

UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY

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

Introduction

When David speaks of “*the secret place*,” he is referring to the “holy of holies” in the Tabernacle—a place he had never seen. Although it was the great joy of King David to bring the Tabernacle into the city of Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:14–19), only the High Priest was allowed into the holy of holies, and then only on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1–19).

But David was “*a man after [God’s] own heart*” (1 Samuel 13:14; Psalm 89:20; Acts 13:22), who surrounded himself with faithful prophets and priests (1 Samuel 22:5, 23:9–13; 2 Samuel 12:1–14, 15:24–29, 24:11). These men of God fully instructed him in the meaning of all the articles in the Tabernacle.

David understood that the Tabernacle was a picture-lesson of God’s provisions for sinful mankind. He recognized that each of the seven pieces of furniture portrayed God’s grace-gifts to men—that we might be redeemed, forgiven, and live in fellowship with Him.

As we move from one article to the next, we are provided with a spiritual road-map which guides us into the very presence of God, represented by the Ark of the Covenant. David understood that what God portrayed in the structure of the Tabernacle was His plan by which sinful men could be brought into perfect reconciliation to a holy God.

In this study, we will look at each article in the Tabernacle from three aspects:

1. The spiritual need of mankind
2. The promised provision of God
3. The fulfillment in Jesus Christ

My prayer is that God will bless this study so that many will learn to live daily “*under the shadow of the Almighty.*”

The Seven Articles—Exodus 31:7–9, 37:1–38:8; Hebrews 9:1–5

As we read the passages cited above, we get a picture of the articles of the Tabernacle. In the Exodus passage, the veil between the holy place and the holy of holies is not mentioned. In the Hebrews passage, the altar of sacrifice and the laver of cleansing are omitted. By taking the two passages together, we get the full picture.

It is interesting that, in Exodus, the description moves from the Ark of the Covenant outward. This is the picture of God’s grace reaching out to sinful men. In Hebrews, this direction is reversed, moving from the lampstand to the ark. This is the picture of the redeemed believing soul moving into the presence of God through faith.

By careful study of the seven articles, it is possible for us to learn how we are to grow spiritually from the moment of our salvation to the point of spiritual maturity, where we are abiding in Christ daily (John 15:1–11). Each article has its fulfillment in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Looking at the Tabernacle from the perspective of our approach to God, the seven articles are:

1. The altar of sacrifice
2. The laver of cleansing
3. The lampstand
4. The table of showbread
5. The altar of incense
6. The veil
7. The Ark of the Covenant

A diagram of the Tabernacle is helpful to picture the location of each article (see diagram at the end of this study). In this spiritual road-map, we have seven provisions of God's grace, and seven stages of spiritual growth for every believer to become "*complete in Christ*" (Colossians 1:28, NASB).

The Bible gives three basic stages of spiritual growth. These are seen in 1 John 2:12–14 as:

- "*little children*" (new believers),
- "*young men*" (growing believers), and
- "*fathers*" (mature believers).

These three stages are also portrayed in the layout of the Tabernacle by the inner court (altar of sacrifice and laver), the holy place (lampstand, table of bread, and altar of incense), and the holy of holies (the veil and the Ark of the Covenant). We will develop this connection as we work through the seven articles.

The Altar of Sacrifice, Jesus Christ our Sacrifice—Exodus 20:24–26, 27:1–8, 38:1–7

"... the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23

The first step in restoring a right relationship between sinful mankind and a holy God is the judgment of that sin in such a way that the sinner might be forgiven and cleansed. This undertaking of God on behalf of men is pictured in the altar of sacrifice.

The Problem of Sin

The problem of sin is two-fold. First, all sin is an offense to the holiness of God, and His justice demands that judgment must be executed. But secondly, the results of sin include spiritual death.

Spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God. This was suffered by Adam and Eve when they sinned in the Garden (Genesis 2:17, 3:7–10).

Adam then passed on the condition of spiritual death to all of his descendants (Genesis 5:3; Romans 5:12). All mankind is born spiritually dead, separated from God, and sinners by nature. We do not become sinners when we sin, we are born sinners, which is why we all commit sin. There is absolutely nothing sinful man can do to solve this condition. The solution has to come from God.

The Promised Gift of God

In the altar of sacrifice, we see God's solution. God's judgment on sin must be carried out, and the wages of sin must be paid in full. In the sacrificial offering, we see that God's solution is for the innocent to die for the guilty. This is called substitutionary sacrifice.

Originally, the altar was made of earth or uncut stone (Exodus 20:24–26). Neither artistry nor steps were allowed, to imply that we cannot improve our condition or climb up to God by good deeds. In the Tabernacle, the altar is made of wood overlaid with bronze (Exodus 27:2), which speaks of judgment (see Exodus 21:8–9).

In the instructions regarding the sacrifice in Leviticus 1:1–9, four great truths stand out. First, the sacrificial animal had to be pure and without blemish. Second, the one making the offering was to bring it of his own free will—a picture of faith. Third, God accepted the offering on behalf of the one who sinned—a picture of substitution. And finally, this was pleasing to God as *“a sweet aroma to the LORD.”*

The most common sacrifice, offered for 1,500 years from the time of Moses to the coming of Jesus Christ, was the offering of the spotless lamb (Exodus 29:38–39). This offering was made every morning and every evening and was designed by God to point to His perfect sacrifice.

The Lamb of God

John, the baptizer, called Jesus *“the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29, 36). In His Son, the age-old picture of animal sacrifice came to fulfillment. The name *“Jesus”* means “the salvation of God” (Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:30). The prophet Isaiah called Him *“Immanuel”* because He was God in human flesh (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). As the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus took the place of every sinner on the cross, suffering the judgment of God. As Peter says in 1 Peter 3:18, *“for Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”*

Because of His virgin birth, our Lord was born free from sin and the curse of Adam. He alone could live a sinless life and go to the cross as our perfect substitute. He willingly took our judgment upon Himself (Isaiah 53:1–12; 1 Peter 2:24–25), that we might be forgiven of all sin. Beyond this, He offers His own righteousness to all who will receive Him by simple childlike faith (John 1:12, 3:16; Romans 3:21–26). By His death, burial, and resurrection, He has paid the debt of sin for all mankind (1 Timothy 2:5–6; 1 John 2:2), broken the power of Satan (2

Corinthians 4:1–6; Hebrews 2:14–15; 1 John 3:8), and conquered the power of the grave (1 Corinthians 15:50–58).

In 1 Corinthians 15:22, the Apostle Paul tells us that *“in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”* We are *“in Adam”* due to physical birth, and we can enter into Christ only by spiritual birth. This is why Jesus said to Nicodemus, *“You must be born again”* (John 3:7).

The altar of bronze is a reminder that no man can come to God except through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ (John 14:6). He is the *“gift of God”* (Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 9:15) to all mankind. But that gift, and the life He offers, can only be received by faith (Romans 4:3–5; Ephesians 2:8).

When we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are forgiven all sins; and His righteousness is placed to our account before God (Romans 4:3, 22–25). As a child of God, we are now able to draw near to Him in spiritual growth and conformity to His character. This process is seen in the six remaining articles of the Tabernacle.

Summary Lessons

1. The altar of sacrifice reminds us that God is holy and must judge all sin. It is the promise of the cross of Jesus Christ.
2. Jesus Christ offered Himself to God on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for all mankind, John 3:16; Romans 3:21–26; 1 Timothy 2:5–6; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2.
3. All who believe in Him as Savior are forgiven all sins and are granted the righteousness of Jesus Christ, Romans 3:21–26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14.
4. At the moment of salvation, God the Holy Spirit comes to indwell the believer, to be our *“Helper”* in spiritual growth and conformity to Christ, John 14:16–18; Romans 8:9–11, 15–17.
5. Once we become children of God by faith, it is essential that we grow up to spiritual maturity, Ephesians 4:11–16; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 6:1; 2 Peter 1:5–7, 3:18.

The Laver of Cleansing, Jesus Christ our Purification—Exodus 30:17–21, 38:8

*“Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things,
he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to
the Master, prepared for every good work.”* 2 Timothy 2:21

Where the altar of sacrifice speaks of the finished work of Christ for our salvation (John 19:30; Hebrews 10:12), the laver reminds us of the need for daily cleansing. Though we are saved once for all by faith in Christ (Hebrews 10:10, 14), we will still commit sin, and need to know how to receive cleansing from it.

The Sins of the Christian

Salvation by faith delivers us forever from the guilt and penalty of sin. However, as Christians, we still retain the sin nature, and we will continue to commit sins day-by-day. The Apostle Paul clearly portrays his own struggle with sin in Romans 7.

Both in Peter's denial of the Lord (Matthew 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:54–61; John 18:25–27), as well as his compromise with the legalistic Judaizers in Galatians 2:11–14, we see the leader of the Jerusalem church caught in sin. Because of the continued presence and practice of sin, we who believe in Jesus Christ must learn to wash ourselves daily with the water of life. The laver of cleansing teaches this truth.

The Washing of Water

The laver of bronze was placed between the altar of sacrifice and the entrance to the holy place. This position indicates that even after the sacrifice for sin has been offered, there is still need for cleansing before engaging in the service of God.

The laver, like the altar of sacrifice, was made of bronze. Since bronze speaks of judgment, this is a reminder that cleansing after salvation is based on the finished work of Christ on the cross. Even though the priests had been set apart to serve God, they still had to wash daily.

At the dedication of the priests, four things were done in connection with a sacrificial offering (Exodus 29:1–20). First, they were bathed with pure water. Next, they were clothed with the garments of the priesthood. Then, they were anointed with oil. Finally, the sacrifices were offered, and the blood applied to them on the right ear, right hand, and right foot. This is symbolic of hearing God's Word, doing its commands, and following its guidance.

After this once-for-all dedication, the priests would wash daily at the laver (Exodus 30:17–21) before entering the Tabernacle for service. We can see that their dedication is a picture of the provisions of salvation, while the daily washing is a picture of the need for day-by-day cleansing.

Jesus Christ and Living Water

Jesus often spoke of "living water" as He taught people His Word. He talked to Nicodemus of being "born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). To the woman at the well, He offered "living water," which would forever satisfy her spiritual thirst (John 4:10–14). At the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus cried out and said:

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." John 7:37–38

John tells us in John 7:39 that Jesus was referring to the Holy Spirit, who would be given to all who believed in Him.

In this way, we see that the role of the Holy Spirit is critical both in our salvation and also in our Christian lives. The laver of cleansing teaches us how necessary the ministry of the Spirit of God is to the believer. Consider His role both in salvation and spiritual living.

Five Works of the Spirit at Salvation

1. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:13.
By the baptism of the Spirit, we are eternally united with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1–10). Water baptism is a public confession that His Spirit has already placed us into the Body of Christ.
2. The Regeneration of the Spirit, Titus 3:4–6.
Regeneration means to be “born again.” Paul calls this “*the washing of regeneration.*” It is the once-for-all bath of cleansing from sin forever. Paul reminded even the carnal Corinthians that they had been “*washed*” and purified from sin (1 Corinthians 6:11).
3. The Indwelling of the Spirit, John 14:16–18; Romans 8:9–11.
At the moment of salvation, the Spirit of God takes up His residence in the newly created inner man (2 Corinthians 5:17). He comes to be our comforter, “*Helper,*” and mentor (John 14:16). This indwelling is “*forever*” according to Jesus and will never end.
4. The Gifting of the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:4–7.
Every child of God is gifted and empowered to serve God in a specific area of ministry (1 Corinthians 12; 1 Peter 4:10–11). We are a new priesthood (1 Peter 2:5–9), dedicated to the service of God through the temple of our body (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19–20). As we grow to maturity, our gift will become evident and effective.
5. The Sealing of the Spirit, 2 Corinthians 1:21–22; Ephesians 1:13–14; 4:30.
Finally, we are sealed by the Spirit for our eternal destiny. We might say that the Spirit of God places on us the mark of God’s ownership. We belong to Him, and this seal is the guarantee of our eternal inheritance in His kingdom.

These five things take place through the power of the Spirit, at the moment of our salvation. Each of them plays a role in our future growth and service.

Jesus illustrated the difference between eternal and daily cleansing in the Upper Room (John 13:1–10). The foot-washing was a picture of the disciples’ need for daily cleansing. When Peter, after being rebuked, asked to be washed all over, Jesus said, “*He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean.*” In other words, the washing of salvation cannot be repeated. But daily cleansing is necessary. Not only had the disciples entered the room without washing their feet, they had been arguing about who would be greatest in Jesus’ kingdom (Luke 22:24). Jesus was showing them that they needed cleansing from this attitude of pride.

When we commit sin, we stand in need of “*the washing of water by the word*” (Ephesians 5:26). When we come boldly to the throne of God’s grace (Hebrews 4:14–16) and confess our sins honestly (1 John 1:9), we can then receive correction from God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:16–17) so

that we “*put off*” the conduct of “*the old man*” (our unsaved way of life), and we “*put on*” the conduct of “*the new man*” (see Ephesians 4:20–24). This is the truth taught by the laver. When we have washed with the water of life, we are prepared to enter into the service of God.

Summary Lessons

1. The altar of sacrifice and the laver of cleansing in the Tabernacle relate to those foundational teachings needed by the “*little children*” (1 John 2:12–14), or those who are new believers. These teachings relate to the security of our salvation and the provisions for cleansing of daily sin.
2. The laver of cleansing reminds us that, after salvation, we still stand in need of daily washing from God’s Word (John 13:10).
3. The Spirit of God indwells every believer to convict us of sin in our life and to correct us by the Word of God (John 16:13–14; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).
4. We can only conduct ourselves as obedient sons of God when we are being led by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:13–15).
5. The Spirit of God seeks to wash us in the Word of God daily to prepare and equip us for serving God. This is now illustrated by entrance into the holy place of the Tabernacle.

Reminder

The truths and doctrines contained in the altar of sacrifice and the laver are essential for new believers. They must understand that the cross paid for all their sins: past, present, and future. They must gain the assurance of their security in Christ, and learn to deal with daily sins by the cleansing power of confession, correction, and obedience. On this foundation, they are able to grow from the childish stage into the “*strong*,” “*young men*” stage of ongoing maturity (1 John 2:12–14). This is the equivalent of entering now into the holy place.

The Golden Lampstand, Jesus Christ our Light—(Exodus 25:31–40, 37:17–24)

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

Once we understand both the eternal and day-by-day provision for cleansing, we are prepared to engage in effective service to God. The first article we see in the Tabernacle is the golden lampstand. We cannot serve God unless we serve Him in the light (1 John 1:7).

Light in a Dark World

We live in a very dark world. This darkness is spiritual in nature and is under the control of the prince of darkness—Satan himself. In our unbelief, we were children of darkness (Ephesians 5:8) but have now, in Christ, been delivered from Satan’s power (Colossians 1:13). As “*children of [the] light*” (Ephesians 5:8), we are to shine the light of Christ into this dark world (2 Corinthians 4:6; Philippians 2:15). However, we are incapable of doing this in our own strength. Again, we are reminded of the need for the ministry of the Spirit of God in our lives.

The Illumination of God's Spirit

Both the altar and the laver were made of bronze because this is the symbol of judgment. However, once we enter the holy place, everything is made of wood covered with gold. This is a picture of the dual nature of Jesus as the God-man. He is perfect humanity and undiminished deity in one Person. Gold is the symbol of God's nature, which we reflect as our faith is purified (1 Peter 1:7–8).

The lampstand had seven lamps, and these reflect the perfect ministry of the Spirit of God (Isaiah 11:2; Revelation 5:6). The lampstand provided the only light in the Tabernacle, reminding us that there is no light apart from the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:14) who always points us to Jesus Christ (John 1:4–5, 9). Without the illuminating work of the Spirit, no one can know Jesus Christ or understand His Word (Ephesians 1:15–20). The lampstand is pictured as the seven churches in Revelation 1:12–13, 20 because the Spirit indwells the Church.

This lampstand, and in fact the whole Tabernacle, was based on the heavenly pattern revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5). Since we know that God is the true Temple in Heaven (Revelation 21:22), we know that everything in the Tabernacle speaks of God's plan revealed through Jesus Christ.

The lamp was to be kept burning continually by the priests (Exodus 27:20–21)—a reminder that we are to keep the oil of the Spirit always burning in our souls from the fire of God's Word (Jeremiah 23:29).

Walking in the Light

The Apostle John tells us that, *“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7). We walk in the light as we obey the Word of God by the power of His Spirit.

In the Ephesian epistle, Paul first prays for their enlightenment by the Spirit (Ephesians 1:15–21), then he prays for their enablement from the Spirit (Ephesians 3:14–21). The principle is that enlightenment must precede enablement. We need to learn before we can obey and do.

We have seen in the previous section the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation. Now, we need to consider His ministry to us in enabling us to walk in the light.

Five Commands Regarding the Spirit of God

1. *“Do not grieve the ... Spirit,”* Ephesians 4:30.
The context from Ephesians 4:17–32 shows us that if we commit sins, we grieve the indwelling Spirit of God. Since we are not walking in the light, He cannot give us more light. Disobedient conduct blinds us to the Spirit's guiding and wisdom for life.

2. “Do not quench the Spirit,” 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

Once again, the context from 1 Thessalonians 5:11–22 reveals that failure to obey what is good quenches the Spirit. Whereas we grieve the Spirit by negative things we do, we quench the Spirit by the positive things we fail to do. The first is caused by sins we commit; the second is caused by good works we omit. James teaches us that good works, in obedience to the Word and Spirit of God, gives life to our faith (James 2:14–26). The best way to quench a fire is to stop giving it fuel. The Spirit is quenched when we cease doing spiritual works.

3. “Be filled [by] the Spirit,” Ephesians 5:18.

When we speak of the filling of the Spirit, we do not mean we get more of the Spirit, since we are indwelt by the whole Spirit from the moment of salvation (John 14:16–18; Romans 8:9–11). The Spirit fills us with His fruit (Galatians 5:22–23), which makes us more like Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29–30, 12:1–2; 2 Corinthians 3:17–18). The believer who is filled by the Spirit will:

- witness to the true Gospel message (Acts 2:14–39, 4:8–12, 31, 9:17–20),
- confront and expose false doctrine (Acts 13:9–12),
- be filled with joy (Acts 2:28, 13:52),
- be filled with wisdom (Acts 6:3),
- be full of God’s Word and faith (Acts 6:4–5, 11:24),
- be powerful (Acts 6:8), and
- be full of good works (Acts 9:36; Romans 15:14).

These are the true signs of the believer filled by the Spirit. In simple terms, they become more and more like Jesus Christ in character, conduct, and ministry.

4. “Walk in the Spirit,” Galatians 5:16, 25.

It is important to note that this command is in the context of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). To walk in the Spirit is to walk in good works (Titus 1:1, 2:11–14, 3:1, 8, 14). This is accomplished by a conscious submission to the authority of the Spirit and the Word of God (Romans 6:11–14, 12:1–2). This involves a deliberate denial of self (Luke 9:23), the putting off of old habits and ways, and the putting on of obedient conduct (Ephesians 4:20–24; Colossians 3:1, 8–11). It is like taking off old, worn and dirty clothing, and putting on clean new clothes.

5. Love by the power of the Spirit, 1 Peter 1:22.

Here, Peter makes it clear that obedience to the truth comes by submission to the Spirit, who will produce in us the love of Christ for other members of the family of God. We might say that the filling of the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit, and the evidence of this is love for fellow-believers. This love is not emotional, it is spiritual. It is not selfish, but is sacrificial. In 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, all of the negatives speak of the deficiencies of human love, which always have an element of selfishness. The love of Christ is selfless, as illustrated by the eight positives, and leads to sacrificial service. We are to be energized by the love of Christ in our lives (2 Corinthians 5:14–15).

Summary Lessons

1. The Spirit of God will always lead us to the Word of God (John 16:13–14).
2. The lampstand reminds us that the Holy Spirit gives us light to understand the Word of God and to walk in its light (John 8:12, 9:5; Ephesians 1:17–19, 5:8–10).
3. We might say that every believer is a lamp (Revelation 1:20), to be filled with the oil of the Spirit, and lit by the fire of God’s Word, to give light to the world (Philippians 2:15).
4. Because Jesus Christ is the “*Light*” of the world (John 1:4–5, 9, 8:12, 9:5), the Spirit of God has come to glorify Him by giving that light to every child of God (John 15:26–27, 16:13–15).
5. As we live and speak according to the truth of Christ, God will bring light from our life and ministry to deliver others from the darkness of Satan’s kingdom (2 Corinthians 4:1–6).

The Table of Bread, Jesus Christ the Bread of life—Exodus 25:23–30, 37:10–16

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

The word translated “showbread” in English is *paniyim* in Hebrew, and comes from a root that means “form or presence.” The bread represents the presence of God, who is the only One who can satisfy the hunger of the soul.

The Problem of Spiritual Hunger

Because of our separation from God, every soul has a spiritual hunger, which nothing in this world can fill. All mankind is driven by this hunger. However, in our blindness and hardness of heart, we seek to satisfy the hunger with things of this world. Our sin nature perverts our need for a right relationship with God into lust for personal gratification. This is called the love of the world (1 John 2:15–17). As long as we live by the love of this world, the love of the heavenly Father is not in us. Our spiritual hunger can only be satisfied by receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and growing in His Word.

The Bread of Heaven

Jesus said to the multitude, “*Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you ... I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever ...*” (John 6:27, 51).

The table of showbread was a picture of Jesus Christ—the “*bread of life*” (John 6:33, 35, 48, 51). We come to the table of bread after the lampstand because no man can come to Jesus Christ without the conviction and drawing of the Holy Spirit (John 12:32, 16:7–14). There are three symbols of Jesus Christ in the bread found in the Bible:

1. The bread of Melchizedek, Genesis 14:18–20.

This is the first record of men eating bread (see also the prophecy of Genesis 3:19, the first mention of bread in the Bible). Abraham had just won a great victory. He was about to face a great test, as the king of Sodom would offer him all the plunder of that victory (Genesis 14:21–24). Melchizedek, the king of ancient Jerusalem (see Hebrews 7:1–2) is a picture of Jesus Christ. He came and offered to Abraham “*bread and wine.*” This is the first mention of these two elements together. The fact that Melchizedek was also a priest of God indicates that there was a spiritual meaning behind his actions. In these elements, he was reminding Abraham of the promises of God, and pointing to the focus of his hope: the Lord Jesus Christ (John 8:56; Romans 4:1–3; Galatians 3:6–9). By reminding Abraham of God’s promises, Melchizedek helped him escape from the desire for the things of this world, represented by the temptation of the king of Sodom.

2. The bread of the Passover, Exodus 12:6, 18.

On the day of Passover, the Jews began the feast of unleavened bread (Exodus 13:6–10, 23:14–17, 34:18). Because leaven was a picture of the influence of evil (Matthew 16:6; Mark 8:15; 1 Corinthians 5:6), it was not used for this bread. Here, we also have a picture of the sinless nature of Jesus Christ. The unleavened bread was eaten with the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:6, 18), revealing that our Lord is both the sacrificial Lamb of God and the Bread of Life. This is the bread and cup that now speaks of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:25–27; Hebrews 8:7–13), which we celebrate in the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:26–30; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

3. The bread of the Tabernacle, Exodus 25:30.

In light of the first two examples, we can see that the “*bread of the Presence*” (NASB) was also a picture of Jesus Christ. Its position in the tabernacle reminds us that if we are to “*draw near*” to God (Hebrews 10:22), we must come first to the altar of sacrifice (salvation by faith in Jesus Christ), then to the laver (cleansing from sin daily), then to the lampstand (illumination of the Spirit), after which we can feed on the bread (Bible study).

Feasting at God’s Banquet Table

In ancient times, as in the days of King David, it was common for the King’s banquet table to be open to many poor, needy people (2 Samuel 9:1–8). David realized that in giving us His Word, God had provided a rich spiritual banquet for us (Psalm 23:5). When we fail to feed our souls on the Word of God, we insult His Spirit and suffer spiritual loss (see the parable in Luke 14:15–24). Our use of the Word of God, day-by-day, will determine our place and power in Heaven. Jesus promised His disciples that they would feast at His table in His kingdom (Luke 22:28–30). Will we be seated near Him, or far down at the end of the table?

Summary Lessons

1. The table of bread speaks of Jesus Christ as the only bread that can satisfy the hunger of the soul (John 6:47–51).
2. We can only feed on that bread by learning the Word of God on a daily basis. Every day we feed our body; it is more important that we feed our souls!

3. The bread of God's Word not only satisfies spiritual hunger, but it brings us spiritual growth into the likeness of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17–18; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18).
4. God has given us gifted teachers of His Word so that we might grow up to spiritual maturity (Ephesians 4:11–16).
5. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray “*give us this day our daily bread*” (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3), He did not mean just physical bread. We must always remember that “*man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*” (Matthew 4:4, see also Deuteronomy 8:3).

Only when we have been fed by the Word of God are we ready to move on to the next article in the Tabernacle, which is the altar of incense.

The Altar of Incense, Jesus Christ our Intercessor—Exodus 30:1–10, 37:25–28

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

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

Standing before the veil, which separated the holy place from the holy of holies, was the altar of incense. A special incense was used here that was not to be used for anything else (Exodus 30:34–38). In addition, no other incense was ever to be offered on this altar (Exodus 30:9). We will see why this was so important.

We Need a Mediator

Man's great need is to reach out to God. But how can sinful man enter into God's presence? Our sense of separation from God can lead us to despair of any hope at all. In the story of Job, during his great afflictions, he cried out (Job 9:32–33):

“For He [God] is not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him, and that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both.”

Deep in the soul of every person is this sense of desperation. How can one so sinful ever gain a fair hearing from a God who is holy?

Jesus Christ, our Intercessor

The altar of incense was God's promise, in a prophetic picture, of One who would be our mediator, intercessor, and advocate. The altar was again made of wood overlaid with gold, speaking of the union of God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ. He alone could be the go-between who held both the interest of God and man in bringing about reconciliation.

The incense that was used on the altar (Exodus 30:34–38) was unique, as Jesus Christ is unique—unlike any other man. As this incense burned, the aroma ascended up to Heaven—a picture of the intercession of Jesus Christ on our behalf (Romans 8:34; Ephesians 5:2). Whenever we come under condemnation, either by man or by the devil who is called “*the accuser of [the] brethren*” (Revelation 12:10), then Jesus Christ speaks as our “*Advocate*” (1 John 2:1–2). He is able to defend us, because any sin we commit He has died and paid for.

Further, the fire used on the altar could only come from the altar of sacrifice (Leviticus 16:12). This indicates that our Lord’s intercession is based on His finished sacrifice on the cross. To use any fire not from the altar of sacrifice or any other incense was called “strange fire” or “*strange incense*” (Exodus 30:9), and the penalty was death (Leviticus 10:1–3). The main point in all these instructions was to make clear that no man can approach God on any other basis than the substitutionary death of the Savior on the cross.

Finally, when the High Priest entered into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1–14), he could enter only if he brought the blood of the sacrifice (picture of the cross of Christ) and the altar of incense (picture of the intercession of our Lord). To come without either meant certain death (Leviticus 16:2). To bring both these things meant mercy and forgiveness would be given—both to him and to the people. Today, Jesus, our High Priest, is seated in the presence of God the Father to gain mercy and forgiveness for us on the basis of His death, and through His intercession (Hebrews 8:1–2, 9:11–15, 24–28, 10:19–24; 1 John 2:1–2).

Our Access to God’s Throne

Because we have a perfect Mediator and Intercessor in Jesus Christ, who is now seated at God’s right hand (Hebrews 8:1), we are able to boldly approach the throne of God with our own prayers (Hebrews 4:14–16, 10:19–22). We find that the altar of incense is often used in connection with the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8, 8:4). The point is that both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit join in with our prayers before the throne of God (Romans 8:26–27, 34). Remember that Zacharias was offering incense, while the people were praying, when he was foretold of the birth of John (Luke 1:9–17).

When we pray amiss, the Holy Spirit corrects our prayers according to the will of God (Romans 8:26–27). When we pray according to the will and Word of God, we have power and are certain of being answered (1 John 5:14–15). It is encouraging to consider that God considers the prayers of His people as sweet-smelling incense!

Summary Lessons

1. When Jesus Christ offered Himself in our place on the cross, His sacrifice was like fragrant incense to God (Ephesians 5:2).
2. In Heaven, the Lord Jesus continues to intercede for us, defending us against all accusations and gaining mercy for us in times of need (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 8:1–2; 1 John 2:1–2).
3. Because our High Priest is in Heaven, we can come to the throne of God with boldness, knowing that God delights to give us grace and mercy (Hebrews 4:14–16).

4. The more we understand the Word and will of God, and pray accordingly, the more powerful and effective our prayer life will be (2 Corinthians 2:14–16; 1 John 5:4–5, 14–15).
5. Truly effective prayer is less of praying for my needs (Matthew 6:8), and more of interceding on behalf of others (Colossians 1:9; James 5:16).
6. The prayers of God’s people are stored up before God as a basis for His judgment on the Earth (Psalm 56:8; Revelation 5:8, 8:3–5).

Reminder

The three articles in the holy place (the lampstand, table of bread, and altar of incense) represent those truths and doctrines that help us grow from “*young men*” (1 John 2:12–14), what we might call adolescent believers, into full-grown maturity. They represent the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of daily feeding on the Word of God, and the maintenance of an effective prayer life. Only those who consistently walk in the power of the Spirit, learn the Word of God, and “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) are empowered to enter beyond the veil. This is to become a mature child of God, abiding in Christ.

The Veil, Jesus Christ the Door—Exodus 26:31–35

“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 ...” Hebrews 10:19–20, 22

The Barrier between God and Man

Moses was told by God that the veil represented a barrier between God and mankind (Exodus 26:33). No one but the High Priest could go behind that veil on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1–14). This veil represented the barrier of sin that separates us from God. Without our sins removed, we cannot look on the glory of God.

This barrier was also illustrated by the veil Moses wore on his face to hide the glory of God from the children of Israel (Exodus 34:29–35). Even the reflected glory of God was too much for them to look on, due to their unbelief. However, as Paul teaches us, that veil is removed by faith in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:12–18).

It is because of this barrier that unsaved men fear God. When we speak to unbelievers about God, they become fearful, and don’t want to talk about it. There is a “*veil [over] their heart*” (2 Corinthians 3:14–15). That veil remains because of unbelief, by which men remain under condemnation (John 3:17–19). Only when one comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the veil, and the fear, removed.

The Barrier Removed by Christ

When Jesus paid the penalty for all sins on the cross, He said *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). All the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament regarding salvation were fulfilled. At that moment, the veil in the temple was ripped from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51; Luke 23:45).

This symbolized that the barrier between God and men was removed in Christ, and the way to God was open through faith in Him. Jesus, no doubt, had this in mind when He said, *“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me he will be saved”* (John 10:9). Because Peter said that, *“[He] bore our sins in His own body on the tree”* (1 Peter 2:24), the author of Hebrews is able to say, *“He consecrated for us [a way], through the veil, that is, His flesh”* (Hebrews 10:20). The barrier was sin, and when sin was judged in the body of our Lord, the barrier was removed and the way to God was opened.

Our Access into God’s Presence

What a wonderful privilege it is for believers to have an open door into God’s presence at all times! Paul often speaks of our *“access”* to His throne (Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:13–18, 3:12). What this means is that as children of God through faith in Christ, we are free to enter into His presence without fear at any time.

This is especially true when we have failed, and stand in need of His mercy and grace (Hebrews 4:14–16). Others may judge and condemn us, but our Lord and Savior will always intercede on our behalf (Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1–2). Like the father in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32), He will never turn us away! What a loving and gracious God and Savior we have!

Summary Lessons

1. The veil of the Tabernacle, and later the temple, is a reminder that sinful man cannot come near to a holy and just God.
2. When He walked this earth, Jesus gladly received sinners, because He would bear their sins on the cross (John 8:1–12; Luke 5:30–32, 7:39, 15:2, 19:7).
3. With His finished work on the cross, the issue of sin was forever solved, and the way to God opened (John 19:30; Matthew 27:51; John 14:6).
4. Satan is constantly working to accuse us before God, and to create fear in us of approaching God (Revelation 12:10; Hebrews 2:14–15). He uses the judgmental attitude of others to seek to create in believers a sense of unworthiness (2 Corinthians 2:5–8, note that this refers to the man in 1 Corinthians 5:1–5).
5. Only by faith and the assurance of the Word of God can we be lifted above the condemnation of others to a sense of worth, value, and purpose in God’s plan (Philippians 1:29–30; Colossians 2:8–10, 16–19; 1 Peter 2:5–9).
6. To enter beyond the veil is to leave all the things of this world, taking our eyes off of things, circumstances, and others, to just gaze on the face of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:1–3). When we “abide in Christ,” all else fades from view, and He is all in all.

The Ark and Mercy Seat, Jesus Christ our Peace—Exodus 25:10–22, 37:1–9)

The Ark of the Covenant was the only article found in the holy of holies, also called “*the holy place*.” It represented the presence of God; the mercy seat was a picture of His throne in Heaven. To enter this holy place without blood or incense brought certain death (Leviticus 16:2). But the High Priest, coming with the blood (picture of the cross) and incense (picture of Christ’s intercession - Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1–2), was allowed to enter in peace.

The Cry for Peace

There is a cry for peace with God in the heart of every living soul. All of our doubts, fears, conflicts, and fighting come from lack of peace with God (James 4:1–10; 1 Peter 3:8–12). This is why the message of what Jesus Christ has done is called “*the gospel of peace*” (Acts 10:36; Ephesians 6:15). While men seek to fill the void in their soul with the things of this world, it is only the love of the Father that can bring peace to the troubled soul (1 John 2:15–17; Jude 2). Only Jesus Christ, who brought peace to the stormy sea (Mark 4:39), is able to bring peace to our troubled souls.

Jesus—the Way of Peace

The Ark of the Covenant is an amazing picture of Jesus Christ. First, like other articles in the Tabernacle, it was wood overlaid with gold. As mentioned previously, this pictured the union of God and man in Jesus’ humanity. On the top of the Ark sat the mercy seat—a picture of the throne of God. Beside it were two cherubs—the mightiest of angels—with wings stretched out over the mercy seat, looking down into it. This is the picture David had in mind when he spoke of abiding “*under the shadow of the Almighty*” (Psalm 91:1). These angels represented the holiness of God—His righteousness and justice.

Inside the Ark were three items. They spoke of God’s miraculous provisions for man, and of man’s sinfulness in rejecting them. These articles are listed in Hebrews 9:4:

1. The golden bowl of manna (Exodus 16:15–35).
Here God supplied their “*daily bread*” (Matthew 6:11), which they should have received with gratitude and contentment (1 Timothy 6:8). As we will see, they were not content.
2. Aaron’s rod that budded (Numbers 16:1–40).
Another spiritual provision God makes for His people is spiritual leadership, which is to be honored (1 Timothy 5:17).
3. The broken tables of the Law (Exodus 32:1–19).
The Law of Moses, initially contained in the Ten Commandments, was the revelation of God’s Word for their lives, designed to sustain their souls (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4).

Each of these items represented provisions God made for Israel, which in some way they rejected. When He gave them manna in the wilderness, which was designed to test their faith (Exodus 16:4), they failed. They complained about the manna (Numbers 11:6) and tried to gather

it on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:27), which they were forbidden to do. The word “*manna*” in the Hebrew means “What is it?” They insulted the grace of God by their unbelief and ingratitude.

The rod of Aaron spoke of spiritual leadership, which was ordained by God. Korah and his associates found fault with Aaron, and led a rebellion against him and Moses. Neither of these men were perfect, but they were God’s chosen leaders. God used the budding of Aaron’s rod as a supernatural way of showing His chosen priest. It pictured the power God has to even give life to that which is dead. No matter how weak a man may be, if he is God’s chosen leader, he will be mighty through the Spirit of God.

The broken tables were God’s revelation of true holiness to a sinful people. The Law was never given to save mankind, rather it was given to condemn us, for the purpose of leading us to faith in Christ (Galatians 3:10–14, 19–24). In violating the Law, Israel was rejecting both the Lawgiver, and His provision through Jesus Christ to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5:17; Romans 10:4).

Three Categories of Sin

In these three provisions, and Israel’s failure to receive them by faith, we see the three main categories of sin that infects our lives:

1. The sins of the tongue (manna).

The people grew tired of manna and grumbled against God because of it (Numbers 6:11, 18–23). James warns us that though the tongue is a small member, if not under the control of the Spirit of God, it is set on fire by hell (James 3:1–12).

2. The sins of the mind (Aaron’s rod).

In the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16), we see the sins of pride and envy. These are some of the most dangerous of all sins because they are easily hidden. Yet they are very destructive.

3. The sins of the body (the tables of the Law).

In the incident in Exodus 32, the people not only engaged in idolatry, but also immorality, when it says they “*rose up to play*” (see Exodus 32:6 and 1 Corinthians 10:6–7). The word in Hebrew is the same used in Genesis 28:8 of Isaac showing affection to his wife.

So these three items not only speak of God’s gracious supply, but of man’s rejection of those gifts.

Between these symbols of God’s grace and man’s sin was the mercy seat. It was here, on the Day of Atonement, that the High Priest would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice (Leviticus 16:11–17). This blood covered the mercy seat, and came between the symbols of Israel’s sin and the cherubs—symbols of God’s righteousness and justice.

The word “*atonement*” in Hebrew means “to cover, to hide.” The picture is that sins are hidden from the sight of God through the blood of Christ. Because God is satisfied with the work of Christ on the cross, we have peace with God (Romans 5:1–2; Ephesians 2:14). It is by understanding this truth and living in light of it, that we enter into true spiritual maturity.

Abiding in Christ

In the Upper Room (John 13–17), Jesus spoke His last words to His disciples before going to the cross. In this extended message, we have parallels to the order of the seven items of furniture in the Tabernacle:

1. The altar of sacrifice = the coming crucifixion.
Jesus was anticipating His crucifixion and resurrection, as we see in John 13:1–3, 31–35, 14:27–31, 16:16–22. He would be leaving them, but would not leave them alone!
2. The laver = His lesson about spiritual cleansing.
In John 13:4–17, He instructs them both about our once-for-all purification from all sin (John 13:10, we are “*bathed*” at salvation), as well as our need for daily “foot washing.” As we daily confess and correct our own sins (2 Timothy 2:21; 1 John 1:9), and forgive others who sin against us (James 5:16), we are able to both receive and give the “foot washing” needed.
3. The lampstand = ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15–18).
This is a major part of this extended message (see John 14:15–18, 26–28, 15:26–27, 16:7–15).
4. The table of bread = the importance of God’s Word.
He stresses the importance of obedience to the Word of God (John 13:34–35, 14:6, 15, 21–23, 15:7).
5. The altar of incense = the power of prayer.
Jesus teaches the disciples about effective prayer (John 14:12–14, 15:7–8, 16:23–28).
6. The veil = entering and abiding in Him.
When Jesus talks about “abiding” in Him (John 15:1–27), He is inviting the disciples (and us) to enter the veil and dwell in His presence. To “abide in Christ” is to “*abide under the shadow of the Almighty*” (Psalm 91:1).
7. The ark = the high-priestly ministry of Jesus.
In John 17, we see our Lord exercising His high-priestly role as Mediator and Intercessor. His repeated desire is that we might be one, as He and the Father are One. Here, we see a preview of His present intercession on our behalf at the right hand of God (Romans 8:34–39).

The more you study the Tabernacle, and compare it to the Upper Room Discourse (John 13–17), the more you will see that all the pictures are fulfilled for us in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

It has been my purpose to show that all the shadows and pictures of the Tabernacle are fulfilled in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. These lessons only touch the surface of this truth. I pray that you will diligently study this topic, and pray for the Spirit of God to make clear

to you every truth that we have covered. If you will diligently study with the desire to “*rightly* [divide] *the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15), the Spirit of God will reveal much more to you than is contained in this brief presentation.

Finally, I pray that you will not only study to learn, but also to obey, and then to teach others (see Ezra 7:10). Only then will my labor in this little book not be in vain!

The Tabernacle Typical Meaning

The Seven Articles, Exodus 31:7–9; Hebrews 9:1–5

1. The Brazen Altar, Exodus 27:
 - a. a picture of Christ our sacrifice, John 1:29; Hebrews 13:10–13
 - b. a picture of salvation to the believer, John 1:12, 3:16; Acts 16:31

2. Laver of Cleansing, Exodus 30:17–21:
 - a. of Christ, a picture of the Water of Life, John 3:5; Ephesians 5:26
 - b. for the believer, a picture of daily cleansing, 1 John 1:9; 2 Timothy 2:20–22

3. The Lampstand, Exodus 25:
 - a. of Christ, Light of the world, John 1:9, 8:12, 9:5
 - b. for the believer, illumination by the Spirit, Ephesians 1:16–19, 3:16–19

4. Table of Showbread, Exodus 25:23–30:
 - a. of Christ, the Bread of Life, John 6:26–48, 53–58
 - b. for the believer, the Word of God, Matthew 4:4; Hebrews 5:14

5. Altar of Incense, Exodus 30:1–10:
 - a. of Christ, our propitiation, Ephesians 5:2
 - b. of the believer, a witness, 2 Corinthians 2:14–17, and our prayers, Revelation 5:8, 8:3

6. The Veil, Exodus 26:31–35:
 - a. of Christ, His body (which covered His deity), Hebrews 10:20
 - b. of the believer: our faith, Hebrews 6:19–20, by which we enter the holy of holies.

7. The Ark of the Covenant, Exodus 25:10–22:
 - a. of Christ, our mercy seat (propitiation), Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2
 - b. of the believer, Hebrews 4:16 (our access to God, place of meeting, Exodus 25:22)

Note: The word translated “*mercy seat*” in Hebrews 9:5 is the same word translated “*propitiation*” in Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2.

