56:67

Luke 19:46a

Revelation 8:35

Romans 8:26,27

Psalms 141:2

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Luke 11:24

Hebrews 4:14-16

Ephesians 1:15-19a

Ephesians 3:14-19

Guidance

You have arrived at the third and final ministry station of the Tent of Meeting. It's a tremendous privilege and responsibility to spend a full day in prayer.

As you dress for this day, be reminded that, while this is the smallest station in the Tabernacle, it is perhaps the most significant. The Altar of Incense is as close as one can get to the Ark of the Covenant without passing through the veil. It is closest to the heart of the Father.

Thus, you may want to consider fasting for a meal or two today, making the day really count. (Devout Catholics routinely fast from eating meat on Fridays.) Plan to take the time you'd ordinarily spend eating and use it instead to be with God. If you are like me, you will NOT find these times particularly rewarding. It will be afterward, however (during the course of the following days, weeks, and months), that your sacrifice will come alive.

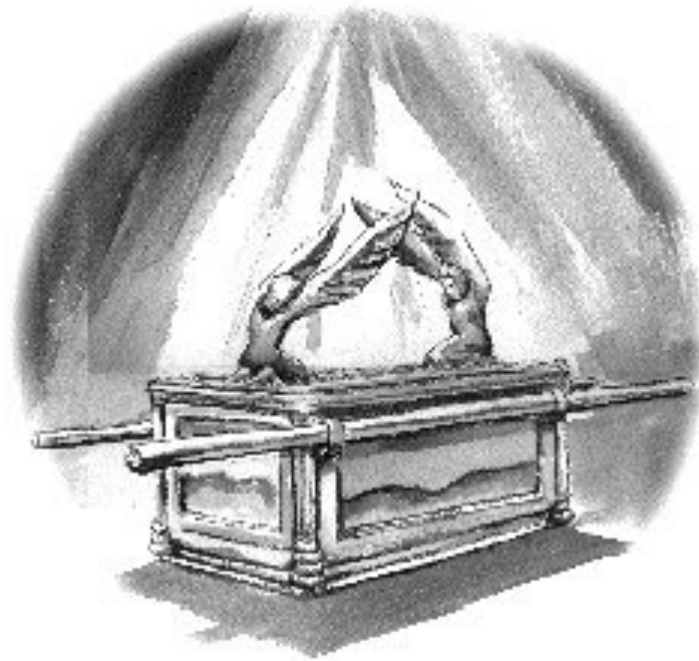
Before leaving the house, get away somewhere and ask the Lord if He would give you a couple of things to "carry about" with you through the day. The High Priests carried around a breastplate of twelve precious stones on their chests, one stone for each tribe of Israel, symbolizing their constant intercession for those tribes before their Lord in everything they did (Exodus 28:15-21 and 29:30). Do something like that. As the precious impressions come, jot them down and carry them with you through the day. Then, through the day, be faithful to lift your "precious stones" to the Lord. Maintain the freedom to pray for as long or short as you have to as you move from one item to the next, with the understanding that the Spirit is praying through you, moving you through the stones, at His speed, intensity, and at His good pleasure. At the end of the day, you might consider calling the people of your prayers and asking them how their day went!

To some, the idea of taking a prayer day is idyllic. It's perceived as a "day off" where you simply linger in the sweetness of God and the two of you enjoy fellowship and sit with each other admiring each other's beauty. But that is rarely so. Spiritual fellowship happened yesterday at the Table of Showbread and you can sit and admire each other's beauty tomorrow morning in the Most Holy Place. I have taken many "prayer days" and have found them to be emotionally difficult. While there are times of sweetness and admiration, true intercession happens when God takes His heart for a person, place, or situation - even the emotions of His heart with regard to those - and superimposes it upon the heart of the intercessor. When that happens, it can be a difficult, even painful experience. You

may cry for no “known” reason (Romans 8:26), become filled with a righteous anger, or be physically pained in your body. Prayer on this level is a gift from God. I have found my prayer language to be helpful in these times of deep intercession.

Through it all, remain humble. Be attuned, continually yielding to what He has given you and His specific ways of praying. Remember: His ways are not your ways. You may question how He is calling you to pray for a situation, but pray on anyway, lifting up your hands sacrificially unto the Lord. When you do this your prayers will be powerful and effective (James 5:16b). They will rise like incense before the throne of grace and He will be pleased!

F. Saturday:
| Holy of Holies |
The Ark of the Covenant



My Prayer for You This Day

*You are wholly glorious,
O King of the Ages,
and worthy of all praise and adoration.
Indeed, eternity itself humbles itself
before Your all-consuming throne.*

*Your temple is filled
with the festive company of mortals,
angels, and archangels,
day and night, crying unto You:
“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.*

Heaven and earth are full of Your glory!"
Your majesty reflects from the crowns at Your feet.
Flashes of lightening and deafening thunder
are shadowed by the One shrouded in blinding light.
Living rainbows surround You
and embrace You with the favor of Creation.
As creation breathes, "Holy is He!"
As creation plays, "Holy is He!"
As creation whispers, "Holy is He!"
As creation is silent, "Holy is He!"
As creation waits, "Holy is He!"
As creation loves, "Holy is He!"
As creation lives this day, "Holy is He!"

Themes

Today's theme speaks to righteousness, justice, majesty, and omnipresence found in God Almighty. He is robed with the universe and enthroned in eternity as the Judge and Creator of all that is seen and unseen - and yet, He has opened the curtain and wishes to enjoy you, and the pleasure of your presence, all day long.

Readings

Isaiah 6:18

Revelation 5:6-14

Hebrews 12:12,18-24

Revelation 4:1-11

Hebrews 10:12-13

Isaiah 37:16

Guidance

It's Saturday; welcome home! Although you've entered the darkest, most celestial part of the Tent, it is also the brightest. You have arrived before the Shekinah-lit Presence of Almighty God.

If it were not for the smear of atonement blood on the Ark of your heart, this would be a place of horror, fear, and judgment for you. But you were marked and sealed with the Blood of Christ (in the Outer Courts) and have access to the Eternal Throne of God. Thus, He sees you like His Son. He is delighted with you and has longed for this time you have chosen to give Him. To Him, it's like "Happy

Father's Day" - all day long. Hallelujah!

Today is a marvelous day when you can kick back and enjoy the unique friendship with the Omnipotent God of Time and Space *and* your Heavenly Daddy - both, within the same Person, at the same time.

This can be an unnerving place to be - caught within the friendship of King and Friend. For example, just when you are sharing with Him your dreams of what you'd like to be in the future, He gently taps you on the shoulder and reminds you that He is the One who placed those dreams in your heart in the first place.

Or, just when you've shared with Him something so special - something that you've never shared with anyone else in the whole wide world - you suddenly realize that He is God. He knows your every thought. He even knows the number of hairs on your head. Yet, although He already knew about that "special something" you shared with Him, He reacts to it with love and surprise, almost as if He had never heard it before!

Or, just when you are worshipping Him in the glory of His majesty - face buried in the carpet and caught up with the angels and archangels chanting, "Holy, holy, holy, the whole earth is filled with Your glory!", He lifts you off the floor, swings you around on His shoulder, and takes you for a run on the beach! How utterly and completely unnerving!

Regardless of the perceived incongruities, today you have been invited to walk with Him, to talk with Him, to foster eternal relationship with Him. So celebrate this spiritual friendship in all you do. Invite Him to do something special, something that forces you to play or have fun. Attend a show; walk through a museum; invite Him to the zoo. Take a bike ride, fly a kite, or read a book with Him.

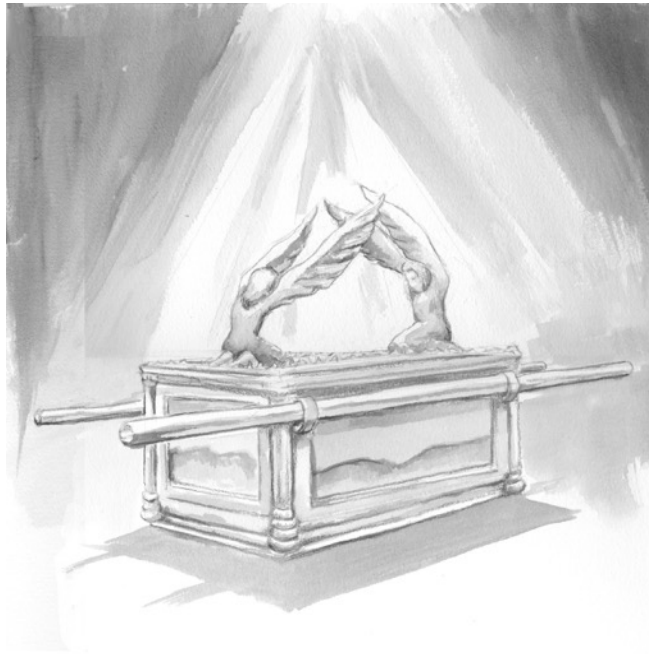
Through it all allow Him to "Father" you.

Here's a good one: take your child out for a milkshake. And, as you watch her slurping out the bottom of the glass with her straw, allow God to "Father" your child through you. (But be careful here, as you may catch a glimpse of your Father "Fathering you back" in the eyes of your child!)

Give yourself permission to be treated as a King's kid - like that beautiful princess or that handsome prince - for it is who you are. At His invitation, enthrone yourself within the lush robes of His ever-living, ever-loving holiness. Be wide-eyed

and amazed as you fall in love again and again with the One who walks with you in the cool of the day.

G. Sunday: | Holy of Holies | The Mercy Seat



My Prayer for You This Day

The Lord would say to you this day:

“Come to Me, and I will give you rest.

You are My child of mercy.

Sit with Me this day; enter into My rest.

*Choose to know My love within My all-knowing gaze;
experience My friendship between the shadow of My wings.*

Allow Me to nestle you in My robes.

You will be stilled and filled with My unearthly Presence.

*Don't be afraid. You are safe here.
Draw near to Me and gaze deeply.
I am, here and now, forever yours,
as you are forever Mine.
Nothing more matters than now.*

*You are My beloved.
I have no agenda here -
none other than the desire to lavish you with My love.
Here there are no thoughts of sin, shame, or disappointment;
no regrets, should-have-been's, or could-have-been's.
The only thing here is Me.
And I love you for who you are -
who I have created you to be.
I have never loved you less than this moment
and I will never love you more than this moment.
I am delighted with you, My child -
delighted!*

*Would you receive My love today?
I promise not to hurt you.
Would you listen to My song for you today?
I promise, you will love the melody!
Would you bring this -
this moment of full pleasure and freedom in Christ -
everywhere you go today?
I so long to play with you, swing with you,
skip with you, silently sit with you
- to simply be with you -
anything, anything at all.*

*Rise up, My child.
Let us go - the day is ours!"*

Themes

Today's theme speaks to everlasting peace, the saturation of God's mercy upon the heart, and the opportunity for unguarded "being" in the midst of God's mercy and grace.

Readings

Psalms 46:10	Deuteronomy 4:27-31	Ephesians 2:4-6
Numbers 7:8,9	Isaiah 66:12, 13	Titus 3:3-7
Exodus 33:7-11	Isaiah 54:48	Psalms 139:1-18
Hebrews 4:9,10	Luke 15:17-24	Psalms 32:7
		James 2:13

Direction

Congratulations! You've made it! What a tremendous week it's been. You've been forgiven and cleansed, you've ministered to God and His Saints, and here you are in this second day in the Most Holy Place, awed by His beauty and basking in His mercy.

As you awaken lie silently for a moment and meditate on His words, "be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10a, NIV). And, as you meditate, know that God is Love. His Presence is as thick as a cloud; He is all over you.

As you rise from your bed and prepare for the day, posture yourself within the beautiful reality of having entered into God's "Sabbath Rest."

God's rest is like no other. It defuses all expectations, melts away all the "undone's" and "should-have-done's," and gently caresses the individual for who he or she is, not for who he or she should be. It is similar to where you were yesterday (i.e., no sin to confess, no wicks to trim, no prayers - nothing left to do but simply "be" a human being), but with the added saturation of God's indescribable mercy. Allow this mercy and redemption to be the holy backdrop wherever you find yourself on this very special Day of the Lord.

Again, you'll want to guard yourself against the tendencies to revisit Egypt, the land of your past (along with its accompanying "all over the chart" emotions). Rather, be internally captivated and embraced in God's present mercy, which overshadows each step of your desert pilgrimage with the golden radiance of His wings.

This is a safe place. Sit, drop your guard, and rest in pure comfort. You will be bathed and cherished by the God of all mercy.

It has been suggested that those who linger in this most sacred of spaces have heard the very songs of heaven - the song of the Bridegroom singing over His bride. These are hauntingly sweet melodies of God's favor, cascading forth into the weary and downtrodden heart.

As you embark on your day be on the "listen" for prophetic assurances of His love for you. You may hear them in a song, experience them through nature, or simply know them to be true in your heart of hearts.

As you get to church and gather for worship make it more than a social time. This marks the capstone of a week filled with Spirit-led ministry - from one end of the Tabernacle to the other - and it's all accumulating here in the Sanctuary of God's holy temple. Rejoice in the Lord; seek Him everywhere - from the people to the preaching, from the prayers to Communion. Be listening for a special word He may speak to you. After all, you are His beloved, and He has waited all week to commune with you there, between the wings of the cherubim.

Likewise, you too have waited all week to meet Him here, so worship Him with a pure and holy abandon. Let His Shekinah Cloud overshadow you and revel in the sweet fragrance that will come as you rest in the unconditional favor of the Lord.

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VIII. End Prayer

*“The future glory of this Temple will be greater than its past glory,
says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.
And in this place I will bring peace.
I, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, have spoken!”*

Haggai 2:9

I pray this study has been revealing to you. There is so much to say about the Tabernacle of Moses, so much unsaid here.

God does nothing by happenstance. Each measurement, each event, is planned and used by Him to bring glory to His Name. Things which seem senseless to us are highly significant to Him; if not now, perhaps thousands of years in the future. The blueprints and pattern of the Tabernacle speak to this. Our Lord Jesus Christ is living in each piece, each measurement, and each symbol of that archaic place. Who would have known?

Our job, of course, is to be obedient to what the Spirit is doing, just as Moses was, so that our fruit would be lasting from one generation to the next.

As I finish “Meet Me in the Desert,” I will use the template of the Tabernacle of Moses and give thanks to God for His servant Moses and for you. God bless you!



*Thank you, Father, for Your servant Moses.
You called him out of the land of bondage and into the Promised Land.
You spoke to him,
and equipped him with everything he needed
to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt
and into Israel.
Then, having arrived back
at the place where You first appeared to him,
You gave him the precise blueprints
for Your dwelling,*

Your roving earthly sanctuary.

*Thank you for his obedience, Lord,
his sacrificial determination
to follow the Cloud wherever it led him.
Thank you, that as we gaze through the ages
into this one man's obedience,
we are able to know more about You,
the God we serve,
Your mercy and Your standards of holiness;
wondrous revelations that can only be seen from this side of the Cross.*

*And I thank you for this study, too.
I pray that You would use it to be a powerful tool
in the lives of Your people.
Use it to forge a glorious reflection
of Your Son in their hearts.
Nourish Your saints in its reading.
As they grow deeper into the mystery of 'Christ in them,'
I pray Your Spirit would continuously reveal the joy that only comes
from serving others in the Tent of Meeting.*

*I also pray that Your Spirit would move them around,
one station to the next, from glory to glory,
until they arrive at the place they need to be.
Teach them to linger where You linger,
and reveal wisdom in each station.
Also call forth the office of ministry embedded in each of them.
Help them to discover and nurture the gifts of the Spirit
that were given to them back at the Laver.*

*May we rise from this place encouraged in Your love for us
and sustained in the power of Your Holy Spirit
through the Blood of the Lamb.
We know that one day we will be eternally with You in Heaven.
In the meantime, may Your reflection in us be a compelling witness
to those who have yet to see Your glorious majesty.
By Your grace,
may we bring many, many people
through Your Gates*

Meet Me in the Desert

*where we can dance with them
at the foot of the Cross.*

*In the Name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.*

IX. Further Devotion

A. The Fiery Cloud

The science of how God appeared in the desert and led the Hebrews through their forty-year pilgrimage through the Sinai remains a mystery. Some have speculated that the origin of the lighted pillar was organic, a form of biological phosphorescence, not unlike that of fire flies, deep sea creatures, or even the northern lights.

The phenomena fire, or luminescence, falling or appearing from heaven is recorded numerous times in Scripture. In some instances the phenomenon was something akin to a glorious revelation of light which is superimposed within/upon a bush, fabric, or a person (Exodus 3:2 and Mark 9:24). When God reveals Himself in this way it is said to be a “theophany”; the visible, lighted presence of God.

Other times the term “fire fell from heaven” is actually about *fire falling from heaven*. Fire fell and consumed Abel’s sacrifice (Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:16). Fire fell on David’s altar at the dedication of his temple (1 Chronicles 21:26), and on Solomon’s altar at the dedication of his temple (2 Chronicles 7:13). Fire literally fell and *consumed* the already water-saturated lumber at the confrontation of Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:38-39). Tongues of fire rested on the heads of the disciples when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost (Acts 2:3), and the fire of God’s judgment upon sin is seen symbolically at the Cross. All of this adds up to one glorious truth: our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29)!

But the “pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night” (Exodus 13:21) was different. This wasn’t the overlapping of heaven and earth across a material object such as a bush or a cloud. Nor was it merely a sign of God’s favor. This was God. God’s Shekinah Presence, interacting with the Israelites and leading them as a shepherd would lead a flock into fields of promise. Here are a few things we know about the Fiery Shekinah, the tangible presence of God, which manifests light, power, and presence:

- ❖ God escorted the Israelites into the desert and over to Mount Sinai in a cloud.

*“The Lord went ahead of them.
He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud,
and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire.
This allowed them to travel by day or by night.
And the Lord did not remove
the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire
from its place in front of the people.”*

Exodus 13:21-22, NLT



*“[The Lord God], who goes before you
looking for the best places to camp,
guiding you with a pillar of fire by night
and a pillar of cloud by day.”*

Deuteronomy 1:33, NLT

- ❖ Moses entered into the cloud and received the Ten Commandments and the blueprints of the Tabernacle.

*“Then the LORD said to Moses,
‘Come up to me on the mountain.
Stay there and I will give you the tablets of stone
on which I have inscribed the instructions and commands
so you can teach the people.’
So Moses and his assistant Joshua set out,
and Moses climbed up the mountain of God.
Moses told the elders
‘Stay here and wait for us until we come back.
Aaron and Hur are here with you.
If anyone has a dispute while I am gone,
consult with them.’
Then Moses climbed up the mountain,
and the cloud covered it.
And the glory of the LORD settled down on Mount Sinai,
and the cloud covered it for six days.
On the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from inside the cloud.
To the Israelites at the foot of the mountain,
the glory of the LORD appeared at the summit like a consuming fire.
Then Moses disappeared into the cloud
as he climbed higher up the mountain.
He remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights.”*

Exodus 24:1-2, NLT

- ❖ The day the Tabernacle was dedicated, the cloud settled over the Holy of Holies, just above the Ark of the Covenant.

*So at last Moses finished the work.
Then the cloud covered the Tabernacle,
and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle.
Moses could no longer enter the Tabernacle
because the cloud had settled down over it,
and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle.*

Exodus 40:33b35, NLT



*“On the day the Tabernacle was set up,
the cloud covered it.
But from evening until morning
the cloud over the Tabernacle looked like a pillar of fire.”*

Numbers 9:15, NLT

- ❖ God moved the people at His own pace, at His own discretion, into their desert pilgrimage.

*“Whenever the cloud lifted from over the sacred tent,
the people of Israel would break camp and follow it.
And wherever the cloud settled,
the people of Israel would set up camp.
In this way, they traveled and camped at the Lord’s command
wherever he told them to go.
Then they remained in their camp
as long as the cloud stayed over the Tabernacle.
If the cloud remained over the Tabernacle for a long time,
the Israelites stayed and performed their duty to the LORD.
Sometimes the cloud would stay over the Tabernacle
for only a few days, so the people would stay for only a few days,
as the LORD commanded.
Then at the LORD’s command they would break camp and move on.
Sometimes the cloud stayed only overnight
and lifted the next morning.
But day or night, when the cloud lifted,
the people broke camp and moved on.
Whether the cloud stayed above the Tabernacle for two days,
a month, or a year,
the people of Israel stayed in camp and did not move on.
But as soon as it lifted, they broke camp and moved on.*

*So they camped or traveled at the LORD's command,
and they did whatever the LORD told them through Moses."*

Numbers 9:1723, NLT



*"Now whenever the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle,
the people of Israel would set out on their journey, following it.
But if the cloud did not rise,
they remained where they were until it lifted.
The cloud of the LORD hovered over the Tabernacle during the day,
and at night fire glowed inside the cloud
so the whole family of Israel could see it.
This continued throughout all their journeys."*

Exodus 40:3638 (NLT)

- ❖ I recommend the following scriptures to you for a fascinating study. As you read them, note what is being done "through the cloud."
- ❖ Exodus 13:21,22; Exodus 40:34-38
- ❖ 1 Kings 8:10,11; 2 Chronicles 5:13,14
- ❖ Mark 9:7; Acts 1:9
- ❖ 1 Corinthians 10:12 with 1 Corinthians 12:13
- ❖ Ezekiel 43:15; Revelation 15:5,8

B. For Further Study and Reading

There is so much more: studies on numerology, the priestly garments, precious gems, in addition to other temples! Too much for this humble book. However, here are some suggestions for further study:

- ❖ **Bibles and Bible Commentaries** provide wonderful insights into the Temple. Do a self-study through Exodus with a good study Bible like the following:
 - ❖ Life Application Study Bible
 - ❖ NIV Study Bible, Zondervan
 - ❖ Spirit-Filled Bible, The Spirit-Filled Life Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers
- ❖ **Bible Dictionary:** A Bible dictionary will give you context and customs, both of which bring passages to life.
- ❖ **Google:** The internet is a haven for deeper study, as well as for interesting images from artists of the components of the Tabernacle.
- ❖ **Hands-on:** Make a model of the Tabernacle of Moses. (I have made three of them.) The process is amazingly insightful and a wonderful creative project for you and/or your children, not unlike creating a manger to place in your front yard during Advent. Models of the Tabernacle of Moses come in assorted sizes and shapes. Find one that you can paint bronze, silver and gold, one that has curtains and columns. Make clay figurines and walk them all around the Outer and Inner Courts! To find a model, look on the internet and/or through Sunday school curriculums.
- ❖ **Temple Fever:** The Tabernacle of Moses is the first and smallest of Biblical Temples. These buildings, while different in size and scope, carry the same DNA of the Tabernacle of Moses. For you real enthusiasts, launch out on your own self-study on the temples of David, Solomon, and Herod. Don't forget about the best temple of all - the Heavenly Temple which is yet to be seen by us and is described in Isaiah 4 and Revelation.

Meet Me in the Desert

C. A Bit on Songs

At the end of each ministry station chapter, I have included lyrics to songs that speak to the significance and symbols found in that particular place of ministry in the Temple. Outer Court songs praise God for what He has done “for me,” and Inner Court songs are songs of worship which repeat the wonder of “Your” love, or “Your” majesty. This is yet another example of how the Tabernacle of Moses can be used as a template to worship God.

The next time you listen to Christian music ask yourself, “What part of the Temple is being portrayed in the words of this song?” The answer to that question will both enhance your appreciation for the piece and, in the case where a particular song is really “speaking” to you, will help you label what the Spirit is doing in your heart so you can press into it and bless Him as He speaks to your heart and soul. Place yourself at the ministry station which is portrayed in the song lyrics. Recall its symbolism and either receive ministry through the song, or use the song as a vehicle of worship to the Lord, depending upon where its lyric has positioned you. This can be a very enriching experience!



For more information on these songs or other praise and worship songs by Bill Blomquist, please write to blomquistians@icloud.com or visit his website to hear more music, read more stuff, peruse his BLOG, and find out about a trip to the Holy Land!

www.blomquistian.com

Acknowledgments

*I have not stopped giving thanks for you,
remembering you in my prayers.*

Ephesians 1:16, NIV

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- ❖ Judson Cornwall, Let Us Draw Near, Logos International

About the Author

The Reverend Bill Blomquist is an Anglican priest and has served in numerous ways throughout his ordained ministry. Bill's passion for the Lord and his desire to spread the gospel are exemplified through his exuberant (and contagious!) style and ministry to the Lord. He is an avid Christian songwriter and a fervent promoter of lay ministry and discipleship.

Bill's testimony runs something like this: Although he always knew there was a God, he did not know the saving grace of a personal savior until his early twenties. As a native Floridian and former surfer dude, it is only fitting that Bill gave his life to Christ on a beach while sitting in the sand - sand - just as the Lord had met and delivered the Israelites from the sand in the Sinai Desert, so He had met Bill and delivered him from his "desert" on the sands of a Central Florida beach. His is a fascinating story filled with the unfailing love of our most merciful Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. By God's grace, Bill set his heart on Jesus and surrendered himself to walk in His ways.

Bill received his Bachelor of Science degree from Florida Atlantic University, his Masters of Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary, and a degree in Anglican Studies from Trinity School for Ministry. He has been studying the Tabernacle of Moses for more than twenty-five years.

