

## Lesson 13 – 24 April 2011

### The Inner Sanctuary of the Tabernacle

**Lesson Scope:** [Exodus Chapters 25 through 40](#)

#### Lesson Focus

Unlike the polytheistic heathen nations surrounding Israel, the Hebrews worshiped one God, and that God chose to meet with His people at one place. (Polytheistic = worshiping many gods)

Stages of separation established a provisional, although temporary, way for man to relate to the holy God. Among men, the Israelites were separate from the rest of mankind, the Levites were separate from the rest of the Israelites: and the high priest was separated from the rest of the Levites. Concerning geography, the dwellings of the people were outside the tabernacle perimeter, the tabernacle courtyard was outside the holy place: the holy place was outside the holiest place, the place of the mercy seat. Man approached God by stages and through representation.

In the Old Testament, the tabernacle was God's chosen place of meeting His people. The sanctuary pointed forward to Christ who provides a greater dimension of fellowship with God today.

This lesson portrays the Gospel in types and shadows. Concerning each of the six items under discussion in this lesson, one question to ask yourself is, "What was being accomplished as the Old Testament saints worshiped with these things?" Whatever it was, the New Testament worship is superior in every respect.

**Lesson Aim:** To study types and shadows from the tabernacle and its furnishings.

**Theme Verse:** [Hebrews 9:24](#). "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true: but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

## **Lesson Text.**

### **The Ark and Mercy Seat**

#### [Exodus 25:10-11](#)

“And they shall make an ark *of* shittim wood: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. <sup>11</sup>And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.”

#### [Exodus 25:16-18](#)

“And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. <sup>17</sup>And thou shalt make a mercy seat *of* pure gold: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. <sup>18</sup>And thou shalt make two cherubims *of* gold, *of* beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.”

#### [Exodus 25:21-22](#)

“And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. <sup>22</sup>And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which *are* upon the ark of the testimony, of all *things* which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”

### **The Table and Candlestick**

#### [Exodus 25:23-24](#)

“Thou shalt also make a table *of* shittim wood: two cubits *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. <sup>24</sup>And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about.”

#### [Exodus 25:30-32](#)

“And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway.

<sup>31</sup>And thou shalt make a candlestick *of* pure gold: *of* beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. <sup>32</sup>And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: “

## **The Veil and Altar of Incense**

### **Exodus 26:31**

“And thou shalt make a veil *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made:”

### **Exodus 26:33-34**

“And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy *place* and the most holy.

<sup>34</sup>And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy *place*.”

### **Exodus 30:1-3**

“And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: *of* shittim wood shalt thou make it. <sup>2</sup>A cubit *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits *shall be* the height thereof: the horns thereof *shall be* of the same. <sup>3</sup>And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about.”

## **The Consummation and Glory**

### **Exodus 40:33-34**

“And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. <sup>34</sup>Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”

## **Questions for Study**

### **The Ark and Mercy Seat**

1. How do the ark and its contents typify Jesus and His work?
2. What activities of God relate to the mercy seat?

### **The Table and Candlestick**

3. How do the table, its provisions, and the candlestick illustrate fellowship?
4. Explain the absence of seats in the tabernacle.

### **The Veil and Altar of Incense**

5. In what ways did the veil typify Jesus' earthly life?
6. Discuss the function of the altar of incense.

## **The Consummation and Glory**

7. What did the Lord communicate by covering the tent with a cloud and filling it with glory?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

The inside of the tabernacle was a place of intense beauty and glory. All the furniture was either covered with gold or made entirely of gold.

God's instructions for building the tabernacle began in the most holy place and moved outward. Man's approach in worship was in the opposite direction, beginning at the court gate.

"The testimony that I shall give thee" (Exodus 25:21) was the Ten Commandments written on stone. Later, two other items were placed in the ark (Hebrews 9:4).

The twelve loaves of shewbread (Exodus 25:30) represented the tribes of Israel. The bread remained on the table for a week. Each Sabbath the priests ate the bread and replaced it with new loaves.

During Israel's wilderness journey, the cloud of God's glory rested on the tabernacle. When the cloud moved, Israel broke camp and followed it.

### **Principles and Applications**

#### **The Ark and Mercy Seat**

1. The ark represents Jesus, the embodiment of God's Word in human flesh (Exodus 25:10-11, 16). The ark was a wooden chest overlaid with gold. Along with the mercy seat, it was separated from the rest of the tabernacle by the veil. In the ark were the tables of the Law, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod. Each of these "shadows" was cast from the person of Jesus. Jesus fulfilled the Law, and in fact is the true Lawgiver. He is King, and His Word is law. The manna sustained the Israelites in their trek through the wilderness. Likewise, the bread of the New Testament, the broken body of Christ, nourishes us in our faith-journey into God's rest. The budding rod affirmed the authority of Aaron and the other Levites to fill the priestly role (see Numbers 17). Jesus' sinless life, sacrificial death, and resurrection qualify Him as the perfect High Priest.

2. At the blood-sprinkled mercy seat the holy God meets sinful man

and bestows pardon and grace (Exodus 25:17-18, 21-22; 26:34). The mercy seat was made of pure gold, topped with golden cherubim facing each other. The mercy seat rested on top of the ark. Every year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would fill the holiest place with the smoke of incense and sprinkle sacrificial blood on and around the mercy seat (see Leviticus 16). In this way, the sins of the people were covered.

Hebrews 9 explains the weakness of this arrangement, as well as the perfect adequacy of Jesus' sacrifice. At the foot of the cross we find mercy, and our sins are washed away.

### **The Table and Candlestick**

3. The table and shewbread symbolise Christ's nourishment and fellowship (Exodus 25:23-24, 30). The twelve loaves represented Israel's place before the Lord forever, and the priests' weekly act of eating the bread in the holy place expressed the twelve tribes' close fellowship with God. Eating the bread also expressed thankfulness and reaffirmed a readiness to continue in the covenant. As a shadow, this tabernacle activity prefigured the Last Supper, when Jesus instituted the memorial of His broken body.

4. The candlestick portrays the unity of the church with Christ in suffering and giving forth light (Exodus 25:31-32). The candlestick was actually a lamp that burned olive oil. Finely wrought from one piece of beaten gold, it had seven flames. In the tabernacle, the lamp stood opposite the table of shewbread.

Seven is a number that occurs in the Bible in conspicuous places. Most notably, there were seven days of creation. The element of time is also present with the candlestick, in that it was to burn continually (Exodus 27:20-21). As a lamp, it obviously gave light. The special privilege of the Jews was to reveal the holiness of God to the world in their day.

The Church of Jesus is the light of the world today. It will reveal God's message of redemption until the close of time.

### **The Veil and the Altar of Incense**

5. The veil indicates the importance of Jesus' incarnation in opening the way into the presence of God (Exodus 26:31-33). The veil hung in front of the ark and the mercy seat, separating man from the holiest place. If any but the high priest entered, he met certain death.

Hebrews 10:19-20 reveals that the holiest place has been opened up for all by the sacrifice of Jesus. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living Way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. The veil of the Old Testament has been removed in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 3:14-18), and the glory of God was manifested in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1: 1-5).

6. The altar of incense illustrates the importance of prayer (Exodus 30:1-3). This altar, set at the entrance of the holiest place, was made of wood and covered with gold. Upon this altar incense was to burn continually. From Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4, we learn that this incense symbolizes the prayers of the faithful. A practical lesson for us is that our worship should be enriched with prayer. We never will get to a point where prayerless worship is acceptable to the Lord.

#### **The Consummation and Glory**

7. God's presence and glory grace the worship of those who approach Him acceptably (Exodus 40:33-34). The Hebrews followed God's instructions for worship, and they were accepted. They saw the cloud of God, but we do not have visible proof of His presence. Instead, we trust that He is near. We have the witness of God in our spirit, and the grace of God strengthens us for obedience. His power is manifested in answered prayers too.

#### **Important Teachings**

1. The ark represents Jesus, the embodiment of God's Word in human flesh (Exodus 25:10-11, 16).
2. At the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, the holy God meets sinful man and bestows pardon and grace (Exodus 25:17-18, 21-22; 26:34).
3. The table and shewbread symbolize Christ's provision for spiritual nourishment and fellowship (25:23-24, 30).
4. The candlestick portrays the unity of the church with Christ in suffering and giving forth light (25:31-32).
5. The veil indicates the importance of Jesus' incarnation in opening the way into the presence of God (Exodus 26:31, 33).
6. The altar of incense illustrates the importance of prayer (Exodus 30:1-3).
7. God's presence and glory grace the worship of those who approach

Him acceptably (Exodus 40:33-34).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. How do the ark and its contents typify Jesus and His work?

Constructed of wood overlaid with gold, the ark typified the reality that Jesus was both human and divine. The mercy seat included no wood, inasmuch as mercy toward man is all on God's part. Cherubim frequently appear in Scripture as guardians of God's holiness. The mercy seat lay between them and the written law on stone, which Israel had often broken.

2. What activities of God relate to the mercy seat?

"There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat" (Exodus 25:22). Below the mercy seat was God's holy Law; above it was His holy presence. Between the two, sinful man found much-needed mercy.

3. How do the table, its provisions, and the candlestick illustrate fellowship?

The wood and gold construction of the table portrays the combined deity and humanity of Christ, who came to this earth to restore man's fellowship with God. The twelve loaves represent the twelve tribes in fellowship with each other on the basis of Christ's then-future work. The main stem and six branches of the candlestick illustrate the fact that believers can function as the light of the world only as they maintain a close relationship with Christ (see John 15:4-5). That the candlestick was "of beaten work" suggests the believers' fellowship with Christ in suffering.

4. Explain the absence of seats in the tabernacle.

The tabernacle offered no seats because service there was never finished. It was only after Christ completed the work foreshadowed in this typology that He "sat down" (Hebrews 1:3; 10:12).

5. In what ways did the veil typify Jesus' earthly life?

The veil, symbolizing Jesus' earthly body (Hebrews 10:19-20), hid the overpowering glory of God from the view of sinful man. The Bible does not explain all the typology present in the tabernacle. We do know that the veil "of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen" was displayed upon four pillars (Exodus 26:32). Is it not significant that the four Gospels present Jesus from four distinct per-

spectives? Matthew presents Jesus as the King (purple); Mark presents Him as the suffering Servant (scarlet); Luke presents Him as the perfect Son of Man (white linen); and John presents Him as the heavenly Son of God (blue). At the moment of Jesus' death, the veil in the temple miraculously rent from top to bottom. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, God was now inviting believers into His holy presence without the mediation of an earthly priest.

6. Discuss the function of the altar of incense.

The golden altar was situated before the Ark of the Covenant, separated only by the veil. Its function was to burn sweet incense before the Lord. The Book of Revelation uses incense to represent the prayers of saints (Rev.5:8; 8:3-4). The altar seems to portray Christ's work of intercession before the Father. With the rending of the veil (Christ's death), believers also share in this ministry. The four horns could symbolize the power of intercession.

7. What did the Lord communicate by covering the tent with a cloud and filling it with glory?

The Lord covered the tent with the cloud, indicating His approval on Israel's finished work. God was now pleased to dwell among them and receive their worship.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

The tabernacle was both beautiful and awesome, God Himself rested there. In the New Covenant, the functions of the tabernacle were fulfilled and superseded by the work of Jesus Christ. He is our Brother, our Sacrifice, our Priest, and our God.

### **Research Guide**

1. Read Leviticus 16; Numbers Chapters 8 and 9; and Hebrews Chapters 8 through 10 for more details on worship at the tabernacle.
2. "Seeing Christ in the Tabernacle" by Ervin N. Hershberger deals with the typology of Old Testament tabernacle worship.