

INSIGHT INTO THE FUTURE REVEALED IN ANCIENT SANCTUARY

One harmonious theme runs throughout the entire Bible—the full relationship between God and man that was lost, and God’s plan to restore that relationship in due time. (1Tim. 2:3-6) This plan is termed ATONEMENT or at-one-ment, and is revealed through God’s Tabernacle among His people, Israel.

To the casual reader of the Bible, the account of the Tabernacle of Israel may seem a chronicle of no real import for Christians today. The sacrifice of bulls and goats upon a brazen altar may seem to be just another meaningless tradition. But, the Apostle Paul explains that this drama, played out among the Jews for over 500 years, was not only a *schoolmaster* designed to lead them to the Messiah, but also abounds with significance for the Christian—“*a shadow of good things to come.*” Gal. 3:24; Heb. 10:1

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS SANCTUARY IN THE WILDERNESS

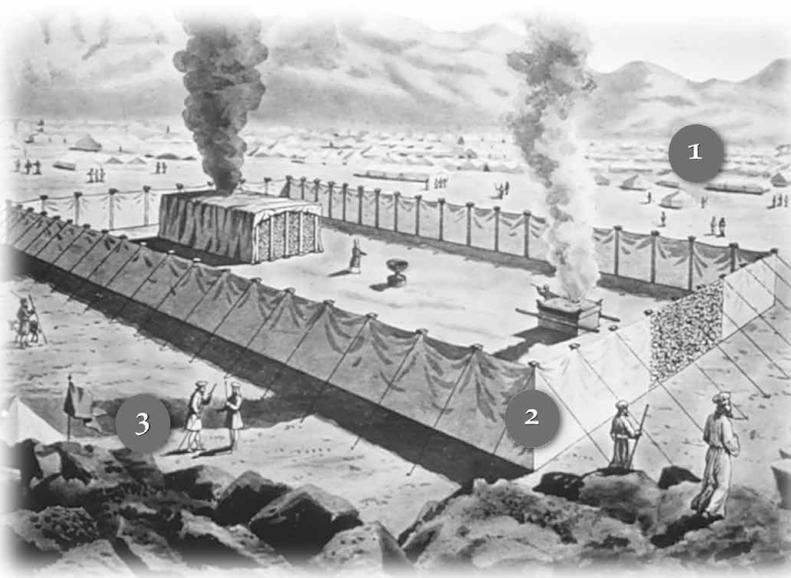
God’s presence was manifested to Israel through this *tent of meeting*. This presence was demonstrated during their wilderness wanderings by a pillar of fire by night over the *Most Holy* of the Tabernacle and a cloud by day. Here Moses would actually speak with God, and here the high priest would learn of God’s judgments through the *Urim and Thummim*. Ex. 33:8-14; Num. 14:10; Ex. 28:30, Lev. 8:8

God also speaks to the church through the many symbolic lessons of the Tabernacle arrangement. The Apostle Paul states in Hebrews 8:5 that the Tabernacle and the priests who served it were but an example or shadow of heavenly (spiritual) things. Continuing this logic he again relates in Hebrews 9:6-9 that the first Tabernacle structure was an allegory or *type* of the spiritually discerned truths of God’s plan for

the atonement of mankind. In Hebrews 9:23-25 Paul plainly states that the activities of the Tabernacle represented Christ’s sacrificial sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven itself, into the presence of God.

SYMBOLIC LESSONS OF THE TABERNACLE

The Tabernacle, with its furniture, priesthood, animal sacrifices and holy days, represents the way of consecration—the way in which a Christian approaches unto God—following in Christ’s footsteps. (1Pet. 2:21; Phil. 3:10; 2Cor. 4:10, 11) It further demonstrates how the world of mankind may be reconciled unto God through Jesus Christ and his church. 1 John 2:2; Rev. 21:1-4; Rom. 8:19-22



“*And the Lord spake unto Moses,...let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.*” Exodus 25:1, 8

The arrangement of the camp, court and Tabernacle symbolically represented the condition of several groups in their relationship to God. Surrounding the Tabernacle at a respectful distance, was **the Camp (1) of Israel**. The Israelites symbolize the world of mankind, separated from God because of sin. They could not see over the seven and a half foot **Curtain of White Linen (2)** encircling the holy things within. To them it was a veil of unbelief; to those within it was a wall of faith.

Encamped closer to the Tabernacle was **the Tribe of Levi (3)**. Each year, this tribe had a most important role in bringing the alienated nation of Israel into harmony with God. The priests who served the Tabernacle were selected from the tribe of the Levites, and through their sacrificial service in the Tabernacle, **atonement** was provided between God and His people.

LESSONS LEARNED IN THE COURT

The sacrificial activities of the High Priest and the underpriests were carried out in **the Court (4)**. Assistants for the priests were chosen from the remainder of the Levitical tribe, and these were permitted to enter into the court. Christ is spoken of as the *High Priest of our profession*. (Heb. 3:1) Christ's church is spoken of as a *Royal Priesthood*. (1Pet. 2:9) The Levites represent young, or immature Christian believers who enter the court by the one **Gate or Door (5)** which pictures our belief in Jesus as the one way or door to God. (John 10:9, 14:6) This is the condition of the Christian when he first approaches God. Like the Levites who had limited responsibilities in the Tabernacle, these have a limited relationship with God until they fully submit their wills to Him. *"Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you."* James 4:8

All articles in the court were made of or overlaid with copper, symbolizing that persons in the court condition were made *just* by the sacrifice of the perfect life of Jesus. The copper fitly represents the perfect man, Christ Jesus, as shown in the illustration of the copper serpent which the children of Israel looked upon to spare their lives. *"And as Moses lifted up the [copper] serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."* John 3:14-15

Once inside the court the first article approached was the **Brazen (copper) Altar (6)** which was made of wood overlaid with copper (mistranslated brass). This represents Jesus' *ransom* sacrifice of his perfect humanity. *"We have an altar, whereof they [the typical priesthood] have no right to eat which serve the Tabernacle."* 1Tim. 2:5,6; Heb. 13:10

Next in the court was the **Laver (7)** made of polished copper and filled with water from which the priests washed their hands and feet before performing sacrificial service. This symbolizes that the believer must wash with the water of God's Word to be clean from earthly defilements. *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."* Eph. 5:26

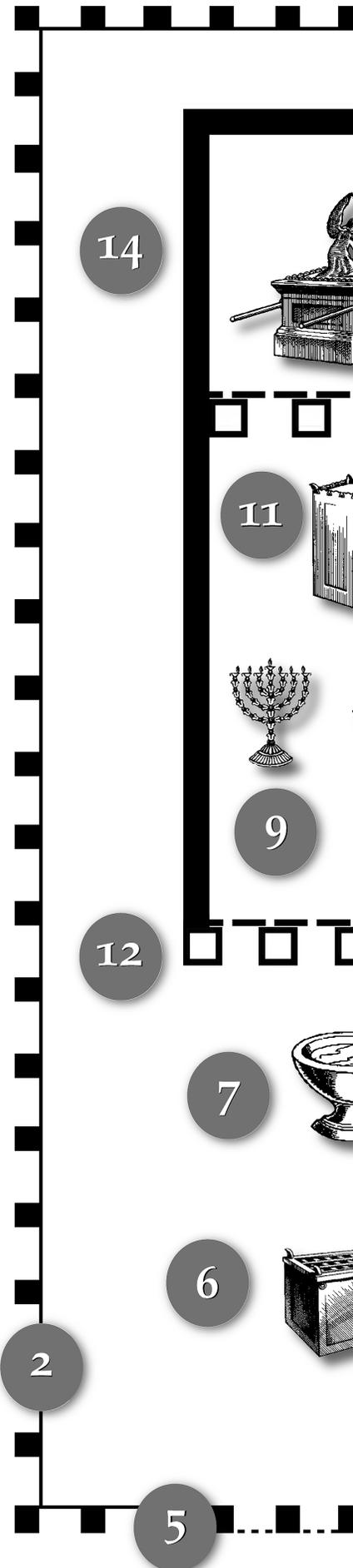
LESSONS LEARNED IN THE HOLY

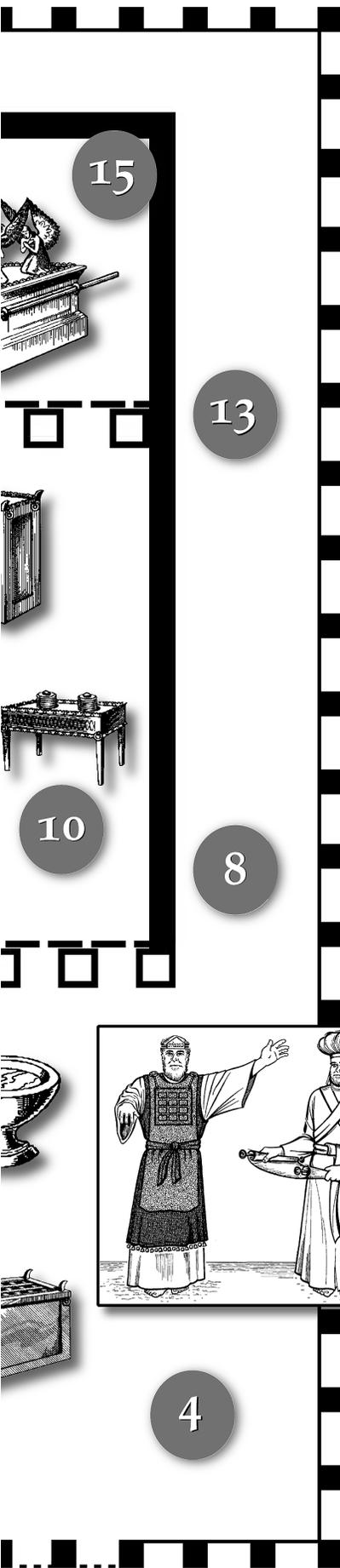
Only the priests could enter into the **Holy (8)**—the first room of the Tabernacle. This pictures that just as the priests only could offer sacrifices, so, too, only believers who go on to consecrate their lives to sacrifice in God's service can enter into the condition of being spirit-begotten and fully justified by the merit of Jesus' sacrifice. *"... present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."* (Rom. 12:1) *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace..."* (Rom. 5:1, 2) Sacrifice directly implies sufferings, especially if it is a *living* sacrifice. See also: Luke 14:25-33; 2Tim. 2:11, 12; Matt. 16:24-26; 19:21-30; James 1:18; 1Pet. 1:23; Heb. 3:1

All things in the Holy were made of, or covered with gold. Gold pictures the divine nature, and represents those who are called to be changed to the divine nature upon their resurrection. (1Pet. 1:4; 2Pet. 1:4) As copper is similar to gold, yet less valuable and less lustrous, this suggests the similarity between God, the Creator, and man the creature. In Genesis 1:26 God said, *"Let us make man in our image . . .,"* and so mankind reflects the ability to reason, worship and love. Yet, as copper tarnishes with time and needs to be polished, or maintained, so, too, perfect humanity is *mortal* and needs sleep, food and water. However, pure gold never tarnishes, it needs no maintenance. A divine being has life within itself and needs no sustenance—it is *immortal*. John 5:26; 1Cor. 15:53, 54

Once inside the Holy what an awesome display was seen! The walls were wood covered with gold. The ceiling was beautiful white linen, covered with cherubim, embroidered with blue, purple and scarlet thread, possibly picturing that those consecrated ones are now under the protection of God, through His ministering spirits—the angels. Heb. 1:13, 14; Matt. 18:10; Psa. 34:7

The only source of light in the Holy was supplied by seven lamps atop a solid **Golden Lampstand (9)** fueled by pure olive oil. What an apt picture of the holy Spirit—represented by the oil—enlightening the minds of consecrated Christians. Only these can see or comprehend spiritual truths. 1Cor. 2:7-15





The second article of furniture was the **Table of Shewbread (10)** made of wood covered with gold. On it sat two piles of *shewbread*, six cakes each, topped with frankincense. The priest class of the Tabernacle was allowed to eat of this bread. This symbolizes that Christians are fed from the Word of God—the 66 books of the Bible, all of which point to salvation through Christ—and also hold it forth unto other spirit-begotten brethren. Matt. 12:4; John 6:35; Phil. 2:16; Matt. 4:4

The third and last piece of furniture in the Holy was the **Golden Incense Altar (11)**. This, too, was made of wood covered with gold. It represents the acceptable sacrifice of Jesus and his church or body members, a sweet odor to God. (Phil 4:18) Our submission to the trials or sufferings of this life is shown by the incense being consumed on contact with the coals of fire and yielding its *sweet-smelling savour*. Eph. 5:1, 2; 2Cor. 2:14, 15; 1Pet. 4:12-13

When a priest passed through the **First Veil or Door (12)** into the Holy, it symbolized the death of a Christian's human will to henceforth do the will of God. The believer is then considered to be *spirit-begotten*—a *new creature*—yet still in the flesh. (Rom. 6:3-6; 8:9; 2Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15) When this earthly course is finished the flesh of the new creature actually dies, and the personality and mind of the new creature is resurrected in a divine spiritual body. (1Cor. 15:40-54) In this condition the new creature will enter heaven itself and behold the heavenly

Father, the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY! This was illustrated when the high priest stooped under the **Second Veil (13)** which separated the Holy room from the **Most Holy room. (14)**

LESSONS LEARNED IN THE MOST HOLY

The chamber called the Most Holy was the location where God dwelled with His people through their mediator Moses. There was only one article of furniture in the Most Holy—the **Ark of the Covenant. (15)** It was made out of wood covered with gold with a solid gold lid called the *mercy seat*. It was from above this mercy seat that God communed with Moses. (Exo. 25:22) It was in the Most Holy that, once every year, the high priest sprinkled the blood of the Atonement Day sacrifice in the pattern of a cross. How wonderfully this pictured our Lord's entry into

heaven itself, 40 days after his resurrection, to present the blood (merit) of his ransom sacrifice on our behalf. (Heb. 9:23-26) As the high priest went twice into the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement with blood, it teaches us that we, his body members (1Cor. 12:27), are privileged to follow our Master's example of faithfully sacrificing our little all even unto death. (Rev. 2:10) Having done so, we will be privileged to follow him into eternal glory and our celestial home! Heb. 10:19, 20; 1Cor. 2:9; Heb. 13:11-13

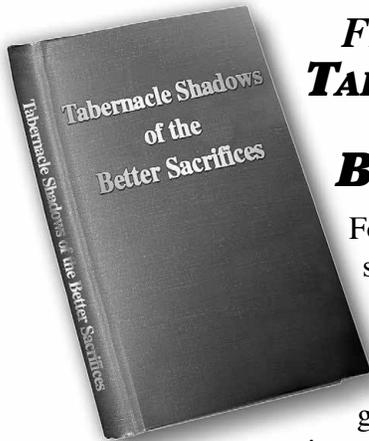
GOD'S PLAN DEFINED IN THE TABERNACLE

When the sacrifices were concluded in the Tabernacle on the Day of Atonement, all of the people of Israel received this Atonement and were no longer considered estranged from God. How beautifully this pictures the time when the sacrifice of Christ and his church are complete. Then, the blessings will begin to flow to the estranged people of the earth who have not as yet been atoned for. Those who avail themselves of the atoning blood of Christ will have access to the heavenly Father through the great mediator, Christ and his bride! *"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands... neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.... for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, [covenant] that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament [law covenant], they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."* Heb. 9:11-15

This inheritance of the saints—the blessing of all the families of the earth—is the grand consummation for which we pray: *"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."* (Matt. 6:10) Then, God's tabernacle will be symbolically among men, and *"he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people..."* See Rev. 21:1-4

Yes, the Tabernacle arrangement of the nation of Israel speaks volumes to the Christian. To further study about the instructions for the Tabernacle arrangement read Exodus 25-27, for the construction of the Tabernacle, read chapters 35-40, and for the fulfillment of these types and shadows, read the Book of Hebrews.

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