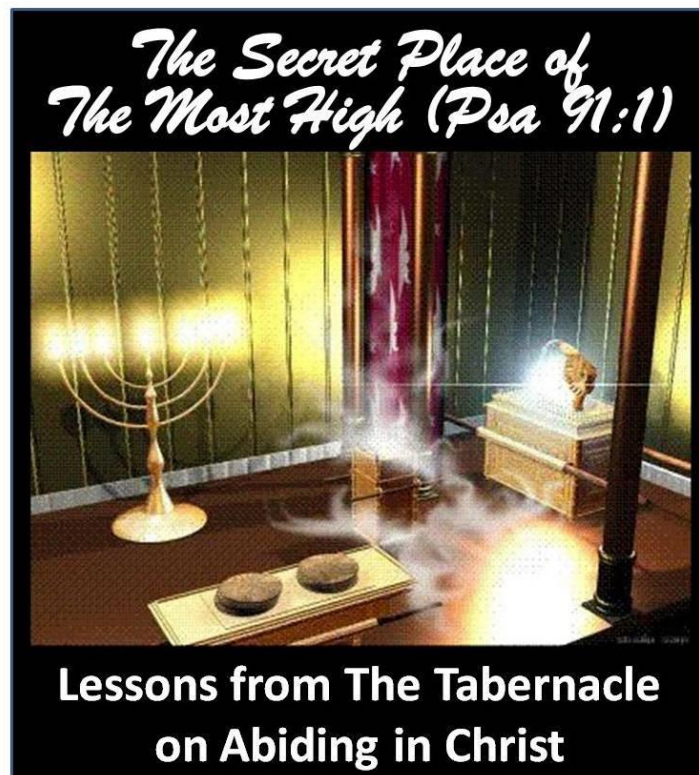


# Basic Training Bible Ministries

## The Secret Place of the Most High



### Australian Bible Conference

*“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High  
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Psa 91:1*

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## **The Secret Place of the Most High** **Lessons from the Tabernacle on Abiding in Christ**

### Introduction

*“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High  
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Psa 91:1*

David uses the Holy of Holies, and in particular the Ark of the Covenant, as a visible image—an object lesson of what we know in this age as “Abiding in Christ.” Though living a thousand years before Christ, David (being a prophet) saw the invisible realities behind the physical tabernacle. David’s vision is confirmed by the words of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews:

*“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come,  
with a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands,  
that is, not of this creation.” Heb 9:11*

This study is intended to use the Tabernacle of the wilderness as an object lesson of the Person and work of Christ. Each article of the tabernacle speaks of another aspect of His gracious provisions for those who trust in Him. Since we cannot utilize what we do not know we have, this study brings to light what it means to live by faith. In essence, the Tabernacle, seen as a diagram, is a map to the greatest hidden treasure of all time—living in the presence of God Almighty. Our careful study of this topic will be richly rewarded as we “*walk by faith, not by sight,*” 2Co 5:7.

### **Typical Meaning of the Seven Articles of the Tabernacle—Exo 31:7–9; Heb 9:1–5**

The Tabernacle of Israel contained just seven articles of furniture. Seven is the number in Scripture associated with divine fullness and completeness. These seven articles speak of the perfect provision of God for man’s spiritual needs. They are prophetic, that is, they are types or figures that portray the perfect Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is of value to note that in the Exodus passage above, the articles are listed in order from the Ark of the Covenant (which was in the Holy of Holies), outward to the Altar of Sacrifice. When the author of Hebrews reviews the list, he reverses the order—from the outside coming in. Since the Ark represented the very presence of God, and the sacrificial Altar the first need of men, this order is significant.

In Exodus, God is seen reaching out to mankind in grace, from the Ark to the Altar. In Hebrews, the author’s concern is of the believer’s approach to God (see Heb 4:14–16); therefore, he rightly moves from Altar to Ark. Both these perspectives are essential to understanding the spiritual lessons contained within the Tabernacle.

From the Exodus perspective, we see the divine viewpoint of the work of God in His grace—redeeming and reconciling mankind to Himself. From the Hebrews perspective, we can understand how men must respond to God by faith in His finished work.

Each of the seven articles will reveal to us God’s provision for our need. And with each provision will be found a faith-response, which God requires if we are to receive the benefits and blessings of His work on our behalf. By simply following this ancient “road map” or “treasure map,” we are led step-by-step from eternal salvation through the stages of growth and spirituality that end in a life of “abiding in Christ”—the place of victory, peace, and security for our souls.

For the sake of our study, we will primarily use the perspective of the author of Hebrews, seeing first our need, then God’s provision for it. Finally, we will consider how we who believe should live in light of these provisions.

## I. The Brazen Altar—The Sin of Mankind and the Savior of God

*“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom 6:23*

### A. The Wages of Sin

Prior to the Tabernacle, altars were made from earth or uncut stone (Exo 20:24–26). The principle of animal sacrifice was introduced to Adam and Eve after they sinned, as a means of looking forward to the coming Savior—the Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15, Gen 3:21, Gen 4:4). The sacrifice showed that *“the wages of sin is death”* (Rom 6:23) and revealed our need for a perfect Savior.

The details of the bronze altar are found in Exo 27:1–8. It was essentially a square box of wood, overlaid with bronze, with a bronze grill in the middle. On this grill, fire was built, upon which the sacrifice was offered, Lev 1:1–9.



The altar is a reminder of the sin of man and the need for an acceptable sacrifice. The most common sacrifice was the daily offering—morning and evening—of a pure lamb without spot or blemish, Exo 29:38–39. Our altar is the cross, Heb 13:10–15.

### B. The Gift of God

When Jesus began His public ministry, He was identified by the prophet John as, *“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,”* Joh 1:29. Even before the virgin conception, Mary was told by the angel, *“you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins,”* Mat 1:21. He was also identified by the prophet Isaiah, over 700 years before His birth, with another name, *“Immanuel,”* which is translated *“God with us”* (compare Isa 7:14 and Mat 1:23).

Coming into this world as *“the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Mat 16:16), our Lord lived a sinless and holy life. Then, as God’s perfect Lamb, He went to the cross to fulfill the promised sacrifice that alone could bring redemption from sin (see Isa 53:1–12 with Zec 12:10, Zec 13:6). Having died in our place, He was buried and rose again the third

day in victory over sin and death, 1Co 15:3–8. He is now seated at God’s right hand, awaiting the consummation of the plan of God, Heb 10:12–14.

### C. The Necessity for Faith

When we say that we believe that “*Jesus is the Christ*” (i.e., Joh 20:31), we are declaring that we believe Him to be the “God-man” who was foretold from ancient times by the prophets, and who alone could save mankind from sin and judgment. He is God’s “*indescribable gift*” (2Co 9:15), and only by simple childlike faith in Him can we receive the “gift of God”—eternal life, Rom 6:23. We are told that “*without faith it is impossible to please [God]*,” Heb 11:6. Jesus Christ must be the object of that faith, “*For there is one God, and one Mediator ... the Man Christ Jesus,*” 1Ti 2:5.

### Summary: The Doctrine of Redemption

1. The term “redemption” speaks of the comprehensive work of Jesus Christ on behalf of all sinful mankind, providing a way of forgiveness and eternal salvation:
  - a. The plan of God for saving men includes all mankind (Joh 3:16; 1Ti 2:3–6; 2Pe 3:9).
  - b. The work of Jesus Christ on behalf of sinners includes all men (Rom 3:21–26; 1Ti 2:6; 1Jo 2:2).
  - c. By His incarnation, life, and resurrection, Jesus Christ provides light to all men (Joh 1:9, Joh 8:12, Joh 9:5).
  - d. Being crucified for all, Jesus actively draws all men unto Himself (Joh 12:32).
  - e. The Holy Spirit of God convicts all mankind of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Joh 16:7–11).
2. The work of redemption involves the payment of the penalty/ransom of sin. The words used in the Greek New Testament have specific and significant meaning:
  - a. The verb *agorazo* portrays the purchase of a slave out of the slave market.
  - b. The verb *lutroo* carries the connotation of setting that slave free, on the basis that the ransom price has been paid.
  - c. The verb *apolutroo* indicates that the slave is not only liberated, but is taken out of the slave market.
3. The biblical concept of redemption is clearly established at the Exodus, where the people of God were redeemed out of Egypt by the blood of the Passover lamb (Exo 12:1–13; 1Co 5:7).
4. In the Old Testament, the verb *ga'al* (redeem) is related to the noun *goel*, which means “kinsman-redeemer,” and is graphically portrayed by Boaz in the book of Ruth.
5. Whereas the work of redemption is accomplished by Christ on the cross, without any part played by man, the counterpart and effect of that work is justification, by which those who believe in Him are declared righteous by God (Rom 3:24, Rom 3:26, Rom 5:1, Rom 8:30; Gal 2:16, Gal 3:24; Tit 3:4–7).
6. Those who are redeemed by faith are secure forever in eternal life (Gal 3:13; Eph 1:7, Gal 1:14; Heb 9:12; 1Pe 1:18–21; Rev 5:9).

7. The ongoing effect of redemption is called sanctification, involving spiritual growth and purification in life and practice (1Co 5:7–8; 1Pe 1:13–21).

## II. The Laver of Cleansing—Christ our Purification

*“Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter [dishonorable conduct], he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” 2Ti 2:21*

### A. The Need for Cleansing



The priests of ancient Israel were ordained by God to serve Him in regard to the spiritual needs of His people, Heb 5:1–4. Their inauguration involved being fully bathed in pure water, then robed and anointed with special oil, Exo 29:4–7. These actions symbolized being consecrated to God, robed in His righteousness, and anointed by His Spirit. This was a once-for-all inauguration into the service of priests.

However, provision needed to be made for daily cleansing. This was the purpose of the laver, Exo 30:17–21. Every day, before going about their duties, they were to wash their hands and feet, Exo 30:17–20. This daily washing was a reminder of our need for daily cleansing from the thoughts, words, and actions that constitute sin before God.

### B. The Cleansing Power of the Cross

By His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus Christ provided both eternal and temporal cleansing for those who believe in Him. In the Upper Room with His disciples, Jesus took a page from the ancient ritual of Israel, Joh 13:1–10. He was preparing His disciples to represent Him on earth. For this service they needed to be purified.

In His dialogue with Peter, Jesus makes a distinction between already being “*bathed*” and yet standing in need of “*foot washing*,” Joh 13:8–10. Jesus knew that all the disciples, with the exception of Judas (Joh 13:11), had trusted in Him and received “*the washing of regeneration*,” Tit 3:5. But their attitudes upon entering the Upper Room were contrary to humble service, for they argued as to which was to be considered the greatest, Luk 22:24. They were in need of practical cleansing.

### C. Purified by Faith

We are told “*Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word*,” Eph 5:25–26. By steady growth in understanding and applying His Word, we learn that His cleansing power continues to work in our lives in three ways:

1. First, there is the willingness to confess our sins honestly (1Jo 1:9; Jam 5:16).

2. Secondly, the willingness to forgive others who sin against us (Joh 13:12–15; Mat 18:21–22; Eph 4:32).
3. And finally, to “*walk in the light*” of His Word daily (1Jo 1:7). Just as we wash our bodies daily, we must be alert to the cleansing and purification of our souls with the water of His Word.

### Summary: The Doctrine of Sanctification

1. The word “sanctification” simply means “to set apart” from something, to something. The idea is to set apart from common usage for a holy purpose.
2. The work of sanctification is effected by the Holy Spirit on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross (1Th 5:23; 2Th 2:13; 1Pe 1:2).
3. To be “*sanctified*” in the biblical sense is to be separated forever from the world, and set apart unto God as His possession, and for His service (Rom 15:16; 1Co 1:2, 1Co 6:11; Heb 10:10, Heb 10:14).
4. The basis of sanctification is found in the redemption of the cross of Christ and the justification of the believer (see “Redemption” above).
5. The comprehensive work of sanctification involves three major phases:
  - a. Phase One, Regeneration: the work of the new birth, when we become a new creature by faith in Christ (Joh 3:3, Joh 3:7; 2Co 5:17; Eph 5:26; Tit 3:5).
  - b. Phase Two, Purification: the progressive sanctification of the believer practically, by spiritual growth and obedience (Joh 17:17, Joh 17:19; 2Ti 2:21; 1Th 4:3, 1Th 4:7, 1Th 5:23; Heb 2:11).
  - c. Phase Three, Glorification: the ultimate consummation of salvation when we are resurrected in a glorified body like the resurrection body of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:17, Rom 8:30; Phi 3:20–21; 1Jo 3:2).
6. The present focus of sanctification is spiritual growth and service (Joh 15:1–17; Eph 4:12–16; 2Pe 3:18).
7. Sanctification requires the cooperation of the believer in receiving and applying the Word of God to daily life (Joh 17:17; 2Ti 2:21; Heb 9:13–14; 1Th 4:3, 1Th 4:7).

### **III. The Lampstand—Christ the Light of Life**

*“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Joh 8:12*

#### A. The Lamp and the Oil



Passing by the Altar of Sacrifice, then the laver of cleansing, we enter into the holy place, or the sanctuary. On the left, our attention would immediately be drawn to the beautiful and ornate lampstand. It was made of hammered gold, with seven lamps, Exo 25:31–40. It was emphasized to Moses by God that he must make it “*according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain,*” Exo 25:40. The author of Hebrews tells us this was because they represented “*the copy and shadow of the heavenly things,*” Heb 8:5. It is worth reflecting on what the beauty of heaven must be, in light of this statement.

But the lamp itself was of no value without the oil for the light. Pure, pressed olive oil was the fuel which made the light, Exo 27:20–21. The oil for the lamps, like the anointing oil for the priests (Exo 30:22–33) was a symbol of the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. Apart from this, there can be no light, and no acceptable service.

### B. Jesus Christ, the Light

First and foremost, the lampstand is a picture of Jesus Christ. The seven lamps remind us of the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit through Him, Isa 11:1–5. By His life and sacrificial death, Jesus brought light into a dark world, and that light is reflected to every member of the human race, Joh 1:9. By His perfect sinless life, the Lord Jesus lights the way to faith and eternal life (Joh 9:5, Joh 12:46–47). All who believe in Him, with simple child-like faith (Mat 18:3), become spiritual children of light, Joh 12:36. Since “*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*” (1Jo 1:5), those who are born again by faith bear the image of the heavenly Father.

### C. Walking in the Light

At the moment of salvation, the believer becomes a “*new creature*” in Christ, 2Co 5:17. As part of this transformation, the Spirit of God does five mighty works in the believer:

1. First, He baptizes (unites) that believer with Christ forever, 1Co 12:13.
2. Second, He regenerates to new life, Tit 3:5.
3. Third, He permanently indwells the believer (Joh 14:16–17; Rom 8:9–11).
4. Fourth, He gifts the believer with spiritual power for service, 1Co 12:4–7.
5. And finally, He seals the believer as God’s eternal possession (Eph 1:13–14, Eph 4:30).

What does all this mean in practical terms? Simply that we are now His “lamp stands.” As we rely on His Spirit, we are given illumination and guidance (Joh 16:13; Eph 1:17–20) so that our lives can reflect His nature. As we “*walk in the light, as He is in the light*” (1Jo 1:7), His Spirit gives power and purpose to our lives, Eph 3:16.

## Summary: the Doctrine of Illumination

1. By illumination, we mean the enlightening of the soul for the perception of spiritual truth, without which no man could ever know God.
2. All mankind has been spiritually blinded to the truth of God because of sin, and by the malignant power of Satan (2Co 3:14–16, 2Co 4:3–4).
3. The miracle of the healing of the man born blind is indicative of the power of Jesus Christ to remove spiritual blindness and give light to the soul (Joh 9:1–7, Joh 9:25).
4. By virtue of His incarnation (coming in the flesh), Jesus Christ—by His life, death, and resurrection—provides light to all men (Joh 1:9, Joh 12:8, Joh 9:5; 2Ti 1:10).
5. One of the purposes, of the coming of the Holy Spirit into the world, is to give men the conviction of sin and illumination regarding the truth of the Gospel (Joh 16:7–11; 2Co 4:4, 2Co 4:6).
6. Those who have believed are to be a reflection of the light of Christ to the darkness of this world (Mat 5:14–16; Rom 13:12; Eph 5:8; Phi 2:15; 1Th 5:5; 1Jo 1:7, 1Jo 2:10).

## **IV. The Table and Bread—Christ the Bread of Life**

*“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger,  
and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” Joh 6:35*

### A. The Bread of the Presence

On the right side of the sanctuary stood a table, made of wood, overlaid with gold, Exo 25:23–30. This combination of wood and gold used in all the articles within the sanctuary speaks of the union of deity and humanity in the Person of Jesus Christ. Both the Altar of Sacrifice and the laver were made of bronze, because bronze speaks of judgment, reminding us that Christ bore our sin and provided our cleansing.

On the table, each and every Sabbath, were set twelve loaves of bread—one for each tribe in Israel, Lev 24:5–9. It was called “*showbread*” (Exo 25:30), which in Hebrew is literally “bread of presence,” or more precisely, “bread of the face.” The bread was a symbol of the covenant between God and Israel, representing the life-sustaining power of communion with God. Following each Sabbath, the week-old loaves were then eaten by the priests, and this symbolized that the spiritual life of Israel was sustained by the presence of God among them.

### B. Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life

It is of special interest that frankincense was either poured upon or placed with the bread of presence. Frankincense was a very valuable gum with a bitter flavor, yet a sweet, balsamic fragrance. It was used for embalming, and was brought as one of the gifts offered to the Christ-child, Mat 2:11. The symbolism here is that Jesus Christ, the true “Bread of Presence” would offer Himself on the cross and die in our place, but the bitterness of His sufferings would be like a fragrant incense to God, Eph 5:2.



### C. Not by Bread Alone

The Lord Jesus, in His temptation in the wilderness, was sustained by the truth that “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*” (Mat 4:4; Deu 8:3). For those who have received new life in Christ, only the Word of God can sustain the spirit-life within them. We partake of the sustaining life of our Lord by feeding the soul on His Word, Joh 8:31–32.

Just as the bread was eaten by the priests after each Sabbath-rest, so we can only “feed on Christ” (Joh 6:51, Joh 6:56) when we enter into His “rest” by faith, Mat 11:28–30. Since every believer has been made a member of the “*royal priesthood*” (1Pe 2:9), our service to God is sustained only by the bread of life. Spiritual maturity and power are the result of developing an appetite for the “*solid food*” of ever more advanced truth and understanding from the Bible, Heb 5:14. The lack of spiritual power in believers’ lives can usually be traced to a poor spiritual diet!

### Summary: the Doctrine of Edification

1. The word translated “edify/edification” is from the Greek *oiko*, “house,” and *demo*, “to build.” It conveys the step-by-step process of laying a foundation, building upon it, and completing the structure.
2. The foundation of all edification is the truth of who Christ is, and what He accomplished on the cross (Mat 16:13–18; 1Co 3:10–11; Eph 2:19–22).
3. On the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ, the believer is to build toward spiritual maturity, beginning with basic doctrines, Heb 5:12–6:3.
4. The goal of spiritual maturity, called “perfection” or “completeness,” is attained by consistent growth in both knowledge and practice of God’s revealed Word (2Co 13:9, 2Co 13:11; Eph 4:12–16; 2Ti 3:16–17; Heb 13:21; Jam 1:2–5).
5. The challenge is repeatedly given in the New Testament to persist and to persevere in the process of spiritual growth (Eph 1:15–19, Eph 3:14–19; 2Th 1:3, 2Th 1:11; 1Pe 2:2; 2Pe 3:18).
6. All spiritual growth is predicated on submission to the indwelling Spirit of God (Joh 14:15–18, Joh 14:26, Joh 15:26–27, Joh 16:7–14; Rom 8:4, Rom 8:13–17; Gal 5:22–23; Eph 5:18).
7. The believer in Christ will never reach a point in this life where further growth is not possible and essential, Phi 3:8–15.

### V. The Altar of Incense—Christ our Mediator

“... *Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*” Eph 5:2

“*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.*” 1Ti 2:5

### A. The Tale of Two Altars



As we move beyond illumination and edification (the lampstand and the table of showbread), we come to the altar of incense (Exo 30:1–10, Exo 37:25–28). This altar stood immediately before the veil, which concealed the Holy of Holies and the Ark.

The two altars (of sacrifice and of incense) are closely related.

On the first, as we have seen, sacrifice was made for sins. At the second, our acceptance by God, on the basis of that sacrifice, is seen. The fire for the altar of incense had to come from the altar of sacrifice, demonstrating the truth stated above. To offer “*strange*” fire, that is not from the sacrificial altar, resulted in severe judgment (Exo 30:9; Lev 10:1–3; Num 16:35). The special incense used on this altar included frankincense (Exo 30:34), once again showing that our acceptance to God is based on the death of Jesus Christ.

There were two distinct offerings of incense. The first was the daily offering, every morning and evening (Exo 30:7–8), just as with the offering of the lamb. The second was by the high priest, and then only on the Day of Atonement, Lev 16:11–13. Since the daily offering of incense was closely associated with the prayers of God’s people (Luk 1:9–13; Rev 5:8, Rev 8:3), we can conclude that the incense offered on the Day of Atonement speaks of the intercessory prayers of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

### B. Our Mediator and Intercessor

Christ Himself is not only our sacrifice, He also lives to be our Mediator and Intercessor (1Ti 2:5–6; Rom 8:34). Whenever we sin, we come under the accusation of Satan, Rev 12:10–11. It is then that Jesus Christ, our Advocate before God (1Jo 2:1–2), speaks out in our defense. Because He paid the penalty for all our sins—past, present, and future—no charge against the believer can stand (Rom 8:1, Rom 8:31–34).

### C. Our Access to God

The altar of incense stood before the veil, which concealed the Holy of Holies. That veil represented a barrier between God and men, showing that the way to God had not yet been opened, Heb 9:6–9. But with the substitutionary death of Christ completed, the veil in the temple of Jerusalem was rent from top to bottom (Mat 27:51), showing that for those who believe, access to God was supplied. Our faith in Jesus Christ guarantees us free and open access to God, Rom 5:1–2. Based on this free and full access (Eph 3:11–12), we are urged to “*come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need,*” Heb 4:16.

## Summary: the Doctrine of Intercession

1. The altar of incense is associated in the Bible with the effective prayers of the children of God (Rev 5:8, Rev 8:3).
2. However, the effectiveness of our prayers is based entirely on the intercession of Jesus Christ and the Spirit on our behalf (Joh 17:1–26; Rom 8:26, Rom 8:34; 1Ti 2:5).
3. Prayer falls into various categories, beginning with prayers for personal needs (petitions and supplications), and reaching the higher level of intercession (prayer on behalf of others), until reaching the highest form of prayer, which is thanksgiving and praise (glorifying God for who He is and what He does).
4. In the Old Testament, both Abraham and Daniel are examples of the practice and power of intercessory prayer on behalf of others (Gen 18:16–33; Dan 9:3–19).
5. The crucial ingredient that makes for powerful prayer is when the child of God prays in the power of the Spirit, according to the Word of God (Eph 6:18; 1Jo 5:14–15; Jud 1:20).
6. By contrast with the above point, self-centered prayers are ineffective and doomed to fail (Jam 1:5–8, Jam 4:1–3).
7. The Church-Age believer has a privilege never before available to saints in the Old Testament—to boldly enter into the very Throne Room of God, and to pray with the power of a believer-priest, under the High Priesthood of Christ, according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 4:14–16, Heb 5:6, Heb 7:17; 1Pe 2:5–9).
8. By effective and prevailing prayer, the child of God participates in the accomplishment of the will of God on earth (Jam 5:16–18; 1 Kings 17–19).

*“Prayer moves the arm that moves the world.” D.L. Moody*

*“Prayer is not preparation for the work, prayer is the work.” Oswald Chambers*

## **VI. The Veil—Christ Concealing or Revealing God’s Glory**

*“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is His flesh ... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith ...” Heb 10:19–20, Heb 10:22*

### **A. The Barrier between God and Men**

One primary thing is said of the veil in the tabernacle—that it was a barrier. *“The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy,”* Exo 26:33. Once again, no one could enter behind the veil except the high priest, and then only on the Day of Atonement, and even then, *“not without blood,”* Heb 9:7. Violation of any of these restrictions would result in immediate death.

The purpose of the veil was to be a continual reminder, up to the crucifixion of Christ, *“that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest,”* Heb 9:8. This was why, when Jesus cried *“It [God’s plan of redemption] is finished”* (Joh 19:30), the veil in the temple ripped from top to bottom (Mat 27:51; Mar 15:38; Luk 23:45), because His sacrificial offering of Himself opened to men the way to God. The veil in the tabernacle

reflected the veil Moses was forced to wear, due to the unbelief of the people, Exo 34:29–35. Paul tells us that the veil remains where minds are blinded by unbelief, but *“the veil is taken away in Christ ... when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away”* (2Co 3:14, 2Co 3:16).

#### B. In Christ, God’s Glory: Concealed or Revealed

Some men looked at Jesus and saw only a man. Most see Him this way today. His glory is concealed by their unbelief. Others, looking upon Him, saw the Son of God (Mat 16:16; Mat 27:54). There were a few who saw Him as God in the flesh (Joh 1:14, Joh 1:18; Joh 20:28). At the Mount of Transfiguration (Mat 17:1–8), Peter, James, and John saw—for a moment—the veil lifted, and His glory revealed.

Whether the humanity of Christ conceals or reveals His true identity and glory is a matter of the condition of the heart. Just as Jesus said, *“No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (Joh 14:6), in the same way no one enters into *“the Holiest of All,”* what David called *“the secret place of the Most High”* (Psa 91:1), unless they approach *“with a true heart, in full assurance of faith,”* Heb 10:22.

#### C. “Blessed are the Pure in Heart”

Jesus spoke to His disciples and told them, *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,”* Mat 5:8. Purity of heart is the opposite of “double-mindedness,” by which no one can receive anything from God, Jam 1:6–8. By purity of heart, Jesus means the simplicity of faith or, as Paul says, *“the simplicity that is in Christ,”* 2Co 11:3. Let the Word of God cleanse your soul of doubts, and the promise of Jesus will be fulfilled: *“I will manifest Myself to him,”* Joh 14:21.

#### Summary: the Doctrine of Communion

1. The promise of Jesus in Joh 14:21–23 is an invitation to every believer to “enter the veil” into deep, personal communion with the Father and Son.
2. The biblical idea of communion is that of the believer whose chief focus and concentration is on the daily fellowship available with the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Only when the above prevails in the souls of believers can true communion among members of the Body of Christ be enjoyed. The word for “fellowship” is *koinoneo*, and speaks of “joint participation” in the merits and blessings of faith in Jesus Christ.
4. In 2Co 6:14–15, the Apostle Paul uses four words that define the concept of communion. *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship [metoche, partnership] has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion [koinonia, sharing of nature] has light with darkness? And what accord [sumphone, harmony] has Christ with Belial? Or what part [meris, portion] has a believer with an unbeliever?”*
5. A life of communion is a life wherein the soul is pre-occupied with the Person and purpose of Jesus Christ in that life. Such a life is exhibited by the Apostle Paul (Gal 2:20–21; Phi 1:21, Phi 3:7–15).

6. The path into such communion is followed by few, and requires the development of three cardinal, spiritual virtues: *“faith ... hope ... love”* (1Co 13:13; Gal 5:5–6; Col 1:4–5; 1Th 1:3, 1Th 5:8; Heb 6:10–12; 1Pe 1:3, 1Pe 1:5, 1Pe 1:8).
7. In the exercise of these virtues, faith daily lays hold of the Word of God; hope (based on the promises of God’s Word) provides the substance of our prayers; and love guides our conduct toward others. Faith initiates, hope prosecutes, and love executes the plan of God in our lives.
8. A life of communion is where the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the will of the heavenly Father, are more real and tangible than anything in the world around us.

## VII. The Ark of the Covenant—In the Secret Place

*“Seeing that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession ... Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help In time of need.”* Heb 4:14–16

### A. The Ark of the Covenant

We come now to the most amazing article of furniture in the Tabernacle. The symbolism and meaning of this one solitary item is worthy of much study and reflection. The background is found in Exo 25:10–22, Exo 37:1–9.



### B. Jesus Christ: God in the Flesh

Like many of the items in the Tabernacle, the Ark was essentially a box made of wood, overlaid with pure gold. This pictures the hypostatic union of God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ. He is undiminished deity and perfect humanity united forever in one Person (Joh 1:1, Joh 1:14, Joh 1:18, Joh 5:18, Joh 10:30, Joh 14:8–11).

### C. The Savior of Sinners

Inside the Ark, there were three items, Heb 9:4. Each uniquely portrays the sins of mankind, and the Savior who died for those sins. We are told that He *“Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed,”* 1Pe 2:24. This is what the Ark portrays. The author of Hebrews puts these three items in a significant order, and we will follow that order:

#### 1. The Bowl of Manna, Exo 16:32–34

Most importantly, the manna speaks of Christ as the bread of life who came down from Heaven, Joh 6:28–33. Unless we eat of that bread by faith, we cannot possess eternal life. Secondly, manna represents the sins of the tongue. Though God gave this amazing provision to a nation wandering in the wilderness, because of their unbelief

and ingratitude, they complained about God's provision, Num 11:4–6. In the same way, men complain about Christ!

2. Aaron's Rod that Budded, Num 17:8–11

In the miracle of Aaron's rod, a dead staff budded and came to life. This is a picture of Jesus Christ—our resurrection, Joh 11:25–26. Because He conquered death and the grave, He is able to give resurrection life to all who believe in Him. In the incident that led to the miracle, we find Aaron being challenged by the arrogant young men of other tribes who wanted to be priests. Here we have the sin of pride—a mental attitude sin. God caused the rod of Aaron to blossom before all the rods of the other tribes to show that He had chosen Aaron and his lineage to be priests.

3. The Tablets of the Law, Exo 25:16; Deu 10:1–5

In the Ten Commandments, we have a revelation of the holiness of God in terms of human conduct. But only the Lord Jesus Christ kept the Law in every detail. He is the holiness of God revealed in mankind. This is why He is called the Living Word (Joh 1:1, Joh 1:14; Heb 1:1–4). Since He alone obeyed the Law, He is the only fitting sacrifice and Savior for those who have broken it. When Moses received the Law on Mt. Sinai, before he could even bring it down to the people, they were violating every aspect of it, Exo 32:1–19. They were engaged in sins of the flesh, or overt sins.

Because no man can keep the Law, it can only condemn us to judgment. Thank God that "*Christ is the end [fulfillment] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes,*" Rom 10:4.

What we find, in the order of these items given by the writer, is the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit regarding "*sin ... righteousness, and of judgment,*" Joh 16:8. In the Person and work of Jesus Christ, God has met the needs of sinful men, provided righteousness through faith alone, and warned of judgment to all who reject Him, Joh 3:15–19. Only the hardest of hearts can refuse such provisions of grace and mercy.

D. The Mercy Seat: God's Righteousness Satisfied

Sitting on top of the Ark was the mercy seat, overlooked by two golden cherubim. It is unfortunate that "cherubs" have come to be pictured as fat little angels of love. In the Bible, the race of angels called cherubs are the mightiest and most awesome of angelic beings, and are guardians of His throne (Psa 80:1, Psa 99:1). These cherubs represent God's righteousness and justice. Because righteousness demands the penalty of sin be paid, justice must carry out the verdict. But they are positioned looking down onto the mercy seat (Exo 25:17–20, Exo 37:6–9).

Every year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would bring the blood of the sacrifice into the Holy of Holies, and he would sprinkle it on the mercy seat. Thus, coming between the holiness of God and the sins of men was the blood of the sacrificial offering. In the Old Testament, this was called "*atonement,*" literally, the "covering" of sin, Exo 32:30. The New Testament gives a newer and richer meaning to this by using the word "*propitiation,*" which means "satisfaction." God is satisfied with the offering of

Christ, the Lamb of God, on behalf of sinful men. It is worth noting that the word translated “*mercy seat*” in Heb 9:5, and the word “*propitiation*” in Rom 3:25, 1Jo 2:2, and 1Jo 4:10, are the same. It is interesting that the Prophet Isaiah—over 700 years before Christ—spoke of God being satisfied when sinful men would, by faith, make an offering for their sin in the Person of Jesus Christ, Isa 53:10–11.

#### E. Living in the Presence of God

When the Tabernacle was completed, the presence of God came down in the form called the Shekinah Glory, literally “the glory of His presence.” This glory resided above the mercy seat (Exo 25:22; Lev 9:23; Num 7:89). This glory represented the dwelling of God among men, Exo 25:8. The greatest gift, the greatest treasure that any human being can possess, is that of dwelling in the very presence of God—for there is the fullness of His blessing and the security of His care.

In the book of Acts, at the Jerusalem conference, James quotes the prophet Amos (Amo 9:11–12), saying, “*After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD WHO DOES ALL THESE THINGS,*” Act 15:16–17. From this, it appears that in the future kingdom, the Tabernacle will stand as a memorial to the work of Jesus Christ on behalf of all the redeemed of history. We will look at the Tabernacle, and see there the promise of God for sinful men. Then we will look at Jesus Christ, and see in Him the perfect fulfillment of the promises of God. Then, David’s expressed desire shall be fulfilled, and we shall “ *dwell in the house of the LORD forever,*” Psa 23:6.

#### Summary: the Doctrine of the Faith-Rest Life

1. The Ark of the Covenant, with the mercy seat, is symbolic of living in the presence of God, a life of rest in His perfect provisions, and peace in the outworking of His perfect will.
2. Both prophetically and practically, the ministry of Jesus Christ to men is declared to be that of bringing them into a state of rest and peace (Isa 28:12; Mat 11:28–30).
3. In the Old Testament story of Israel, the land of Canaan represented the entrance into the faith-rest life—a life of victory and enjoyment of divine blessings (Exo 33:13–14; Deu 3:20, Deu 12:10, Deu 25:19; Jos 1:13, Jos 21:43–45).
4. The author of the book of Hebrews demonstrates that the failure of the Exodus generation to enter the land was entirely due to their unwillingness to trust in the promises of God, and he warns us not to follow their example, Heb 3:7–19.
5. The faith-rest life is set forth by the same author for the New Testament believer in Heb 4:1–16, and is characterized by eight qualities:
  - a. Faith in the Word of God, Heb 4:1–2
  - b. Assurance in the finished work of God, through Christ on the cross, Heb 4:3–4, Heb 4:14–16, with Joh 19:30 and Heb 9:14, Heb 10:19–25
  - c. A Sabbath-like quality of rest—free of all self-effort, Heb 4:9–10
  - d. At the same time, a spiritual diligence to enter and hold fast to daily faith and, therefore, daily rest, Heb 4:11

- e. Self-exposure to the correction and instruction of God’s Word, Heb 4:12–13, with 2Ti 3:16–17
- f. Conviction of great personal responsibility, as a priest serving under the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, Heb 4:14
- g. Assurance that the provisions of Jesus Christ can overcome all personal weakness and failure, Heb 4:15, with Rom 8:31–39
- h. Determination to live, as it were, in the Throne Room of God, to receive His infinite supply of grace and mercy for every need, Heb 4:16

**Conclusion: In the Secret Place of the Most High**

*“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”* Psa 91:1

*“And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”* Psa 23:6

These two Psalms, one coming from David’s early years and the other later in life, show his preoccupation with living in the presence of God. David anticipated, more than any other Old Testament prophet, the principle of “abiding in Christ.” In the above Psalms, there are five great truths to be found:

1. To dwell in the presence of God is a personal decision of faith.  
The phrase *“he who dwells”* is an active participle, speaking of deliberate and consistent action. This action can only be that of the child of God. Although no one but the high priest could enter the Most Holy place, the opportunity to live in God’s presence by faith and obedience is open to all. Each individual must determine what value he places on communion with God. This is a moment-by-moment decision to live by faith.
2. This decision is based on the supreme value of knowing God.  
The title *“Most High”* is *El-Elyon*, and speaks of God as the Supreme Being in authority, power, and worth. He alone is worthy of being our chief delight (Psa 7:17, Psa 9:2), for He is the Author and Owner of all that is good, Psa 14:22. Either Jesus Christ is the chief treasure and joy of our lives, or His rightful place is taken by people and things. It is easy for *“the cares of this world”* to *“choke”* out the fullness and richness of delighting in His spiritual treasures, Mat 13:22.
3. There are blessed consequences for making this decision.  
The phrase *“shall abide”* is reflexive (*hithpael* imperfect), showing it as a result of the previous action. The decision to live in communion with God, to dwell *“in the secret place,”* has blessed consequences. This is a rare word for “lodging” that often emphasizes being the guest of someone. When we are the guest of God, He treats us like royalty, as seen in Psa 25:12–14, where the same word is used for *“dwell.”* In Joh 14:21 and Joh 14:23, Jesus makes the astounding promise, to those who abide and obey. To them will be given some personal manifestation of His presence, and the abiding presence of the Father.
4. The greatest safety is to be found in His presence.



To abide “*under the shadow of the Almighty*” is to be in perfect safety and peace. The title “*Almighty*” is *El-Shaddai*, and speaks of God as the all-sufficient One. The picture is of a father eagle spreading His wings in protection over his young. This security is pictured by Moses in Deu 32:10–11 and Deu 33:26–27.

5. Our greatest hope and expectation is His eternal presence. Just as our Lord is the greatest source of joy and fulfillment in this life, so in looking to eternity, to dwell in His presence surpasses all other expectations.

*“As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.” Psa 17:15*

*“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present [face-to-face] with the Lord.” 2Co 5:8*

