

The Tabernacle and God's Plan of Salvation

Part 3: Dwelling in the Temple of the Almighty

In Psalm 27, King David wrote, "One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock" (Psa. 27:3-4).

In the last two installments of this series on the tabernacle, we journeyed through the eastern entrance to the court, reached the altar of burnt offering, then the laver, and finally entered the Holy Place. We saw that this parallels the first three holy days, as well as Peter's instructions in Acts 2:38: repent, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Receiving the Holy Spirit makes us God's temple or tabernacle (1 Cor. 3:16-17). Like the priests in ancient Israel, we are now dedicated to God and His service.

Entering the house of the Lord, the Holy Place, is where we left off in each of those articles. Now, then, let us examine the Holy Place.

Outside the tabernacle itself, God had commanded Moses to make the altar of burnt offering and the laver of bronze (Ez. 27:1-8; 30:18). Now, on the inside, everything is gold: the lampstand, the table of showbread, the altar of incense, even the walls (Ex. 25:23-24, 31; 26:15-29; 30:1-3).

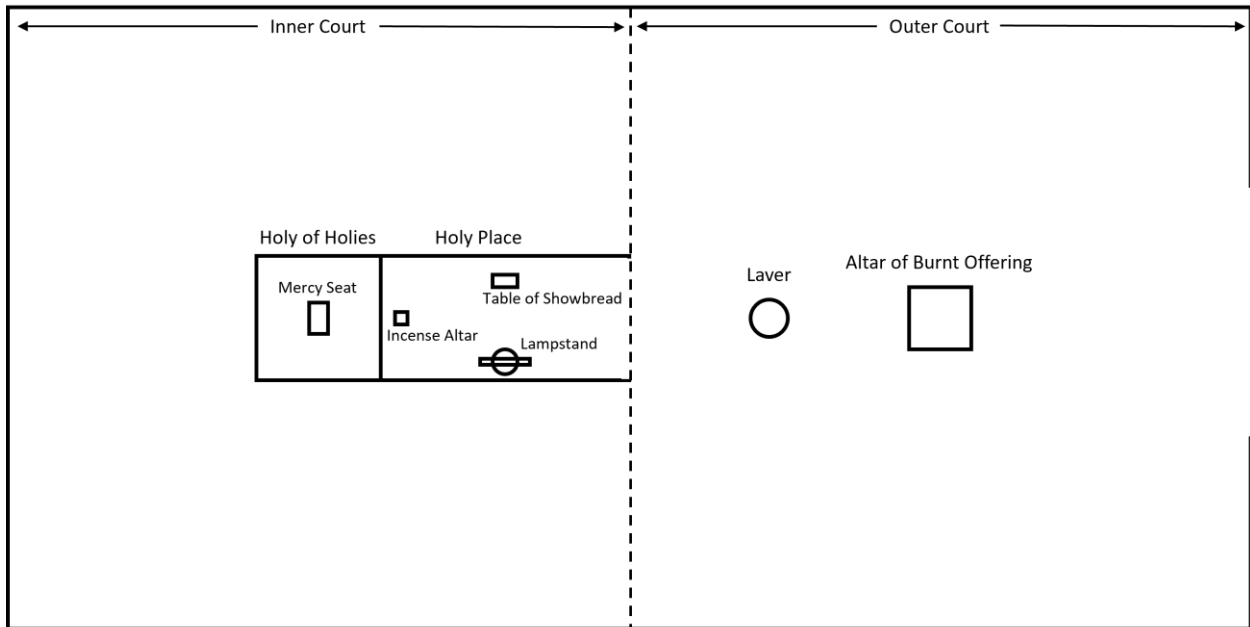
Why gold?

Gold, the most precious metal known to the Israelites, remains perhaps the most desired today. But it's worth no more than mud in comparison to the true riches: "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold... but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). In Psa. 119:127, the psalmist sang to the Almighty, "I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold!"

Yet gold, though rubbish compared to the true riches, pictures them. Yeshua/Jesus warned the congregation at Laodicea, "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed" (Rev. 3:18).

1 Cor. 3:11-13 tells us, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious

The Tabernacle (Exodus 25-31, 35-40)



Holy of Holies: 10L x 10W x 10H	Laver: dimensions not given
Holy Place: 20L x 10W x 10H	Altar of Burnt Offering: 5L x 5W x 3H
Whole Tabernacle: 30L x 10W x 10H	Inner Court: 50L x 50W
Mercy Seat: 2.5W x 1.5L	Outer Court: 50L x 50W
Incense Altar: 1L x 1W x 2H	Entire Courtyard: 100L x 50W
Table of Showbread: 2L x 1W x 1.5H	Entrance to the Courtyard: 20 cubits
Lampstand: dimensions not given	

stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is."

And of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, we read that it consists of "pure gold, like clear glass" (Rev. 21:18, 21).

So we see that the tabernacle's gold pictures the true riches: righteousness, holiness, and truth. To these things our heavenly Father has called us. As He tells us in Lev. 11:45, "For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

The golden walls of the tabernacle must have gleamed in the light of the golden lampstand. Let's examine it first, for without it, we could see nothing else in the tabernacle.

The Lampstand

God told Moses, "You shall also make a lampstand of pure gold; the lampstand shall be of hammered work. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and flowers shall be

of one piece. And six branches shall come out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side” (Ex. 25:31-32).

Atop the main shaft and the six branches, “You shall make seven lamps for it, and they shall arrange its lamps so that they give light in front of it” (Ex. 25:37). Olive oil fed the flames of the lamps (Ex. 27:20).

Light. As in the last article, we return to the topic of light. Here’s John 8:12: “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’”

So the lampstand represents our Messiah. Interestingly, as demonstrated in *The Lord’s Passover* by this author, the lampstand was extinguished each morning at the 3rd hour and relit each evening at the 9th hour, the very hours of the Crucifixion! When Jesus died at the 9th hour, as the lampstand was lit, the darkness lifted and light returned (Mat. 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44).

But this isn’t all Yeshua/Jesus said about light. He also told us, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house” (Mat. 5:14-15).

Both our Messiah and we, His followers, are the light of the world. However, the light we shine is not our own. As the Apostle Paul wrote in Rom. 7:18, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells.”

And yet there IS something good that dwells in us, something that enables us to be a light. 1 Cor. 3:16 explains, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” So the light that we shine is not our own, but the Spirit of God.

As a matter of fact, fire itself can picture the Holy Spirit: “Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:3-4).

What about the olive oil, then?

God instructed oil to be used for anointing, as we can see throughout the Bible. The anointing we receive is the Holy Spirit: “But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him” (1 John 2:27).

Thus, the oil that fed the flame, the fire itself, and the light it produced all pictured the Holy Spirit — the Spirit of God the Father and His Son. (Contrary to mainstream Catholic and Protestant dogma, the Holy Spirit is the power and nature of God, not a separate being. God is Spirit, and His Spirit is holy.)

Lest anyone still doubt that the lampstand represents God's Spirit, we read in Rev. 4:5, "Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

So now we can see that the lampstand pictures both our Savior and us, and that the light shining from it is our Savior's Spirit. This leads us to another interesting discovery.

First, we read in Rev. 1:12-13, "Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band." Then, in v. 20, we find, "the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches."

Again, God's people, His congregations, are the light of the world, just as we read earlier. Of these seven congregations, Yeshua had words of praise for most, and also words of correction for most.

Of one congregation, and only one, He could find nothing praiseworthy to say: Laodicea. To the Laodiceans, Jesus warned, "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:16).

We know that some of God's people won't make the cut as firstfruits, as the parable of the ten virgins in Mat. 25 tells us. After God vomits Laodicea out of His mouth, that leaves six congregations.

Now, remember from Rev. 1:13 that Jesus Christ stands in the midst of the lampstands. The lampstand in the tabernacle had one shaft in the center, the midst, and three branches coming out of each side like branches sprouting from the trunk of a tree.

Jesus told us, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). In the same passage, He said, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He [the Father] takes away" (John 15:2).

Laodicea didn't bear good fruit, so God took it away. He vomited it out of His mouth. Thus we are left with six branches, three out of each side of the Messiah, for He is in the midst of them. That gives us the golden lampstand in the tabernacle!

The Table of Showbread

On the north side of the tabernacle, across from the lampstand on the south, and illuminated by it, stood the table of showbread (Ex. 26:35).

God instructed the priests, "And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD. Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually" (Lev. 24:5-6, 8).

What is bread?

“And Jesus said to them, ‘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). He continued, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die” (John 6:48-50).

Just like the lampstand, the table of showbread pictures Jesus Christ. And, like the lampstand, it also shows more than that.

God’s Word, too, is symbolized by food. We find in Jer. 15:16, “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.”

The writer of the Book of Hebrews chided his audience, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:12-14).

Finally, we get this direct link between bread and God’s Word: “So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD” (Deut. 8:3).

Of course, Yeshua/Jesus is Himself the living Word of God, as several passages teach us. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Verse 14 adds, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” And Rev. 19:13 explicitly calls Him “The Word of God.”

As for the specific bread used placed in the tabernacle, “showbread,” it’s a compound of two Hebrew words: *lechem* (bread; Strong’s # H3899) and *panim* (faces; Strong’s # H6440). The showbread is literally the “bread of faces.”

Bread of faces. What can this possibly mean?

Here’s Jam. 1:22-25 with the explanation: “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

God’s Word is like a mirror. By studying the Bible and by looking at Yeshua/Jesus’ example, we can see where we fall short of God’s standard. We can see what we need to change, just like when we look in a mirror. Thus, the showbread, a type of God’s Word, is the “bread of faces.”

As the lampstand illuminated the table of showbread, so God's Spirit illuminates His Word so that we can understand it. Notice, too, that the priests replaced the showbread every Sabbath. Likewise, when we assemble together on the Sabbath, it's to study and learn from God's Word — a fresh serving of showbread every Sabbath!

Lest anyone think the Sabbath is the only time we need to study God's Word, though, I feel it necessary to point out that whoever eats only once a week will soon waste away and die! Just as our physical bodies need food every day, so do our spiritual bodies.

The Altar of Incense

The third piece of furniture in the Holy Place was the altar of incense in front of the entrance to the Holy of Holies (Ex. 30:1-6).

In Psa. 141:2, King David sang to God, "Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."

In Luke 1:10, as the father of John the Baptist offered incense in the temple, "the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense."

If we hadn't already made the connection, Rev. 5:8 tells us plainly, "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

So incense represents our prayers. God commanded the priests to offer incense on the altar twice a day, morning and evening (Ex. 30:7-8), again foreshadowing the hours of Jesus' crucifixion.

As I demonstrated in *The Lord's Passover*, God's servants in both Old and New Testaments, including David and Daniel, customarily prayed three times a day: morning, noon, and evening. The psalmist of Psalm 119 praised God seven times a day (Psa. 119:164).

1 Thes. 5:16-18 exhorts us, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." As Jam. 5:16 tells us, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

God treasures our prayers.

On the other hand, we read, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight" (Prov. 15:8). Again, even more bluntly, "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Prov. 28:9).

It's a stark reminder that we must "be doers of the word, and not hearers only." When we pray, we speak to God. When we study His Word, He speaks to us. Talking to God without listening to Him is extraordinarily disrespectful!

As we can see, all three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place are interconnected. Furthermore, as demonstrated in a [blog post](#) by this writer, the number 3 represents man's relationship with God. It only makes sense, then, that the three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place reveal the elements of our relationship with God: the Spirit of Christ, God's Word (and obedience to it), and prayer.

All of these must be attended to continually, or else we will end up like the Laodicean congregation: bearing no fruit and cast out of God's presence.

Our journey through the tabernacle has now brought us to the veil in front of the Holy of Holies. What spiritual lessons await us in the Holy of Holies?

To be continued...

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