

*Nico Thorne  
George Ross*

# *the Sanctuary*



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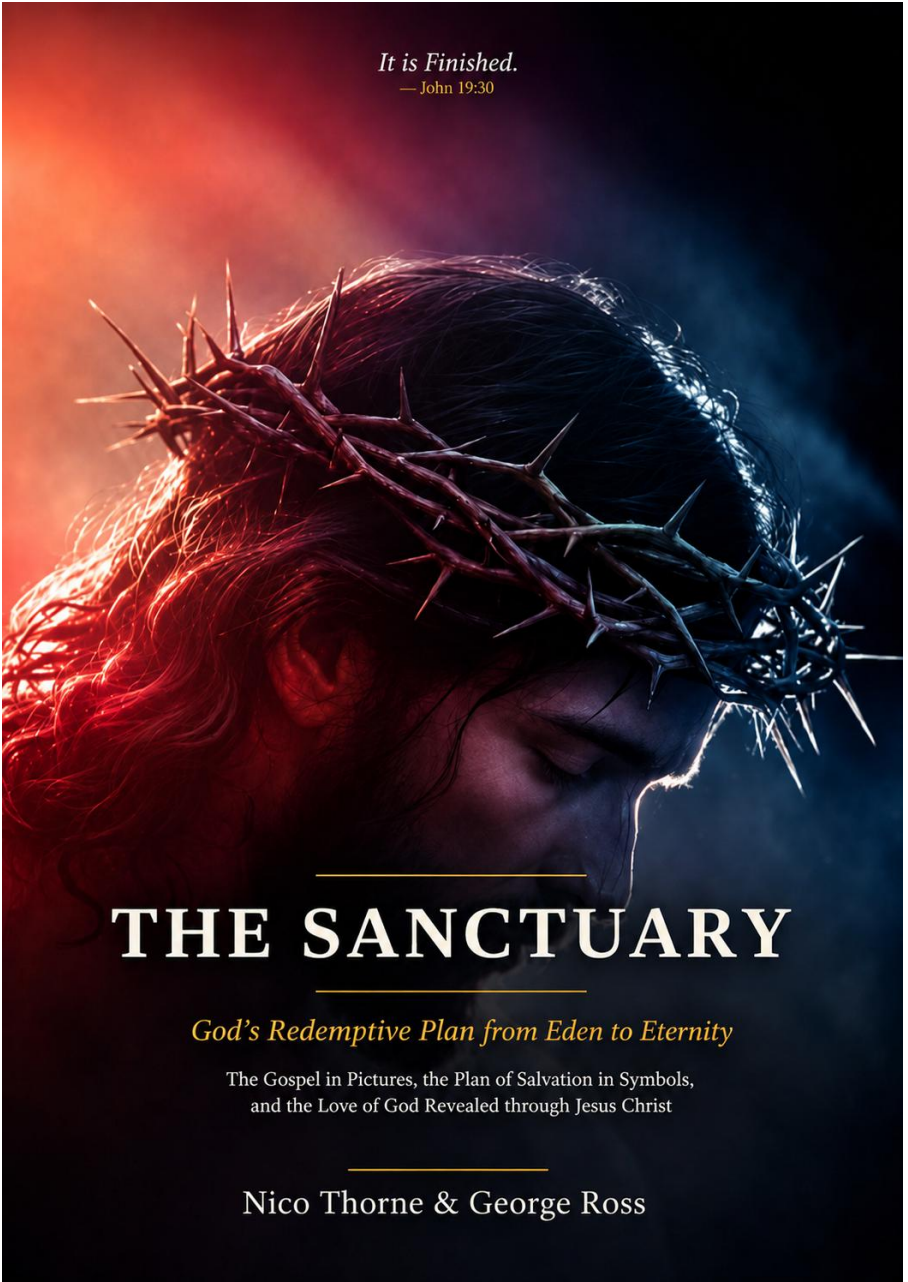
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*It is Finished.*

— John 19:30



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# THE SANCTUARY

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*God's Redemptive Plan from Eden to Eternity*

The Gospel in Pictures, the Plan of Salvation in Symbols,  
and the Love of God Revealed through Jesus Christ

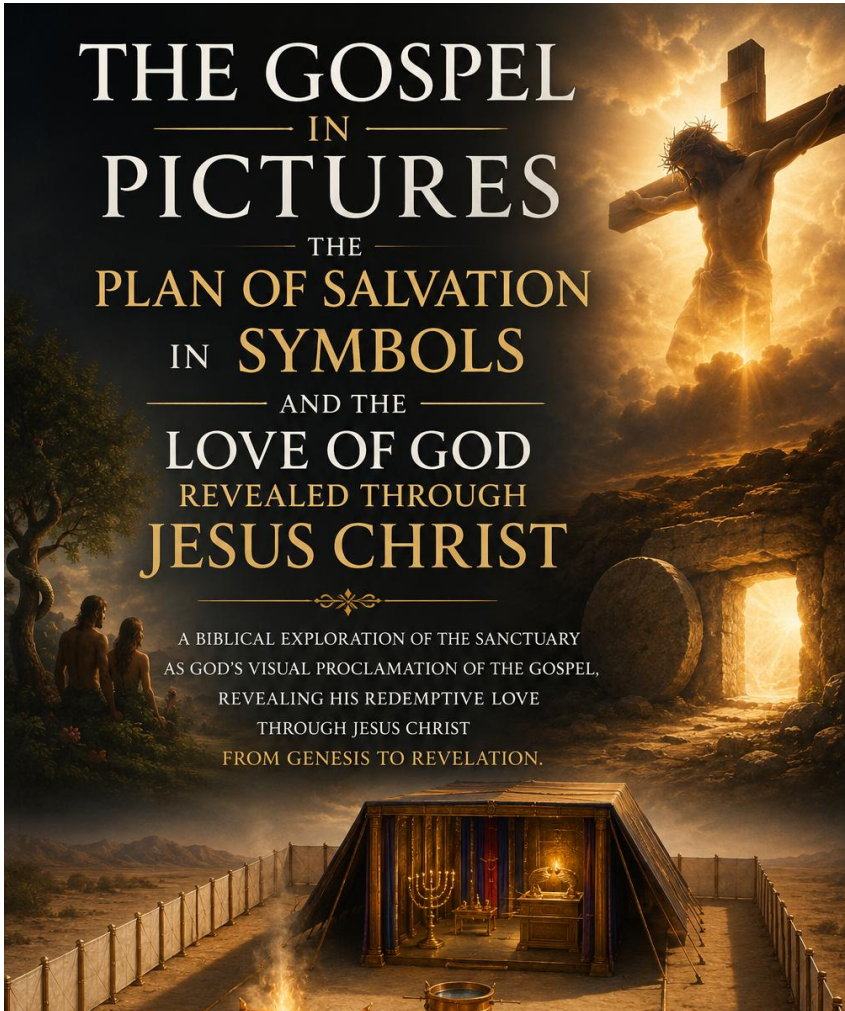
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Nico Thorne & George Ross

# The Sanctuary

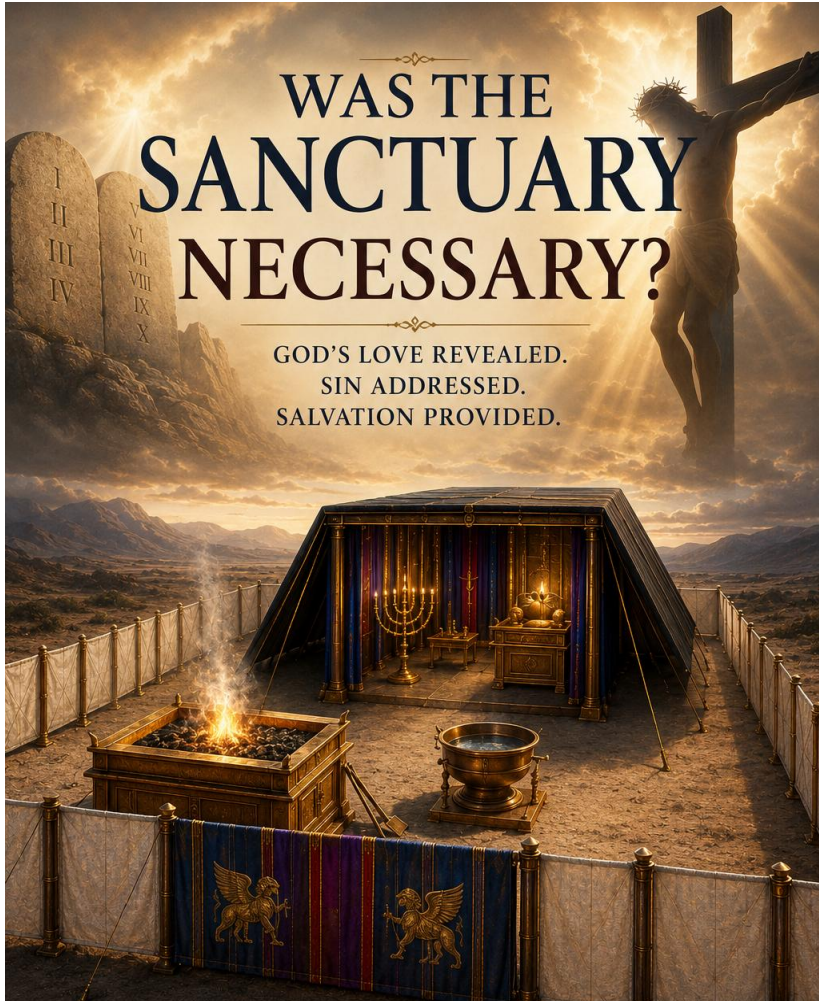
*God's Redemptive Plan from Eden to Eternity*

*The Gospel in Pictures, the Plan of Salvation in Symbols, and the Love of God Revealed through Jesus Christ — a biblical exploration of the sanctuary as God's visual proclamation of the Gospel, revealing His redemptive love through Jesus Christ from Genesis to Revelation.*



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# WAS THE SANCTUARY NECESSARY?

GOD'S LOVE REVEALED.  
SIN ADDRESSED.  
SALVATION PROVIDED.



THE LAW  
revealed  
our need.



THE SANCTUARY  
revealed  
God's solution.



JESUS CHRIST  
fulfilled  
God's promise.

NOT A DOCTRINE. NOT A DENOMINATION.  
A JOURNEY THROUGH SCRIPTURE — REVEALING JESUS  
FROM THE BEGINNING THROUGH THE SANCTUARY SYSTEM.

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## **PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS — WHY A SANCTUARY AT ALL?**

### **Welcome**

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Welcome to a journey deep into the Sanctuary — the Gospel in visual form. Through its furniture, sacrifices, priesthood, feasts and rich symbolism, we will discover that every detail points to Jesus Christ and reveals God's extraordinary plan of salvation.

Far more than an ancient tent in the wilderness, the Sanctuary is a breathtaking revelation of God's love for His people, His longing to dwell among them, and His gracious provision for their redemption. It is a divine masterpiece, designed to teach eternal truths through vivid pictures and living symbols.

As we explore its profound meaning, the pages of the Old Testament will come alive with the presence of Christ, revealing that He has always been at the very centre of God's plan for humanity. From the first sacrifice in Eden to the Cross, from the ministry of the High Priest to the promise of God's eternal dwelling with His people, the Sanctuary unfolds the story of redeeming love in a way that is both beautiful and unforgettable.

Our prayer is that this study will not merely increase your knowledge of the Sanctuary, but deepen your understanding of the Gospel, strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ, and leave you with a greater appreciation of the immeasurable love of God — a love that has been reaching out to humanity from the very beginning.

## **Chapter 1: Was the Sanctuary Necessary?**

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To truly comprehend who God is, we should not read the New Testament in isolation. When we neglect the foundational Scriptures, we risk missing important dimensions of His character and redemptive purpose. By studying this sacred blueprint, we see that God's desire to rescue, redeem and dwell with humanity is deeply rooted in the biblical story from the very beginning.

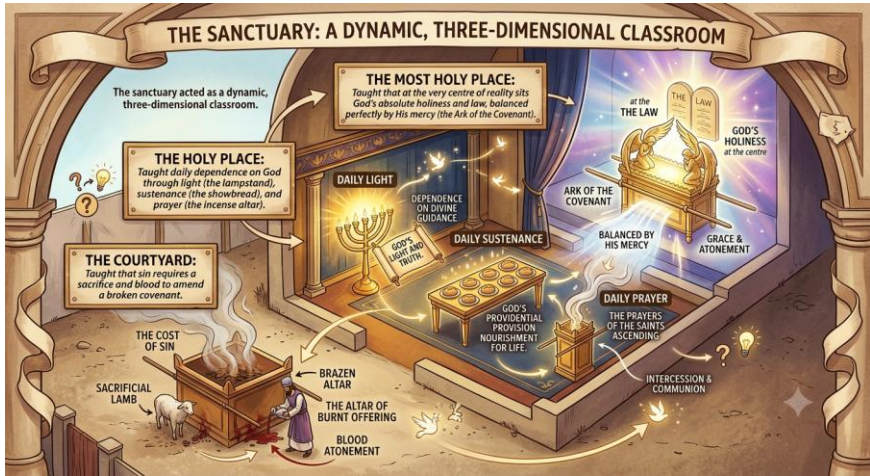
Three vital questions bridge this ancient visual aid to our modern reality.

### **1. Was the sanctuary system necessary?**

From a pedagogical and relational standpoint, the sanctuary system served as a crucial framework. When humanity was separated from God by sin, they lacked the vocabulary to understand concepts like absolute holiness, substitutionary atonement, or justice. God needed a physical, visual aid to teach an invisible, spiritual reality to an ancient, agrarian people. The sanctuary acted as a dynamic, three-dimensional classroom:

- **The Courtyard** taught that sin requires a sacrifice and blood to amend a broken covenant.
- **The Holy Place** taught daily dependence on God through light (the lampstand), sustenance (the showbread) and prayer (the incense altar).
- **The Most Holy Place** taught that at the very centre of reality sits God's absolute holiness and law, balanced perfectly by His mercy in the Ark of the Covenant.

Without this physical framework, many of the categories later used in Scripture to describe a Saviour, or the Lamb of God, would be far harder to grasp.



*The sanctuary as a three-dimensional classroom: the Courtyard, Holy Place, and Most Holy Place, each teaching a stage of redemption*

## 2. Could the New Testament Gospel have happened without it?

Historically and theologically, the New Testament regularly interprets Christ's work through patterns established in the Old Testament sanctuary framework. If Jesus had arrived on earth, died on a cross and risen again without the sanctuary blueprint already in place, His actions would be harder to interpret within the categories Scripture later uses to explain them.

The sanctuary provided categories that help explain His mission. Consider how heavily the New Testament relies on this very structure to explain who Jesus is:

- **John the Baptist** introduces Jesus by saying, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). That title draws on sacrificial categories already familiar within Israel's worship and Scripture.
- **The Apostle Paul** uses the word *hilastērion* in Romans 3:25, a term closely associated with atonement and understood in

connection with the mercy seat, where blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement.

- **The Book of Hebrews** presents the earthly sanctuary as a shadow fulfilled in Christ's heavenly high-priestly ministry, where He acts as our ultimate High Priest (Hebrews 8:1–2).

The Gospel is the *activation* of the plan; the sanctuary was the *architecture* of the plan. You cannot have the building without the blueprint.

### 3. What do we lose if we overlook it?

To overlook the sanctuary message is to overlook one of God's greatest visual presentations of the Gospel. Every sacrifice, every priestly ministry, every article of furniture and every ceremony points forward to Jesus Christ and finds its fulfilment in Him. Without this foundation, many of the profound truths of the New Testament lose much of their richness and context.

The New Testament reveals Christ; the Old Testament sanctuary explains Him. Given how closely these themes are woven together throughout Scripture, neglecting the Old Testament and its sanctuary message can leave a believer with a diminished appreciation of the Gospel's depth.

| If we ignore the sanctuary...  | We risk losing a richer understanding of:                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Bronze Altar (Outer Court) | The Cross can be viewed simply as a tragic death or an inspiring act of love, rather than in the full biblical context of sacrifice, substitution, atonement and covenant. |
| The High Priest's intercession | Jesus' ongoing ministry as our living High Priest and Advocate can receive far                                                                                             |

|                      |                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                      | less attention than the New Testament gives it.                                                                                                  |
| The Day of Atonement | The biblical themes of judgement, cleansing and the final removal of sin become harder to understand within their complete redemptive framework. |

As Augustine of Hippo (354–430) is often paraphrased: the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed; the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

To ignore the sanctuary is to try to read a book starting halfway through. You might grasp the general plot, but you will miss the depth, the motives, and the brilliance of the Author who designed the ending from the very beginning.

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## **Chapter 2: A Word on How to Read This Book — The Berean Standard**

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Before we begin exploring the rich symbolism of the sanctuary, we must first ask an important question: how should we study the Bible? The answer is beautifully illustrated in the example of the Bereans.

The Bereans were Jews who lived in the city of Berea in Macedonia during the first century. When the apostle Paul preached there that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-awaited Christ, he was not merely asking them to accept a new teaching — he was asking them to recognise that everything they had studied throughout the Old Testament found its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. Luke records their response:

*"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11, NKJV)*

Scripture calls them "more noble." Their nobility was not found in wealth, education or social standing, but in the character of their hearts. They listened carefully, examined diligently, and believed only after they had searched the Scriptures for themselves. Notice what they did *not* do: they did not reject Paul's message simply because it challenged long-held tradition, and neither did they accept it simply because Paul was an apostle. Their authority was not the preacher. Their authority was the Word of God.

The remarkable feature of this passage is that the Bereans were testing the preaching of the Apostle Paul himself — not a false teacher. If the inspired apostle welcomed his message being measured against the written Word of God, how much more should every preacher, teacher, author and church leader today be willing to have their teaching tested by the same standard? The believer's final authority is not a denomination, a theological tradition, a respected scholar, a favourite preacher — or even the author of this book. Our final authority is Scripture itself.

This matters especially when studying the sanctuary. For many readers, the sanctuary is unfamiliar territory; some have never studied it, while others have encountered conflicting interpretations. But the sanctuary is not founded on human imagination or theological speculation. It is one of the great themes woven throughout Scripture, revealing God's plan of redemption from Genesis to Revelation.

The New Testament repeatedly warns that false teachers and false doctrines will arise, often appearing persuasive, sincere, and even outwardly biblical. Error rarely announces itself openly; more often, it arrives as truth mixed with subtle distortion. This remains a vital

safeguard today, when the loudest voices often preach a gospel of self-elevation, easy grace without repentance, or sensationalism — when "fresh revelation" is offered that contradicts what God has already spoken, or when emotionalism is allowed to replace sound doctrine. A message is not true simply because it gathers a large following or sounds encouraging. Truth is measured by its alignment with the whole counsel of God.

A genuinely Berean mindset is not cynical, argumentative or suspicious of everything — nor is it gullible or unquestioning. It is humble enough to learn, discerning enough to test, and faithful enough to submit every conclusion to the authority of God's Word.

I therefore invite you to approach these pages exactly as the Bereans approached Paul's preaching. Do not believe something simply because it is written here. Open your Bible. Read every passage. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Ask questions. Allow God's Word to speak for itself. If the sanctuary truly reveals Jesus Christ — as both the Old and New Testaments declare — honest investigation will not diminish your faith. It will deepen it.

Please do not believe this book because it is written with conviction. Believe it only in so far as it faithfully reflects the Word of God. Be a Berean. Search the Scriptures daily and let God's Word — not this author — have the final say.

### **Chapter 3: Two Inseparable Gifts — The Law and the Sanctuary**

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One of the most remarkable moments in Scripture took place at the foot of Mount Sinai. When the Lord revealed His covenant to Israel, the people answered with striking confidence: "All that the LORD has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8).

Their words expressed genuine willingness, but they also revealed something deeper that would characterise the entire human condition: confidence in themselves rather than dependence on God's grace. Israel believed they could obey. God already knew they needed a Saviour.

Significantly, when Moses ascended into God's presence for forty days and forty nights, he did not receive only the Law. He also received the pattern for the Tabernacle. This is profoundly important: the God who revealed His perfect standard also revealed His gracious provision in the same breath. Law and mercy descended the mountain together. Judgement and redemption were never enemies; from the very beginning they formed part of one unified plan of salvation.

### **Two revelations, one God**

The revelation entrusted to Moses displays the harmony of God's character.

- The **Law** reveals His holiness, righteousness and moral perfection. It exposes sin and reveals humanity's desperate need.
- The **Sanctuary** reveals His mercy, grace and provision for reconciliation. It demonstrates that the same God who establishes the standard also provides the sacrifice.

Neither can be fully understood without the other. The Law reveals our need; the sanctuary reveals God's answer. Together they proclaim the Gospel long before Bethlehem.

### **Written by the finger of God**

Scripture gives the Ten Commandments a unique place among God's revelations. Unlike the various civil and ceremonial regulations entrusted through Moses, the covenant tablets are described in extraordinary language: God "gave to Moses... the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). This points to several profound truths:

- **Divine authority** — the moral law did not originate in human wisdom or national legislation. Its author is God Himself.
- **Permanence** — the commandments were engraved in stone rather than written on perishable material, communicating their enduring, unchanging foundation. As Jesus Himself declared, "I did not come to destroy [the Law] but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17, NKJV).
- **A reflection of God's character** — the commandments are not arbitrary restrictions on human freedom; they reveal the moral beauty, holiness, faithfulness and love that flow from God's own character.

### **What would God commend in my character?**

God testified concerning a number of Old Testament figures in remarkable terms. Of Moses He said, "He is faithful in all My house" (Numbers 12:7). Of Job, "There is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8). Of Enoch, simply, "Enoch walked with God" (Genesis 5:24). David, despite his failures and deep repentance, was still called a man after God's own heart. Noah was "a just man, perfect in his generations" (Genesis 6:9, NKJV). Abraham was called "the friend of God" (James 2:23; Isaiah 41:8). Daniel was repeatedly addressed as one who was "greatly beloved" by God (Daniel 9:23; 10:11, 19).

None of these men were perfect — several failed in significant ways. Yet they all shared one defining characteristic: they belonged to God and continually turned their hearts towards Him. These examples invite a deeply personal question: what would God commend in my own character? May that be the longing of every heart — to live in such a way that Christ is seen in us, and that our lives bring pleasure to the One who gave Himself for us.



## Chapter 4: The Vow of Self-Confidence and the Blood of the Covenant

When Moses relayed the Lord's words and laws to the congregation at Sinai, the people answered with a single, thunderous voice: "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient" (Exodus 24:7).

In their spiritual naivety and self-confidence, Israel assumed they could obey God's perfect standard through sheer willpower. This bold pledge exposes an enduring tragedy of the human heart: it is often deeply sincere and well-intentioned, yet utterly powerless. The Law was never given as a ladder by which humanity could climb up to God; it was given as a mirror to expose our helplessness — revealing God's infinite holiness, and our complete inability to meet it.

## **The covenant ratified in blood**

Moses, understanding the futility of human effort, moved at once to establish a sacrificial foundation. In Exodus 24, he built an altar at the foot of the mountain, surrounded by twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. At this point in the story, the Levitical priesthood did not yet exist — Aaron and his sons had not yet been set apart, and the Tabernacle had not been built. So young, strong men — the firstborn sons who, before Levi was chosen, carried the family's spiritual representation — performed the physically demanding work of sacrificing bulls, the costliest and most valuable offering available. Both details carry meaning: the strength of youth points forward to Christ, who gave Himself in the prime of His life rather than in old age, and the supreme value of the bull points to the fact that our rescue did not come cheap, but required the most valuable sacrifice possible — the life of Christ.

Moses then collected the sacrificial blood, pouring part into basins and splashing part against the altar — a solemn rite that visibly bound the covenant community to the God who had spoken. After reading the Book of the Covenant aloud, the people repeated their vow of self-reliance: "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient" (Exodus 24:7, NKJV). They believed they had the strength to keep a perfect law. But a holy covenant cannot be sustained by fragile human promises; it requires a life-giving substitute. Knowing their weakness, Moses then sprinkled the remaining blood directly onto the people, declaring: "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words" (Exodus 24:8, NKJV).

By splashing half the blood on the altar (representing God) and sprinkling the other half on the people, Moses visually and spiritually united the two parties. The blood was the binding, legal basis of the covenant — a sign that the relationship was sustained not by the perfection of the people, but by the life of an innocent substitute. This blood ceremony foreshadowed the far greater reality accomplished by

Jesus Christ, whose blood established the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:18–22). It is no coincidence that only *after* this blood was shed and applied did God give the very next command, in the very next chapter: "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). God's dwelling among His people is tied to atonement and covenant relationship.

### **The danger of overconfidence**

The Israelites meant their vow sincerely — yet it was not long before they were fashioning a golden calf. When we rely entirely on our own willpower, we tend to fall into the same traps they did:

- **The pride trap** — convincing ourselves that our own moral compass and self-discipline are enough to satisfy a perfect, divine standard.
- **The despair cycle** — because human strength is finite, we inevitably fall short, and failing a vow made in our own strength often leads to crushing guilt and shame.
- **The illusion of control** — treating our relationship with God as a transactional contract ("I perform perfectly, therefore I am accepted") rather than a transformational journey.

This is precisely the tension the Apostle Paul wrestles with in Romans: "to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find" (Romans 7:18, NKJV). The danger of quoting Exodus 24:7 as a personal mantra today is that it bypasses the grace of the New Covenant. Under the New Covenant, the expectation is not that we grit our teeth and force ourselves to be perfect, but that we surrender our weakness so that a higher power can work through us — shifting our focus from *"I have the willpower to never sin again"* to *"I desire to obey, so I will rely on daily grace,"* from rules to relationship, from self-reliance and inevitable burnout to surrender and spiritual growth.

Recognising that we cannot live the Christian life in our own strength is not an excuse for spiritual complacency. It is the very beginning of

genuine faith, shifting our confidence away from self-reliance and placing it entirely on God. As Scripture promises, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), yet also, "It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). What God commands, He also graciously supplies — through His presence and power in those who trust Him.



### **The shattered tablets and the golden calf**

The tragic reality of Israel's self-confidence did not take long to manifest. While Moses was on the mountain receiving the detailed plans for the Tabernacle (Exodus 25–31), the people below completely forgot their vow. As Moses descended carrying the two stone tablets written by the finger of God, the sound of revelry filled the air. When he saw the golden calf and the dancing, his anger burned, and he threw the tablets to the ground, shattering them at the foot of the mountain (Exodus 32:19).

The shattered tablets vividly symbolised what had already happened spiritually: Israel had broken God's Law before the tablets had even reached the camp. If the account ended there, the Law could only pronounce judgement, condemnation and total destruction. But God,

in His mercy, rewrote the tablets, revealing that His purpose was not merely judgement but the restoration of His covenant with His people — and gave the instructions for the Sanctuary precisely because He knew the tablets of the Law would be broken.

### **The law did not change; mercy pursued the sinner**

Human rebellion did not alter God's righteousness. The second tablets contained the very same words as the first — God's standard remained unchanged because His character remained unchanged. Yet although Israel had broken the covenant, God did not abandon His people; instead, He graciously renewed it. Judgement was real. Grace proved greater.

This account of the two sets of tablets reinforces the sanctuary's whole message with remarkable clarity. The first tablets were entirely the work of God — fashioned and written by His own finger — yet they were shattered because of Israel's rebellion, becoming a vivid symbol of humanity's inability to keep God's holy covenant. The prepared stones for the second set remind us that repentance involves our willing response to God's call, while the divine writing reminds us that true righteousness can come only from God Himself. Safely placed within the Ark beneath the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat, the tablets proclaim one of Scripture's central truths: justice and mercy meet only through God's appointed provision.

The Apostle Paul explains that the Law functions as our *paidagōgos* — our guardian, or tutor — leading us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). It faithfully exposes our sin, strips away every illusion of self-righteousness, and drives us to the only place where forgiveness can be found. The Law cannot save, and the sanctuary cannot save — but together they proclaim one united Gospel. The Law reveals the holiness of God; the sanctuary reveals the grace of God. And both find their perfect fulfilment in Jesus Christ, who alone fulfilled the Law

completely and became the once-for-all sacrifice through whom sinners may be reconciled to God.

Long before Bethlehem, long before Calvary, and long before the empty tomb, God was already proclaiming the Gospel from the heights of Sinai.

## **Chapter 5: The Sanctuary — God's Answer to a Broken Law**

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It is within this exact sequence of events that the profound beauty of God's grace is revealed. The detailed instructions for the Sanctuary (Exodus 25–31) and its eventual construction (Exodus 35–40) were given precisely because God knew the tablets of the Law would be broken.

### **The Law as a mirror of love**

To understand why this transition matters so much, we must first understand what the Law actually is. It was never given as a ladder by which humanity could climb to heaven; it was given as a mirror that reveals the true condition of our souls. It exposes our sin, our helplessness, and our desperate need for a Saviour. Israel's repeated failures did not prove that God's Law was defective — they demonstrated the weakness of the human heart. The Law could reveal the problem, but it could not provide the cure. It could expose guilt, but it could not provide forgiveness. It could point to righteousness, but it could not produce righteousness in the sinner.

At Sinai, the people confidently declared, "We will do." At Calvary, Jesus triumphantly declared, "It is finished." As Paul writes, "to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5, NKJV). The weakness was never in God's Law — the weakness was in us. But at

Calvary, Jesus fulfilled the Law completely. There, justice and mercy embraced; there, the demands of the Law were fully satisfied; there, the Lamb of God bore the penalty for the sins of the world.

### **The sanctuary solution: from standard to spirit**

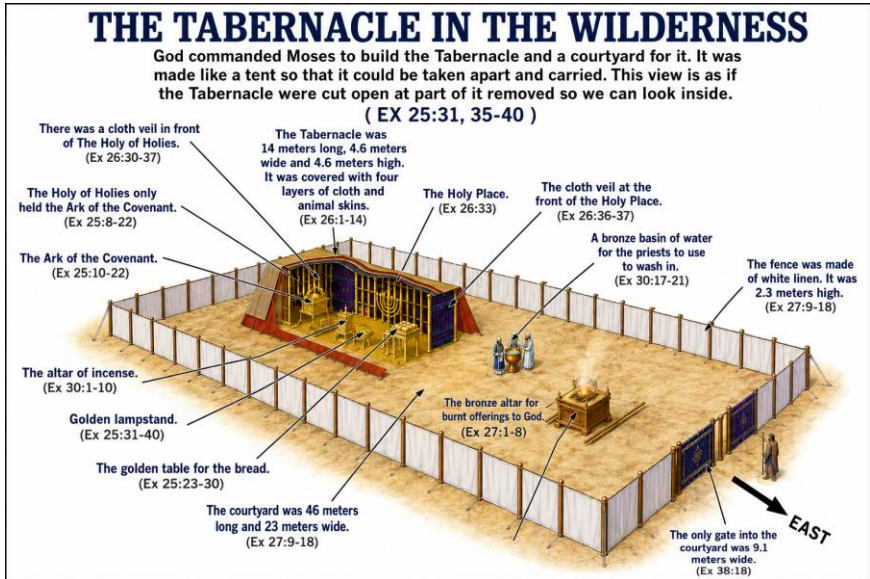
The book of Hebrews serves as God's own inspired commentary on this connection between Sinai and the Sanctuary, recording how, after Moses had proclaimed every command of the Law to the people, he took the blood of calves, water, scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the scroll and the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep" (Hebrews 9:19–20, summarising Exodus 24). The Law and the Sanctuary were established together, inseparably connected from the very beginning.

Under the New Covenant, God promises something the Law alone could never accomplish: "I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts" (Hebrews 8:10). The Law reveals the character of Christ; the Sanctuary reveals the grace of Christ; and through the Holy Spirit, God faithfully works to reproduce the character of Christ in His people. The Law shows us what we need to be; only the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit can make us what we cannot become on our own.

### **A time for honest reflection, before we step inside**

Before we step further into the Sanctuary itself, it is worth pausing to ask: have we truly learned to trust only in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ at the cross of Calvary — or are we still quietly relying on our own willpower, our own performance, our own sense of having "done enough"? If the answer convicts you, please don't lose heart. The very next thing God gave Israel, after their failure at Sinai, was the Sanctuary — His own appointed means of grace. The same is true for us today: conviction of our weakness is never the end of the story. It is the doorway into the Gospel the Sanctuary was built to teach.

## PART TWO: THE ARCHITECTURE AND MATERIALS



*A cutaway view of the Tabernacle and its courtyard, with every major feature labelled and keyed to Scripture*

### Chapter 6: A Foundation of Silver

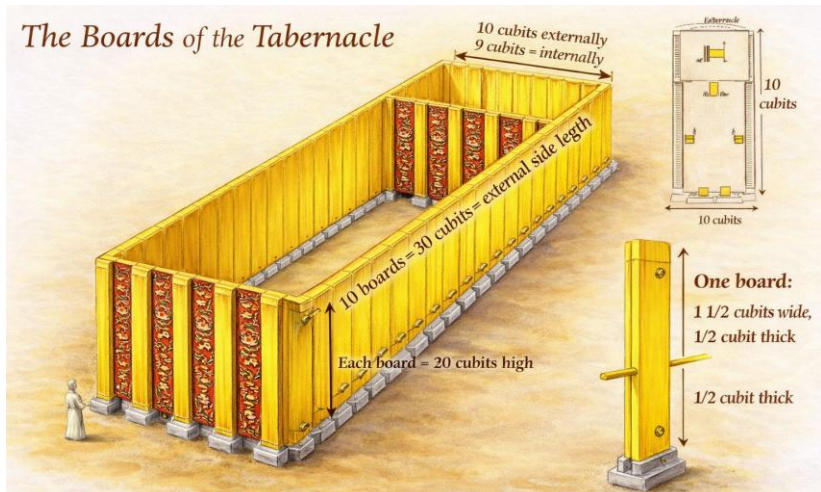
The earthly sanctuary was far more than a remarkable feat of ancient craftsmanship. It was God's visual Gospel — a physical "picture book" designed to reveal profound spiritual realities through tangible objects and carefully chosen materials.

Long before the walls were raised or the curtains hung, a massive foundation had to be laid directly upon the shifting sands of the wilderness. Remarkably, that entire foundation was made of silver.

## The architectural blueprint

Every detail of the sanctuary's construction was deliberate, precise and divinely appointed.

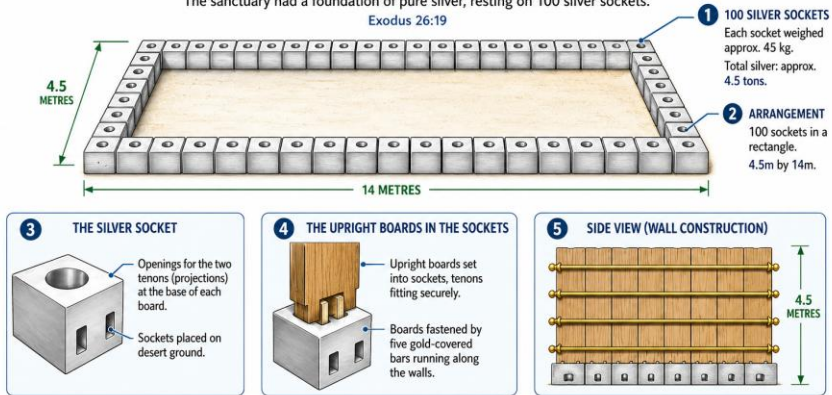
- **The silver sockets.** The foundation consisted of one hundred individual sockets of pure silver. Each socket weighed roughly 45 kilograms, for a total of around 4.5 tonnes of silver resting on the desert floor — a stable platform on which the entire sanctuary would stand.
- **The layout.** The hundred sockets formed a three-sided rectangle measuring roughly 4.5 metres wide and 14 metres long. The eastern side remained open, providing the only entrance into the sacred structure. Nothing about the design was accidental; every dimension and every opening served a purpose.
- **The walls.** Standing on the silver foundation were upright boards of durable acacia wood, completely overlaid with pure gold. Each board stood roughly 4.5 metres high, fitted with tenons that locked securely into the silver sockets below, and the boards were then joined into one unified structure by five gold-covered horizontal bars.



## THE FOUNDATION OF THE SANCTUARY IN THE WILDERNESS

The sanctuary had a foundation of pure silver, resting on 100 silver sockets.

Exodus 26:19



**THE SANCTUARY IN THE WILDERNESS IS LIKE A "PICTURE BOOK" OF JESUS.**

The building stood on heavy silver blocks. | Our lives stand on the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

The silver represents the "price" He paid – His own life.

*The hundred silver sockets, their arrangement, and how the upright boards locked into them*

### Why the design mattered

Practically, these heavy silver blocks sank into the shifting desert sand to create a rigid, level base — preventing the walls from shifting or blowing over in desert storms during a journey in which the whole structure had to be repeatedly assembled and taken down.

Symbolically, silver was widely associated in the ancient world with redemption and refinement. Because every single socket was paid for by the very same half-shekel ransom contributed by every individual Israelite, the literal foundation of the sacred space rested on a single idea: everyone was equally redeemed.

### The four coverings

Over this solid framework were placed four distinct layers that completely enclosed the sanctuary:

- The innermost covering — fine linen, beautifully woven with artistic designs.
- The second covering — a layer of woven goats' hair.
- The third covering — rams' skins dyed red.
- The outermost covering — a durable, protective layer of badger (or similarly tough) skins, shielding the sanctuary from the harsh conditions of the wilderness.

To an outside observer, these might have looked like nothing more than building materials. Yet every socket, board, bar and covering was chosen by God to teach an enduring spiritual truth. As we will see throughout this study, even the very foundation on which the sanctuary stood points beyond itself to the work of redemption accomplished in Jesus Christ.

*\*The origin of the silver: atonement money (kopher)\**

The silver that formed the sanctuary's entire foundation did not come from the royal treasury, nor from any wealthy donor, nor from human initiative. God Himself prescribed its source with remarkable precision in Exodus 30:11–16, where He commanded Moses to take a census of the Israelites and collect from every man counted a mandatory contribution of exactly half a shekel — described in Scripture as “an offering to the LORD.” The Hebrew word used here for this payment is *kopher* — a word meaning covering, ransom, or atonement price. It shares the same root as *kippur* in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Every half-shekel was therefore not merely a census fee but a ransom payment — a public, tangible acknowledgement that each Israelite owed his life to God and could only stand before Him through a substitutionary price having been paid on his behalf.

### **The radical equality of the half-shekel**

What makes this command theologically remarkable is the strict equality God embedded in it. Exodus 30:15 states explicitly: “The rich

shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give an offering to the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves.” Every man — without exception, without distinction — paid exactly the same amount. The wealthiest prince in Israel and the humblest shepherd in the camp each contributed one half-shekel, nothing more and nothing less. No man could purchase a better standing before God by giving more, and no man was excused by poverty from giving at all. The atonement price was fixed, not negotiable, and absolutely equal for all.

This principle strikes at the heart of every human tendency to imagine that our standing before God can be improved by achievement, wealth, social status, religious heritage, or personal merit. Before the foundation of the sanctuary, every soul stood on identical ground: equally guilty, equally in need of atonement, and equally dependent on a ransom price provided not by human effort but by divine appointment. The half-shekel declared what the Cross would one day confirm: there is no hierarchy at the foot of the cross. Rich and poor, learned and simple, respected elder and nameless stranger — all stand before God on the same terms, all equally in need of the same grace.

### **A solemn warning: the consequence of neglecting the ransom**

God attached a solemn warning to this command. Exodus 30:12 states that the census must be accompanied by the ransom payment so that “there will be no plague among them when you number them.” The implication is unmistakable: to count a man without collecting his ransom payment was to treat him as though he stood before God on his own merit — which was spiritually catastrophic. A man numbered without his *kopher* was, in the language of the sanctuary, a soul standing before a holy God without atonement. And that, Scripture insists, is a place of mortal danger.

Scripture records one of the most sobering illustrations of what happens when a leader counts his people without honouring this principle. In 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21, King David ordered a military census of Israel — not the God-commanded census of Exodus 30 with its accompanying ransom payment, but a census driven by pride, a desire to measure his own military strength, and a dangerous trust in human numbers rather than divine provision. Even Joab, David's hardened general, recognised the spiritual danger and urged the king not to proceed. David overruled him. The census went forward — without the *kopher*, without the ransom payment, without any acknowledgement that these men belonged to God and could only be numbered safely under the covering of atonement. The consequence was devastating: God sent a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand men died (2 Samuel 24:15; 1 Chronicles 21:14). David's pride, expressed in a census stripped of the ransom principle, cost the lives of the very men he had sought to count.

The lesson could not be more serious or more relevant. A leader who counts his people without acknowledging their need for atonement — who treats them as assets to be measured rather than souls who stand before God only under the covering of His grace — is playing with fire. To number people without their ransom is to treat God's property as though it were one's own. Every soul belongs to God, and every soul can only safely stand in His presence through the provision He has appointed. David learned this at catastrophic cost.

### **The greater ransom: Christ our kopher**

While Israel's earthly sanctuary rested on literal silver, the New Testament reveals that even this was only a shadow pointing to something far greater. The Apostle Peter draws the connection with striking clarity:

*"...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct*

*received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:18–19)*

The silver sockets beneath the sanctuary proclaimed that God's dwelling place rested upon redemption — yet that redemption money was itself only a symbol, anticipating the far greater ransom that Jesus Christ would one day pay. He is our true *kopher*: our covering, our ransom, our perfect substitute. The significance of the half-shekel was never in its monetary value but in what it represented, pointing beyond itself to the priceless sacrifice of the Son of God, whose blood alone could accomplish what silver could only symbolise.

Before there could be worship, there had to be redemption. Before there could be fellowship, there had to be a ransom. Before there could be a sanctuary in which God dwelt among His people, there had to be a foundation laid in atonement. So too, our relationship with God rests on an unshakable foundation — not on our obedience, our sincerity, our religious heritage, or our best efforts, but entirely on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

|              | <b>The Old Covenant<br/>shadow (Exodus 30)</b>    | <b>The New<br/>Covenant reality<br/>(1 Peter 1)</b> |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| The currency | Literal silver (atonement money, the half-shekel) | The precious blood of the Lamb of God               |
| The source   | Contributed by the sinner (a human hand)          | Provided entirely by the Father (a divine gift)     |
| The quality  | Corruptible — material wealth that decays         | Incorruptible — an eternal, unblemished sacrifice   |

|            |                                                             |                                                   |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| The result | A temporary canopy of safety and inclusion in the community | Full justification, regeneration and eternal life |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|

The wilderness sanctuary stood upon sockets of silver. The believer stands upon something infinitely greater: the precious blood of Christ. That foundation can never fail, never weaken, and never be shaken.

## Chapter 7: The Materials and Colours of the Tabernacle

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Throughout Scripture, the materials and colours of the Tabernacle beautifully illustrate different aspects of the person and work of Christ.

- **Acacia wood** — strong, enduring and resistant to decay, illustrating Christ's true humanity: perfect, sinless and untouched by corruption.
- **Gold** — speaks of His deity, divine glory and eternal kingship.
- **Silver** — closely associated with redemption and ransom, foreshadowing the immeasurable price of our redemption through Christ.
- **Bronze** — frequently associated with judgement, recalling Christ, who willingly endured the judgement our sins deserved.
- **Purple** — speaks of royal majesty and sovereign authority.
- **Fine white linen** — reflects spotless righteousness and perfect holiness.
- **Scarlet** — points vividly to sacrificial death and the precious blood shed for the salvation of sinners.

## **The four threads of the beautiful Gate**

The eastern entrance to the Tabernacle courtyard was a magnificent screen some thirty feet wide, woven from four distinct materials: blue, purple and scarlet yarns, together with fine twined white linen (Exodus 27:16). Every thread was chosen with deliberate purpose, silently proclaiming the identity and mission of the coming Messiah centuries before He walked the earth — and anticipating, in particular, the fourfold witness of the four Gospels.

There were not four gates. There was only one. The worshipper did not choose between a blue gate, a purple gate, a scarlet gate or a white gate — all four threads were inseparably woven together into a single entrance, just as Scripture presents not four different Christs but one glorious Saviour revealed through four inspired Gospel accounts, each emphasising a particular aspect of His person while remaining perfectly united with the others.

- **Blue — the Heavenly Son.** Blue naturally directs the eye towards the heavens, reminding every worshipper that the sanctuary was not man's invention but God's revelation. Its fullest expression is reflected in the **Gospel of John**, which presents Jesus as the eternal Word who was with God from the beginning, bypassing genealogy to take the reader into eternity itself.
- **Purple — the Royal King.** Purple was the ancient colour of royalty and sovereign authority. This theme finds its fulfilment in the Gospel of **Matthew**, where Jesus is continually presented as the promised Messiah and rightful King, from His royal genealogy through David to His final declaration that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him.
- **Scarlet — the Suffering Sacrifice.** Scarlet speaks immediately of blood, sacrifice and atonement. Its ultimate fulfilment is seen in the Gospel of **Mark**, where Christ is revealed as the obedient Servant who came to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

- **Fine white linen — the Perfect Son of Man.** Brilliant white linen represented purity and absolute moral perfection. **Luke's** Gospel reflects this by presenting Jesus as the flawless Son of Man, demonstrating complete obedience to the Father throughout His earthly life.

Taken individually, each colour reveals something precious about Christ. Woven together, they proclaim one complete Gospel. Every Israelite who stepped through that colourful entrance unknowingly passed through a silent prophecy of Jesus Christ Himself — the One who would one day declare, "I am the door" (John 10:9), and "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

The same colours that appeared in the Gate and the inner curtains also appeared in the garments of the High Priest, so that throughout the sanctuary, God repeatedly wove before the eyes of His people a silent but unmistakable testimony to the coming Messiah.

When Jesus stretched out His arms on the cross outside Jerusalem, every thread of that ancient gate converged in history: the Heavenly Son descended from glory; the King of kings wore a crown of thorns; the suffering Servant shed His precious blood; the perfect Son of Man remained righteous even in death. In that single moment, blue, purple, scarlet and white found their fullest expression in Him.

# CHRIST: THE TRUE AND ORIGINAL SANCTUARY

THE EARTHLY SANCTUARY IS A TYPE AND A SHADOW OF SOMETHING FAR GREATER.

**1. THE ALTAR**  
POINTS TO CHRIST  
and His sacrifice  
on the cross.  
"Behold, the Lamb of God who  
takes away the sin of the world!"  
(John 1:29)



**2. THE LAVER**  
SPEAKS OF CHRIST  
as the living and  
cleansing Word.  
"He saved us through  
the washing of rebirth  
and renewal by the  
Holy Spirit;" (Titus 3:5)



**3. THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD**  
REVEALS CHRIST  
as the Bread of Life.  
"I am the bread of life.  
Whoever comes to me  
will never hunger."  
(John 6:35)



**4. THE LAMPSTAND**  
POINTS TO CHRIST  
as the Light of the world.  
"I am the light of the world.  
Whoever follows me  
will never walk in darkness,  
but will have the light  
of life." (John 8:12)



**5. THE ALTAR OF INCENSE**  
POINTS TO CHRIST  
as our interceding  
High Priest.  
"He is able to save completely  
those who come to God  
through Him, because He  
always lives to intercede  
for them." (Hebrews 7:25)



THE OLD TESTAMENT SANCTUARY WAS A FIGURE AND SHADOW  
OF HIM WHO WAS YET TO COME.

THE MOST HOLY PLACE

THE HOLY PLACE



THE ARK

SIGNIFIES HIS SUPREME  
AUTHORITY, KINGLY  
POSITION, AND  
FINISHED WORK.

"It is finished."  
(John 19:30)

THE VEIL

POINTS TO HIS BODY,  
WHICH HAD TO BE  
TORN TO GRANT  
ACCESS TO GOD.

"...the curtain of the  
temple was torn in  
two from top to  
bottom."  
(Matthew 27:51)

THE HOLY PLACE

WAS A PLACE OF MINISTRY  
AND FELLOWSHIP—  
A PICTURE OF CHRIST  
MINISTERING TO US  
AND IN US.

"We have a great High Priest  
who has entered heaven..."  
(Hebrews 4:14)

THE OUTER COURT

SPEAKS OF OUR  
APPROACH TO GOD  
THROUGH CHRIST.

"Let us draw near  
to God with a sincere  
heart in full assurance  
of faith." (Hebrews 10:22)

THE MATERIALS  
TESTIFY OF HIM

THE WOOD  
REPRESENTS  
HIS HUMANITY.  
"The Word became  
flesh and dwelt  
among us."  
(John 1:14)

THE GOLD  
REPRESENTS  
HIS DEITY.  
"...in Him dwells  
all the fullness  
of the Godhead  
bodily."  
(Colossians 2:9)

THE SILVER  
REPRESENTS  
HIS REDEMPTION  
THROUGH BLOOD.  
"...redeemed...with  
the precious blood  
of Christ."  
(1 Peter 1:18-19)

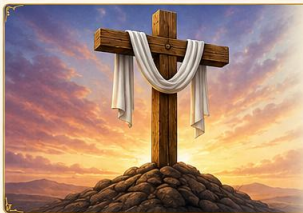
THE BRONZE  
REPRESENTS  
HIS PERFECT  
HOLINESS AND  
JUDGMENT.  
"He will judge the  
world in righteousness."  
(John 12:48)

THE COLORS ALSO TESTIFY OF HIM

PURPLE  
SPEAKS OF  
HIS ROYALTY.  
"King of Kings  
and Lord of lords."  
(Revelation 19:16)

WHITE  
SPEAKS OF  
HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.  
"He was clothed with  
a robe dipped in blood,  
and his name is called  
The Word of God."  
(Revelation 19:13)

SCARLET  
SPEAKS OF  
HIS SACRIFICE  
AND BLOOD.  
"...as one stained  
with the precious  
blood of Jesus."  
(1 Peter 1:19)



ALL POINT TO CHRIST—  
OUR TRUE AND ETERNAL SANCTUARY.

"But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here,  
he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with human hands,  
that is, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and  
calves, but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining  
eternal redemption."

HEBREWS 9:11-14

THE SANCTUARY WAS NEVER THE FINAL REALITY,  
BUT A TEMPORARY AND SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION  
POINTING US TO CHRIST, OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST AND LORD.

*A complete numbered floor plan of the Tabernacle, showing how the materials, colours, and furniture all point to Christ*

### **A few historical notes on the colours**

Ancient blue dye was extracted from Mediterranean Sea molluscs through an extraordinarily complex and costly process, making it a fitting symbol of something that came from heaven and belonged to God alone. The famous Tyrian purple required thousands of murex snails to produce even a small quantity of dye, and its expense made it the universal symbol of kingship and imperial authority throughout the ancient world. The scarlet dye, meanwhile, was traditionally associated with the scarlet worm (*tola'at*); Psalm 22:6 uses this same Hebrew word when the suffering Messiah declares, "I am a worm, and not a man" — a striking, sobering meditation on Christ's humiliation. And in a small but lovely providential echo, the first recorded convert in Europe was Lydia, a merchant of purple cloth from Thyatira (Acts 16:14) — the very colour that once adorned the Tabernacle and symbolised the majesty of Israel's King later carried, through Lydia's trade, into the spread of the Gospel across Europe.

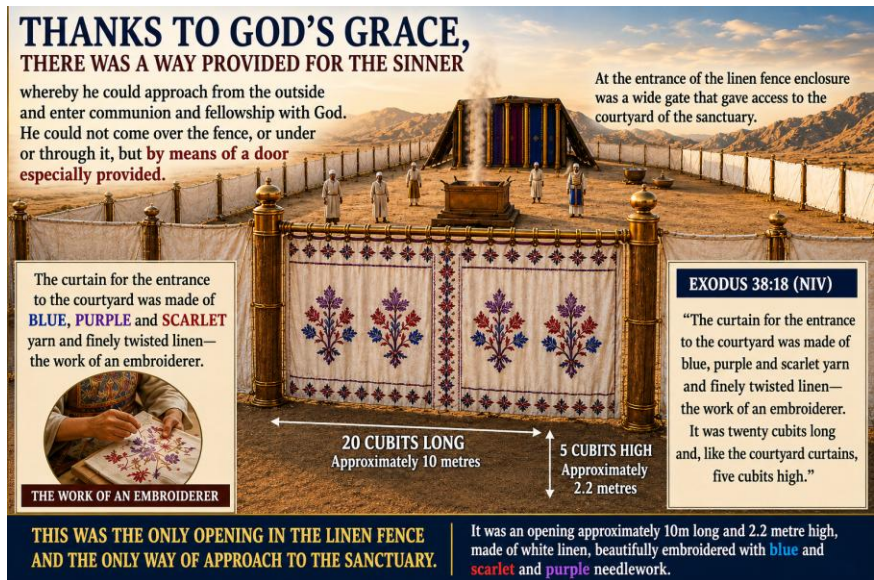
## **Chapter 8: The White Linen Fence and the Bronze Foundations**

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Long before a worshipper ever reached the Bronze Altar, or caught even a glimpse of the Tabernacle itself, they encountered an imposing barrier of brilliant white linen surrounding the entire sacred enclosure. The outer courtyard measured roughly 45.7 by 22.9 metres — about the size of two basketball courts placed side by side — enclosed by a fence just over 2.2 metres high (Exodus 27:9–18). There was no possibility of an onlooker glancing over the barrier to satisfy their curiosity; the design itself compelled every seeker to approach God's way rather than their own.

This fence was far more than a practical enclosure. It was a sermon woven in linen. Its dazzling whiteness proclaimed the perfect holiness and righteousness of God, and silently declared that sinful humanity could not casually wander into His presence, nor devise their own path of approach.

The fence did not exist because God delighted in exclusion. It existed because His holiness is absolute, and because sin creates a real separation between the Creator and His fallen creatures. Yet at the same time, the fence proclaimed something equally beautiful: although it prevented unauthorised access, it did not leave humanity without hope. It directed every searching soul towards one appointed entrance — the Gate on the eastern side. The message could not have been clearer: God's holiness cannot be compromised, God's standard cannot be lowered, God's way cannot be reinvented — but God Himself has graciously provided a way.



*The linen fence and its single gate, with dimensions from Exodus 38:18*

## **Six lessons from the white linen boundary**

Every post, every socket, every curtain and every measurement of the perimeter silently preached the holiness of God and the only way by which sinners could safely approach Him.

- 1. It established an uncompromising boundary.** The fence clearly separated what was holy from what was common. Outside lay the ordinary business of wilderness life; inside was sacred ground, set apart for the worship of the living God. The lesson was unmistakable: God is not merely greater than His creation — He is altogether holy.
- 2. It exposed human inability.** Standing well beyond the natural reach of an average person, the fence could not simply be stepped over. Its height preached a silent message: no amount of determination, morality, religious observance or personal achievement can overcome the separation caused by sin. Anyone who wished to enter had to come through the one appointed Gate.
- 3. It displayed the standard of perfect righteousness.** Fashioned from fine white linen rather than rough cloth, the fence reminded every Israelite of God's absolute moral perfection before they ever reached the Altar. Its supporting pillars were set into bronze bases — bronze, throughout the sanctuary, speaking repeatedly of judgement — so that, even in its construction, God's perfect righteousness stands firmly upon the foundation of His perfect justice.
- 4. It concealed the holy things.** From outside, the Altar, the sacrifices and the priestly ministry all remained hidden from view. This cultivated reverence and reminded Israel that worship was never meant to become ordinary, casual or a matter of public spectacle.
- 5. It directed every worshipper to God's way of atonement.** Because the fence permitted only one entrance, every worshipper was directed towards the eastern Gate, and immediately beyond that Gate stood the Bronze Altar. No shortcuts and no alternate routes

existed. The order itself preached the Gospel: before fellowship came sacrifice; before cleansing came atonement; before communion came substitution.

6. **It served as a merciful guardrail.** The fence was not erected merely to keep people out — it was designed to preserve life, since approaching God's holy presence presumptuously carried devastating consequences throughout Israel's history. Its message was never "stay away forever," but "do not perish by coming the wrong way."

In this sense, every restriction within the sanctuary is, on closer inspection, an expression of grace. The fence is grace, because it keeps sinners from destruction. The single Gate is grace, because God provides a way. The Altar is grace, because God provides a substitute. The fire is grace, because God Himself accepts the sacrifice. The priesthood is grace, because God provides a mediator. The veil is grace, because it protects from an unmediated encounter with holiness. The Mercy Seat is grace, because mercy triumphs over deserved judgement through atoning blood.

In our modern world, barriers are almost always read as rejection — we see a fence and instinctively assume someone is trying to keep us out. The Tabernacle reveals something entirely different. God did not enclose His dwelling place because He delighted in distance. The fence does not simply say, "You cannot come in." It also points every searching soul to the one Gate through which they can. The fence says, "Not this way — but here is the Gate." The altar says, "You cannot pay — but here is the Substitute." The laver says, "You cannot cleanse yourself — but here is God's provision." The veil says, "You cannot enter on your own — but Christ has opened the way." The Law says, "You cannot save yourself — but here is the Saviour." God never exposes our need without also providing His answer; every "no" in the sanctuary is ultimately designed to lead the sinner towards God's gracious and glorious "yes" in Jesus Christ.

### **Holiness resting upon justice**

The combination of brilliant white linen and bronze foundations carries one further, beautiful lesson. The linen speaks of God's perfect holiness; the bronze speaks of His justice in dealing with sin. Together they quietly proclaim a truth that echoes throughout the whole of Scripture: God's righteousness is never maintained by overlooking sin, and His mercy is never exercised at the expense of justice. As the psalmist declares, "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed" (Psalm 85:10, NKJV).

Ultimately, the bronze foundations point beyond themselves to Calvary. At the Cross, God did not ignore humanity's guilt, nor did He abandon His love for fallen sinners. Justice was fully satisfied; mercy was fully extended. The penalty was not cancelled by pretending sin did not matter — it was borne by the sinless Substitute who willingly took our place. There, and there alone, righteousness stood firmly upon justice while grace flowed freely to all who believe.

There is a wider progression worth noticing in the materials of the sanctuary as a whole. Bronze dominates the outer court, where sin is confronted and judged. Silver appears prominently in the redemption money, reminding worshippers that a price has been paid. Gold dominates the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, speaking of the glory and presence of God. The very metals of the building trace the believer's journey — from judgement, through ransom, into glory.

## **Chapter 9: The Tribe of Levi and the Priesthood**

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You cannot fully understand the mechanics of the Sanctuary without understanding the people whom God appointed to serve within it. In the wilderness, the tribe of Levi formed the spiritual heartbeat of Israel's camp. God entrusted them with the care of His dwelling place,

the protection of His holiness, and a ministry that pointed forward to Jesus Christ.

### **Why the tribe of Levi was chosen**

Originally, God's intention was that every firstborn son in Israel would belong to Him: "Consecrate to Me every firstborn..." (Exodus 13:1–2). But a tragic event changed the structure of Israel's worship. While Moses was receiving God's Law on Mount Sinai, Israel turned to idolatry and worshipped a golden calf. When Moses descended, he stood at the entrance to the camp and called out, "Who is on the LORD's side? Come to me" (Exodus 32:26). The entire tribe of Levi gathered to him, and because of their loyalty during this national rebellion, God chose them to stand in the place of Israel's firstborn sons: "Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn" (Numbers 3:12–13).

In exchange, the Levites surrendered an earthly inheritance of tribal land and received something far greater: God Himself became their inheritance. "I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel" (Numbers 18:20). What appeared to be a sacrifice became an extraordinary privilege.

The same principle applies to God's people today. When we surrender sin, worldly ambition and the passing pleasures of this life in order to follow Christ wholeheartedly, we may appear to lose much in the eyes of the world. Yet what we receive is incomparably greater, for the riches and pleasures of this world are temporary, while the inheritance God promises His faithful children is eternal. As Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1–3).

### **The Levites camped around God's presence**

The Levites did not merely work in the Tabernacle — they surrounded it. God commanded them to camp around the Sanctuary as guardians

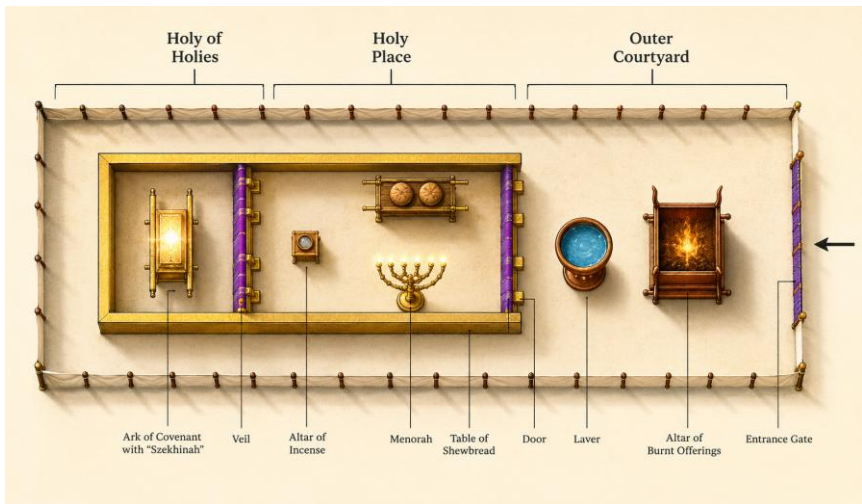
of His holy dwelling: "The Levites shall camp around the tabernacle... so that there may be no wrath on the congregation" (Numbers 1:53). The Tabernacle stood at the very centre of Israel's life, with the Levites forming a protective ring around God's presence, and the twelve tribes camped beyond them.

The arrangement of the wider camp was no less deliberate. Numbers 2 records that the twelve tribes were positioned in four groups of three, one on each side of the Tabernacle — Judah, Issachar and Zebulun to the east, nearest the single Gate; Reuben, Simeon and Gad to the south; Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin to the west; and Dan, Asher and Naphtali to the north. Judah, from whom the Messiah would come, was deliberately placed at the eastern entrance — the first tribe a worshipper would pass when entering the camp, and the tribe nearest the very gate through which access to God's presence began (cf. Genesis 49:10; Revelation 5:5). Whether by providence or simple administrative ordering, the placement quietly anticipates the truth that access to the Father comes only through the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Every tribe occupied an appointed place, in an appointed order, around the dwelling of God. Nothing was left to individual preference; nothing was arranged by status or convenience. The picture is one of ordered nearness — millions of people, each with a divinely assigned position, all oriented toward the same centre. It is the same picture Paul later uses of the Church: many members, a great diversity of gifts and callings, yet "one body in Christ" (Romans 12:5), each member purposefully placed, with Christ Himself at the centre of it all.

This arrangement revealed a profound spiritual truth: God desires to dwell at the very centre of His people's lives. This principle has never changed. Although Christ has fulfilled the earthly priesthood and now ministers as our perfect High Priest, His people are still called to surround His dwelling — not with physical barriers, but with faithful

obedience and devotion to His Word. Just as the Tabernacle stood at the heart of Israel's camp, so Christ must remain at the centre of our lives, with every area — worship, family, decisions, service and witness — ordered around Him.



*An outline of the Tabernacle, showing the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place, with each piece of furniture in its appointed position*

# THE CAMP OF ISRAEL

GOD AT THE CENTRE • THE LEVITES AROUND HIM • THE TRIBES BEYOND

"The Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the people of Israel." (Numbers 1:53)

## THE DIVINE DESIGN

- ▶ God placed His dwelling in the centre of Israel.
- ▶ The Levites formed a protective ring around the Tabernacle.
- ▶ The twelve tribes camped beyond them in perfect order.
- ▶ This order symbolized God's presence, purity, protection and purpose.

## NORTH

### THE TRIBE OF DAN



## THE LEVITES

- Chosen by God to serve in the Tabernacle and care for His holy things.
- They had no tribal territory.
- Their inheritance was the Lord Himself. (Numbers 18:20)

## WEST

### THE TRIBE OF EPHRAIM



### BENJAMIN



### MANASSE (SON OF JOSEPH)



### EPHRAIM

## THE LEVITES:

- Did not receive a land inheritance.
- Camped around the Tabernacle as a buffer between God's holiness and the people.
- Served day and night in faithfulness.
- Taught the people the Law and the ways of God. (Deuteronomy 33:10)

**GERSHONITES (SONS OF GERSON)**  
They were in charge of the covering (tabernacle) and all the furniture of the Tabernacle. (Numbers 1:35-36; 4:12-30)

## THE TABERNACLE God's Dwelling Place

God's presence was in the centre of the camp.  
"He was the focus of Israel's life and journey." (Exodus 25:8)

## KOHATHITES (SONS OF KOHATH)

They carried the most sacred furniture: The Ark, Table of Showbread, Lampstand, Altar of Incense and sacred utensils. (Numbers 3:3-11; 4:4-15)

## THE TRIBE OF JUDAH



### GAD

### JUDAH

### REUBEN

## EAST

### THE TRIBE OF REUBEN



### SIMEON



### ISSACHAR



### ZEBULUN

## MOSES, AARON AND THE PRIESTS

- Camped on the EAST before the entrance of the Tabernacle.
- Moses and the priests ministered daily on behalf of the people. (Numbers 3:38)

## SPIRITUAL APPLICATION FOR TODAY



**GOD AT THE CENTRE**  
Christ must be at the centre of our lives, our families, and our decisions. (Colossians 1:18)



**GUARDED BY TRUTH**  
We are called to guard the truth of God's Word and His presence. (Jude 1:3)



**EVERY ASSIGNMENT MATTERS**  
Different roles, same mission. Every believer has a vital part in God's kingdom. (1 Corinthians 12:14-27)



**STAND FAITHFUL**  
Like the Levites, let us stand for God in a world that bow to golden calves. (Romans 12:2)

CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST • WE A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD • HIS PRESENCE OUR INHERITANCE

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation..." (1 Peter 2:9)

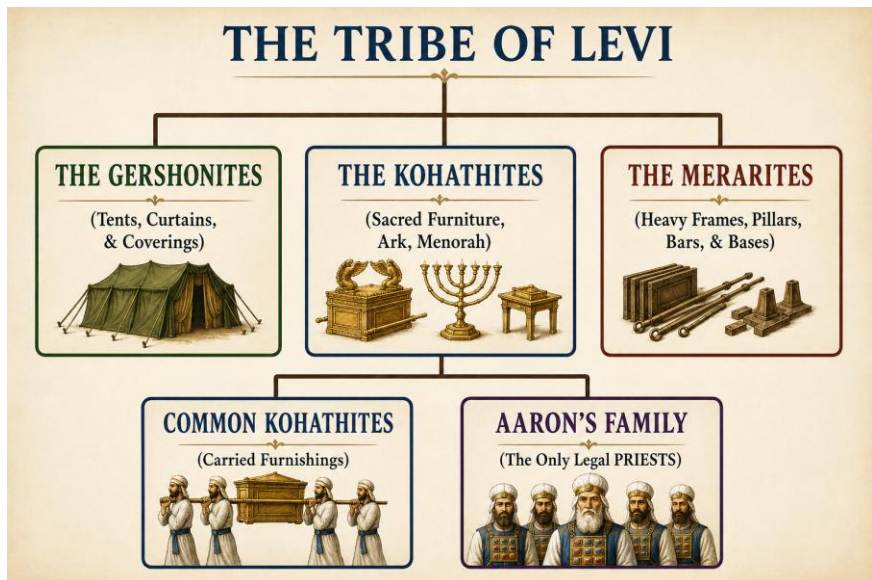
The camp of Israel: God and the Tabernacle at the centre, the Levites surrounding it, and the twelve tribes camped beyond

### Three clans, one family

The tribe of Levi was organised according to Levi's three sons: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. A critical distinction must always be remembered: all priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. Only one family within the Kohathites — the descendants of Aaron — could legally serve as priests before the Lord.

- The **Kohathites** were guardians of the sacred furniture.
- The **Gershonites** were guardians of the curtains.
- The **Merarites** were guardians of the structure — the boards, bars, pillars and sockets.

Every family had a divine assignment, and the Levites, having no earthly inheritance of land, found their inheritance in God Himself.



*The tribe of Levi: the three clans, their responsibilities, and the line of priests descended from Aaron*



*The Merarites transporting the Tabernacle's heaviest components — boards, sockets, and pillars — by ox cart*

### Aaron's family: the priests

Aaron, and after him only his legitimate descendants, served as High Priest. He alone wore the sacred garments with the breastplate, the Urim and Thummim, and entered the Holy of Holies once each year on the Day of Atonement to make atonement for the nation.

The breastplate was a square pouch, folded double, fastened to the ephod with gold chains so that it rested over the High Priest's heart (Exodus 28:28-30). Mounted in gold settings were twelve precious stones arranged in four rows of three, each engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes (Exodus 28:21). The stones represented that every tribe was precious before God, that every tribe had equal access to His covenant, and that none of His people were forgotten — for the High Priest bore the entire nation before the Lord, the names "for a memorial before the LORD continually" (Exodus 28:29), resting directly over his heart in a sign of love and continual remembrance.

God also commanded that the Urim and Thummim be placed in the breastplate (Exodus 28:30) — Hebrew names meaning roughly "Lights" and "Perfections," or "Complete Truth." Scripture never describes their exact appearance, but together they symbolised God's perfect revelation, righteous judgement and unfailing guidance, used by the High Priest when Israel sought God's direction on critical national matters: whether to go to battle, who should lead the nation, or how to resolve questions requiring divine judgement (cf. Numbers 27:21; 1 Samuel 28:6).

Everything about the breastplate finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, our eternal High Priest, who continually bears His redeemed people before the Father — not as engraved names on stone, but as individuals redeemed by His own blood. The prophet Isaiah foretold this intimacy: "See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands" (Isaiah 49:16, NKJV). Just as Aaron carried Israel upon his heart, Christ carries His people in His everlasting love and intercedes for them continually (Hebrews 7:25); no believer is ever overlooked, bypassed or forgotten. Likewise, the Urim and Thummim pointed forward to Christ as the perfect and final revelation of God — He does not merely reveal God's will, He is the Truth (John 14:6).

Beneath the High Priest, Aaron's other sons ministered daily within the Holy Place as common priests, carrying out the regular work of the sanctuary's daily service.

### **Seven Days of Consecration**

Aaron and his sons did not simply put on their garments and begin serving. Leviticus 8 records a deliberate, seven-day ordination ceremony, conducted before the whole congregation at the door of the Tabernacle, in which God established the pattern for entering priestly ministry. Moses washed Aaron and his sons with water, clothed them in their priestly garments piece by piece, anointed Aaron with the holy oil, and then offered a bull as a sin offering and two rams — one as a

burnt offering, and one as a unique “ram of consecration,” whose blood was placed on the right ear, right thumb and right big toe of Aaron and his sons (Leviticus 8:22–24).

The detail is striking: hearing, working and walking were each marked by sacrificial blood before priestly service could begin. The whole ceremony was repeated, in part, every day for seven full days, during which Aaron and his sons remained inside the courtyard, neither leaving nor beginning their public ministry, “for seven days he shall consecrate you” (Leviticus 8:33, NKJV).

The number seven, used throughout Scripture to signify completeness, marks this as no hurried appointment. Ministry before a holy God could not be assumed casually or entered into half-prepared; consecration required time, blood, washing and waiting. The same principle echoes in the life of Christ Himself, who, though sinless and requiring no purification of His own, did not begin His public ministry until He had first been anointed by the Spirit at His baptism (Matthew 3:13–17) and tested for forty days in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1–11) — only then did He return to begin teaching and healing (Luke 4:14–21).

For believers today, the ordination of Aaron and his sons offers a quiet but important corrective to any instinct toward hurried, unprepared ministry. Paul’s caution to Timothy carries the same spirit: a man should not be ordained “hastily” (1 Timothy 5:22, NKJV) — ministry that bypasses preparation, character and testing rarely serves the church well. God’s pattern, from Aaron to Christ to the apostles, is unhurried consecration before public service: washed, clothed, anointed, and tested, before ever being sent.

### **The Robe, the Bells, and the Golden Plate**

Beneath the ephod and breastplate, Aaron wore a blue robe woven in one piece, with an opening for the head reinforced so it would not tear

(Exodus 28:31–32). Around its hem hung an alternating fringe of golden bells and woven pomegranates (Exodus 28:33–34) — and God attached a striking condition to this detail: “it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy place before the LORD and when he comes out, that he may not die” (Exodus 28:35, NKJV).

The bells served a purpose far beyond decoration. As the High Priest moved within the sanctuary, his every step could be heard by those waiting outside — a continual, audible testimony that the mediator was alive and ministering on the people’s behalf. Silence, in this context, would have signalled disaster. The pomegranates, by contrast, were known throughout the ancient world for their abundant seeds, and were widely associated with fruitfulness. Together, sound and fruit hung side by side on the same hem: a priesthood that is both *heard* and *fruitful*.

Both details find their fulfilment in Christ. Our great High Priest “always lives to make intercession” for His people (Hebrews 7:25) — His ministry on our behalf never falls silent, and we are never left wondering whether He is still at work. And where Aaron’s robe bore the mere symbol of fruitfulness, Christ Himself produces it: “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit” (John 15:5). The bells assured Israel that their mediator remained alive within the veil; believers today have an even greater assurance, resting not on the sound of bells but on the living voice of a risen Saviour.

Above the breastplate, Aaron’s turban bore a plate of pure gold, engraved with the words *Holiness to the LORD* and fastened with a blue cord across his forehead (Exodus 28:36–38). God explained its purpose directly: it ensured that Aaron “may bear the iniquity of the holy things” so that Israel’s imperfect worship “may be accepted before the LORD” (Exodus 28:38, NKJV). Even Israel’s offerings, brought with sincere devotion, were never flawless — yet the High Priest,

bearing God's own holiness visibly upon his forehead, stood as the guarantee that imperfect worship could still be received by a perfect God.

This, too, points beyond itself to Christ. He is utterly without sin, the only One who has ever borne perfect holiness — not as an inscription on gold, but as the very substance of His character. Because He presents our worship to the Father, our flawed prayers, our halting obedience and our imperfect devotion are made acceptable, not on their own merits, but through Him. The golden plate proclaimed in metal what Christ accomplishes in reality: He bears what we cannot, so that what we bring may be received.

### **The Anointing Oil — Why He Is Called Christ**

Before Aaron or his sons ever ministered a single day in the Tabernacle, they first had to be set apart. God instructed Moses to compound a holy anointing oil from olive oil and costly spices — myrrh, cinnamon, sweet cane and cassia (Exodus 30:22–25) — and declared that this oil was to be used for no ordinary purpose: “with it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony... You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy” (Exodus 30:26, 29, NKJV). The same oil that anointed the sacred furniture was then poured out lavishly over Aaron's head (Exodus 29:7; Psalm 133:2), and later, in a less common but still sacred practice, used to anoint Israel's kings (1 Samuel 16:13).

The oil itself was never to be reproduced for any common use: “It shall not be poured on man's flesh; nor shall you make any other like it... it is holy, and it shall be holy to you” (Exodus 30:32, NKJV). What the oil touched was set apart for God alone — not by the worth of the object itself, but by the anointing it received.

This single ceremony explains one of the most familiar titles in all of Scripture. The Hebrew word *Mashiach* and the Greek word *Christos*

both mean, quite simply, “Anointed One.” When the New Testament calls Jesus “Christ,” it is not recording a surname — it is making the very same declaration that the anointing oil once made physically over Aaron’s head and over Israel’s kings: this is the One set apart, consecrated, and sent by God. Isaiah foretold it directly: “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me” (Isaiah 61:1), and Jesus applied this prophecy to Himself in the synagogue at Nazareth, declaring that it was fulfilled “this day” in their hearing (Luke 4:18–21). At His baptism, the Father’s anointing came not through oil poured by human hands, but through the Holy Spirit Himself, descending visibly upon Him (Matthew 3:16–17; Acts 10:38).

Christ is, in this sense, our perfect Prophet, Priest and King, each office historically marked by anointing in the Old Testament — yet uniquely combined and perfectly fulfilled in Him alone. And remarkably, the anointing does not stop at Christ. John writes to ordinary believers: “you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things... the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you” (1 John 2:20, 27, NKJV). What was once poured only upon priests and kings is now given, through the Holy Spirit, to every believer in Christ. The oil that consecrated the Tabernacle’s furniture and set apart Israel’s mediators has found its final, living fulfilment — first in the Anointed One Himself, and then, through Him, in all who belong to Him.

### **Korah’s Challenge — and Aaron’s Budding Rod**

Not long after the priesthood was established, its legitimacy was directly challenged. Korah, himself a Kohathite Levite, gathered two hundred and fifty respected leaders of the congregation and rose up against Moses and Aaron, demanding, “Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?” (Numbers 16:3, NKJV). On the surface, the complaint sounded almost democratic — were not all the congregation holy, and equally entitled to draw near to God? But the rebellion struck at the very heart of God’s appointed order: Korah

and his followers wanted the dignity of priesthood without God's calling, access to the Holy Place without God's appointed mediator.

God's response left no doubt about the seriousness of the matter. The ground opened beneath Korah and his immediate followers, and fire consumed the two hundred and fifty leaders who had presumed to offer incense before the Lord (Numbers 16:31–35) — a sobering reminder that nearness to God is never safely approached on self-appointed terms, however sincere the motive.

To settle the matter publicly and permanently, God instructed Moses to collect a wooden rod from the leader of each tribe, with Aaron's name written on the rod for the tribe of Levi, and to place all twelve rods overnight before the Ark in the Tabernacle. The next morning, only one rod had changed: "the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds" (Numbers 17:8, NKJV) — a dead, cut branch of wood bursting into full, fruit-bearing life overnight, without water, soil or sunlight. God then commanded that Aaron's rod be kept permanently inside the Ark itself, "as a sign against the rebels" (Numbers 17:10), a continual reminder that God, not man, appoints His mediators.

The almond rod carries a quiet but striking foreshadowing of resurrection: a piece of wood, cut off and lifeless, brought to sudden and unmistakable life by the power of God alone — much as Christ's own priesthood was vindicated not by human appointment but by God raising Him from the dead. Just as no one could rightly claim Aaron's office without God's authorisation, "no man takes this honour to himself, but he who is called by God" (Hebrews 5:4, NKJV) — and Christ's High Priesthood, far from being self-appointed, was declared by the Father Himself: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You... You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:5–6, NKJV). The rod that budded overnight testifies, centuries in advance, that true priestly authority is always a gift from

God, never a claim seized by man — and that the proof of genuine calling is always life, not merely position.

## **Chapter 10: A Kingdom of Priests**

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Aaron and his sons were set apart to serve as priests for the nation — but God's purpose for Israel reached further still. The priesthood was never meant to remain a privilege enjoyed by a single tribe alone; it was always intended as a picture of something greater: the calling of the whole covenant people, and ultimately the whole Church, to stand before God as His own kingdom of priests.

### **The attractive strategy: a kingdom of priests**

God placed the Sanctuary at the centre of Israel's camp, and in doing so placed Himself at the centre of His people's life — yet Israel was never chosen merely for its own benefit. The Lord declared, "you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:5–6), and Moses reminded Israel that they were "a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:6). Their holiness was therefore not a badge of superiority but a calling to service — to reflect God's righteousness, justice, mercy and love before a watching world.

This purpose was established from the very beginning: when God called Abraham, He promised, "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Israel was chosen as the channel through which God's blessing would reach every nation, occupying a strategic position at the crossroads of the ancient world, so that neighbouring peoples might ask, "Who is this great God who dwells among His people?" Through the prophet Isaiah, God said of His servant nation, "I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 49:6) — a mission fulfilled perfectly in Jesus Christ, the true and faithful Israel, who has now entrusted the same mission to His Church (Matthew 5:14; 28:19–20).

The Apostle Peter deliberately echoes God's words to Israel when he writes to the Church: "you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation... that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness" (1 Peter 2:9). We are not chosen merely to enjoy God's blessings but to proclaim His greatness — set apart not to withdraw from the world, but to reveal God's character within it, so that our lives become living testimonies of His grace, holiness, mercy and truth.

### **Open to all who chose Him**

Even under the Old Testament sanctuary system, anyone from any nation who wanted to worship the true God was welcomed. They were often called "the foreigner," "the stranger," or "the sojourner." When Israel escaped Egypt, a "mixed multitude" of non-Israelites who had seen God's power joined the family even before the Sanctuary was built (Exodus 12:38), and when Solomon dedicated the Temple, he prayed specifically that foreigners who came to pray there might come to know and fear God's name (1 Kings 8:41–43).

Among the most remarkable examples are Rahab, a Canaanite woman from Jericho, and Ruth, a Moabite widow — both of whom left their former lives, placed their faith in the Lord, and were honoured to become part of the direct ancestral line of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5). Their inclusion demonstrates a profound truth: God's family has always been defined by faith rather than ethnicity. This truth reaches its fullest expression in the New Testament, where the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile has been broken down through Christ (Ephesians 2:11–22), and Peter could declare, "in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34–35, NKJV). As Paul wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek... for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28, NKJV).

Throughout the Old Testament, God carefully preserved the covenant lineage through which the promised Messiah would come — a

preservation that was redemptive, not racial, protecting His promise that the Redeemer would come through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David exactly as foretold. With the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that purpose reached its fulfilment: the Old Testament protected the bloodline of the Messiah; the New Testament proclaims the blood of the Messiah. The kingdom of God is not built upon bloodlines but upon the blood of Christ. The cross stands as God's great equaliser — at Calvary, every human being stands on the same ground, as sinners in need of grace, and every believer receives the same privilege of becoming a child of God through faith.

## **Chapter 11: The Four-Layer Roof — A Canopy of Cover and Security**

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Moving from the inside of the Tabernacle outward, the roof was not a single piece of material but a carefully engineered, four-layer canopy. Each layer served a distinct structural purpose in withstanding the harsh desert climate, while simultaneously offering a progressive revelation of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

### **Layer 1: the fine twined linen (the inner ceiling)**

The innermost layer, visible only to the priests serving inside the Holy Place, formed the literal ceiling of the sanctuary. Woven from fine white linen with brilliant blue, purple and scarlet threads, it was embroidered with figures of cherubim (Exodus 26:1). This layer represents Christ in His sinless righteousness, divine royalty and heavenly glory — the immediate canopy of God's manifest presence.

### **Layer 2: the goat hair curtain (the tent of substitution)**

Directly over the fine linen lay a second layer of woven goat hair. God specified different lengths for these two layers, and the difference matters: the inner linen curtain, some 28 cubits long, hung down each side of the ten-cubit-high wooden walls but stopped just short of the

ground, so that this royal fabric never touched the dirt or moisture of the wilderness floor. The goat hair curtain above it, by contrast, was two cubits longer — long enough to trail all the way down to the desert floor, completely sealing off and protecting the delicate linen beneath from the elements.

Scripture maintains a careful distinction here: the inner linen layer is called *mishkan* ("the Tabernacle," or dwelling place), while the goat hair layer is called *ohel* ("the tent") — the rugged outer shell housing the glory within. In biblical typology, the goat is the classic picture of Christ as our sacrificial sin-bearer, a meaning that finds its richest expression on the annual Day of Atonement, when two goats were brought before the High Priest to resolve Israel's guilt: one slain at the altar, its blood carried into the Most Holy Place to cleanse the sanctuary (a picture of Christ's blood satisfying God's righteous judgement against sin); the other sent alive into the wilderness, carrying the people's confessed sin away (a picture of Christ carrying our sin completely away, to a place where it can never return to condemn us). Fittingly, while the inner linen sheets were joined with gold hooks, the goat-hair "tent" layer was joined with fifty bronze clasps (Exodus 26:11) — bronze, again, speaking of judgement borne. As the psalmist writes, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). There is a lovely picture hidden in the Tabernacle's own geography here too: the worshipper entered through the eastern gate and moved steadily westward, towards the presence of God — every step carrying him further from the place he entered and closer to fellowship with God, a picture of redemption as both a decisive turning from sin and a continual movement towards God.

### **Layer 3: the ram skins dyed red (the covering of blood)**

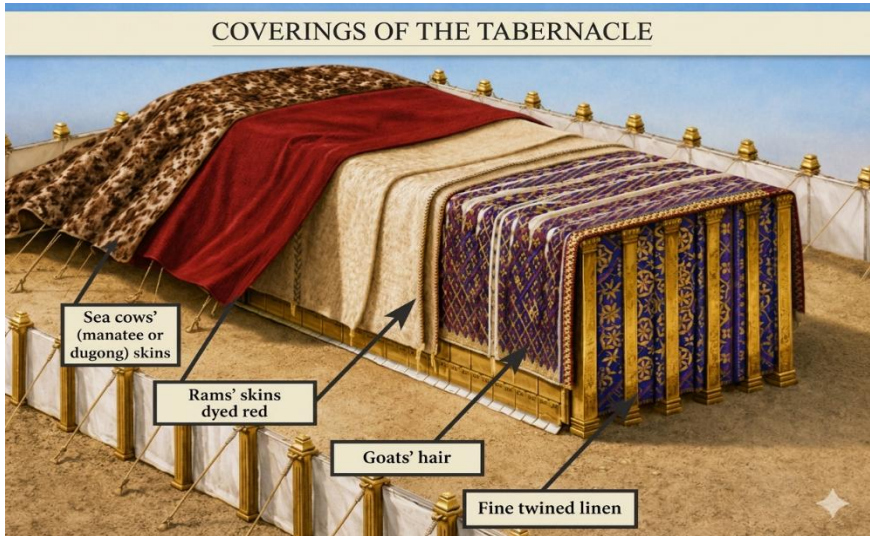
Moving outward, the third layer was a heavy canopy of leather made from ram skins, tanned and dyed a deep crimson (Exodus 26:14). Throughout the sanctuary, the colour red signifies sacrificial death, and

this layer — providing a complete, water-resistant covering over the layers beneath — demonstrates that righteousness and fellowship with God are protected exclusively by blood.

This principle of a substitutionary covering reaches back to the very dawn of human history. After Adam sinned, he first attempted to hide his guilt by sewing fig leaves together — a fragile garment made by human hands, which God rejected. Instead, the Lord Himself shed innocent blood to fashion coats of skin to cover the fallen couple (Genesis 3:21). That same prophetic picture reaches a sharper, more explicit form later, on Mount Moriah, when God provided a ram caught in a thicket to die as a direct substitute in the place of Isaac (Genesis 22:13). The substitute must die, and its lifeblood must be poured out, before the sinner can be safely covered.

#### **Layer 4: the durable outer leather (the veiled Messiah)**

The fourth and outermost covering was made from tough, weatherproof skins — likely a muted, matte greyish-blue leather. Unlike the magnificent colours hidden within, this layer had no cosmetic beauty whatsoever. As the outermost shield, it bore the brunt of the desert's scorching sun, freezing nights, driving rain and sandstorms, and it was the only part of the roof visible to anyone standing outside the Tabernacle — offering no hint of the gold and embroidery hidden directly beneath it.



This final layer paints a striking picture of the humanity of Jesus Christ, as seen by a casual, unbelieving world. Looked at through purely human eyes, He offered nothing especially appealing: "He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men" (Isaiah 53:2–3, NKJV). A person can only behold His true, breathtaking glory once they choose to enter through the one eastern Gate, pass by the blood of the altar, and step inside the sanctuary itself. The sanctuary still whispers the same invitation today: do not judge by appearances. Enter through the Gate. Come inside. Only then will you discover the glory that has been there all along.



*The contrast between the drab outer covering and the gold and glory hidden within the Tabernacle*

| Layer        | Material               | Spiritual direction     | Messianic revelation                                 |
|--------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Innermost | Fine twined linen      | The heavenly interior   | Christ in His perfect righteousness and glory        |
| 2. Second    | Woven goat hair (dark) | Covering the linen      | Christ as our sin-bearer, bearing our guilt          |
| 3. Third     | Ram skins dyed red     | Covering the tent       | Christ as our substitute, covering us in His blood   |
| 4. Outermost | Durable leather        | The wilderness exterior | Christ in His humble humanity, veiled from the world |

## Chapter 12: Bound with Bronze Pegs — The Eternal Security of the Believer

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The Tabernacle was a remarkable feat of portable engineering, built to be repeatedly assembled, dismantled and transported throughout Israel's wilderness journey. It relied not on permanent masonry, but on an ingenious system of boards, sockets, bars, rings, cords and pegs — and despite its mobility, this God-given design provided remarkable stability throughout forty years in the wilderness.

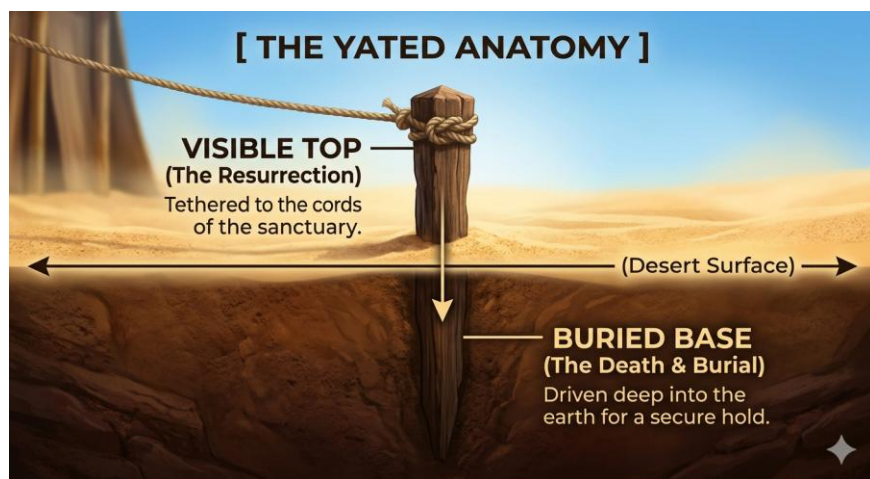
Four elements worked together to hold the whole structure secure. The substantial weight of the four layered coverings pressed the framework down into its heavy silver and bronze sockets. Five bars of gold-covered acacia wood ran horizontally through rings on the boards, with the middle bar extending the full length of the Tabernacle to bind the frame into one rigid unit (Exodus 26:26–28). Cords and ropes secured the coverings and connected them to firmly driven pegs (Exodus 35:18). And bronze tent pegs, driven deep into the desert ground, anchored the whole structure firmly in place.

In the meticulous inventory of materials God instructed Moses to compile, the tent pegs are listed almost as an afterthought: "All the pegs of the tabernacle, and of the court all around, were bronze" (Exodus 38:20, NKJV). Appearing right at the end of the list, they are easily overlooked — when we picture the glory of God's dwelling place, our minds naturally drift to the pure gold of the Ark, or the light of the lampstand, rather than to a humble peg in the sand. Yet these pegs formed an essential part of the anchoring system God Himself prescribed. In Hebrew, they are called a *yāṭēd* — a peg, stake or tent pin — an image that throughout Scripture conveys firmness, permanence and dependable support. It is a fitting reminder that, in

God's kingdom, the things that appear small, humble or hidden are often indispensable to His greater purposes.

Fashioned from bronze — a material that, throughout the Tabernacle, speaks of judgement, strength and endurance — these pegs lend themselves naturally to a further reflection. If bronze consistently points towards divine judgement, these hidden anchors beautifully illustrate the unshakable security established through the finished work of Christ, who walked willingly into the fire of God's righteous judgement against sin, bore the full penalty the Law demanded, and endured every trial without yielding, for no corruption was found in Him. Because His work is perfect and complete, those who belong to Him are securely anchored — not by their own strength, but by His finished redemption.

### Buried and risen



*The anatomy of a tent peg, buried in the earth yet tethered above the surface — a picture of death and resurrection*

The simple mechanics of a tent peg offer one further illustration worth sitting with. For a peg to do its job, it cannot remain lying on the surface — it must occupy two distinct positions at once: one hidden beneath

the earth, one remaining visible above it. The lower portion was driven firmly into the hard-packed ground, hidden from sight, providing the stability on which the visible structure depended; as a devotional picture, this recalls Christ's substitutionary death and burial, entering fully into death on our behalf. The upper portion remained visible above the surface, providing the point where the cords were fastened — without which the peg could not do its work; this naturally recalls Christ's resurrection, in which He did not remain in the grave, but rose in triumph to become the living and unshakable foundation of our hope. While Scripture nowhere assigns this symbolism to the tent peg explicitly, the illustration sits comfortably alongside the Gospel's central message: a Saviour who died, was buried, and rose again — and whose risen life now holds His people secure.

The cords of the Tabernacle were fastened to the exposed, above-ground portion of each peg. In the same way, the believer's faith rests not in a Saviour who remained in the grave, but in the One who conquered it. We are not preserved by the firmness of our grip on Christ; we are preserved by the firmness of His grip on us — He is the sure peg, established forever by God, and all the security of His redeemed household rests safely upon Him.

### **The Glory Takes Up Residence**

When the last peg had been driven and the last cord drawn tight, the Tabernacle stood finished exactly as God had commanded — and Scripture pauses to record what happened next: “Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle... for the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night” (Exodus 40:34–38, NKJV). The same cloud that had led Israel out of Egypt, and that would later rest over Sinai, now descended to dwell permanently in the midst of the camp.

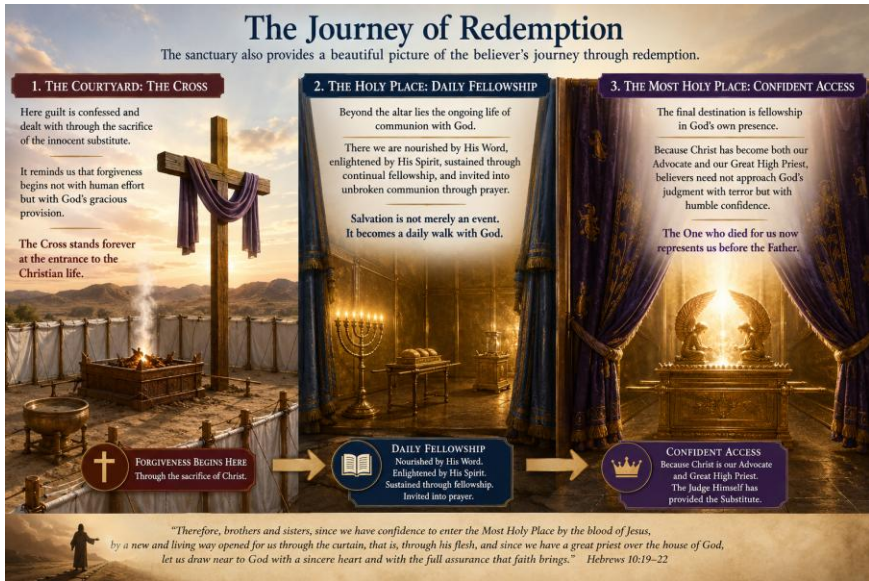
The detail is so dramatic that Moses himself could not enter: “Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud

rested above it” (Exodus 40:35). Every plank, every socket, every curtain had been measured, cut and assembled with painstaking obedience — yet none of that careful craftsmanship was what made the Tabernacle holy. The structure became sacred only when God’s own presence filled it. A tent of acacia wood and linen, however beautifully constructed, would have remained simply a tent without the glory that came to dwell within it.

This same pattern recurs throughout Scripture. Centuries later, when Solomon dedicated the Temple, “the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD” (1 Kings 8:10–11, NKJV). And in the New Testament, the principle is fulfilled in a still more personal way: “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory” (John 1:14). The Greek word John uses for “dwelt” carries the very sense of *tabernacled* — Christ Himself became the meeting place between God and humanity, the place where glory took up residence in a body of flesh.

The lesson reaches forward into the life of the believer as well. A church building, however, carefully built, and a Christian life, however carefully ordered, are not made holy by craftsmanship or discipline alone. They become a true dwelling place of God only when His presence fills them. Paul’s question to the Corinthians carries the same Exodus 40 logic: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). The structure matters — God Himself gave its pattern — but the glory is what makes it sacred.

## PART THREE: THE OUTER COURT



*The believer's journey through the sanctuary: the Courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place*

### Chapter 13: The Single Gate — Facing East

In the ancient world, directions carried profound symbolic significance, and God specifically instructed that the entrance to the outer court and the entrance to the Tabernacle itself should both face east (Exodus 27:13–16). This was no accident of architecture.

The significance reaches all the way back to humanity's first rebellion. God planted the Garden of Eden in the east (Genesis 2:8). After Adam and Eve sinned, they were driven from God's presence, and cherubim with a flaming sword were stationed at the eastern entrance to guard the way to the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:24). When Cain murdered his brother, he went out from the presence of the Lord and settled even

further east, illustrating humanity's continuing drift away from God (Genesis 4:16). Later still, humanity gathered on the plain of Shinar in the east to build the Tower of Babel in proud rebellion (Genesis 11:2). While not every reference to the east in Scripture carries this meaning, a remarkable pattern recurs: eastward movement again and again marks separation from God's presence and blessing.

Against this backdrop, the orientation of the Tabernacle becomes deeply significant. Every worshipper approaching God's appointed way of salvation entered from the east and deliberately walked west — symbolically reversing humanity's tragic journey away from God. With every step beyond the gate, the worshipper moved away from exile and closer to reconciliation: first to the altar of sacrifice, where innocent blood was shed, then towards the Holy Place, and ultimately towards the Most Holy Place, where God's presence dwelt above the Mercy Seat. The sanctuary itself became a living picture of redemption — a visible proclamation that God had opened a way home.

No matter how far east a person has wandered — into sin, failure, disappointment or self-reliance — God's door still faces them. The invitation has never changed. The moment anyone turns towards Him, they are already facing the entrance He has graciously placed before them. Step by step, through the sacrifice He Himself has provided, He leads the wanderer away from exile and back into His presence. The sanctuary was never merely a building of curtains, furniture and rituals. It was God's way of saying to a fallen world: come home.

### **Exclusive holiness, inclusive security**

The sanctuary presents a remarkable paradox: it was at once profoundly exclusive and wonderfully inclusive.

It excluded every attempt to approach God on human terms. Surrounding the courtyard stood a high fence of pure white linen, symbolising God's perfect righteousness and holiness, declaring that

sinful humanity could not simply wander into His presence by personal merit or moral achievement. There was no side entrance, no hidden gate, and no alternate route. Anyone refusing God's appointed way remained outside.

Yet that same sanctuary was gloriously inclusive towards everyone willing to enter by God's appointed way. The single gate stood open, inviting all who would come in faith through the provision God Himself had made. Passing through the entrance and trusting in the blood of the substitute offered on the altar, the worshipper found acceptance rather than rejection, mercy rather than condemnation — and, once inside the courtyard, stood under God's covenant protection, much as Noah and his family were safely enclosed within the ark once God shut the door: secure not because of their own strength, but because God Himself had provided their refuge. The same assurance belongs to every believer in Christ: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28, NKJV).

### **The life is in the blood**

At the very centre of the sanctuary stood the altar, constantly proclaiming one unchanging truth: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls" (Leviticus 17:11). The emphasis here is not merely biological but profoundly theological. God Himself designated blood as the symbol of life given in the place of another life. Because the wages of sin is death, reconciliation requires the giving of life, and every sacrifice pointed to the same principle of substitution: the innocent died so that the guilty might live. The blood on the altar was never magical in itself — its significance rested entirely in God's gracious provision, and pointed beyond every animal sacrifice to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

When a sinner comes through God's appointed way, leaves the old life behind, and places complete trust in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, everything changes. No longer standing exposed in the wilderness of sin, the believer is now "in Christ" — clothed in His righteousness, justified by His blood, reconciled to God, and securely held by His saving grace. The sanctuary was always pointing towards this greater reality.

It is worth pausing at this gate a moment longer to consider what it was made of. As we explored in Chapter 7, the four threads woven into the gate — blue, purple, scarlet and fine white linen — were not chosen arbitrarily. Each one silently proclaimed a distinct aspect of Christ's person: His heavenly divinity (blue), His royal kingship (purple), His sacrificial blood (scarlet), and His spotless humanity (white). These four threads correspond beautifully to the fourfold portrait of Christ in the four Gospels: John presenting the eternal Son of God, Matthew the King of Israel, Mark the suffering Servant, and Luke the perfect Son of Man. Every Israelite who stepped through this brilliant, colourful entrance was, without realising it, walking through a woven prophecy of the complete Christ — and every believer who comes to the Father today does so through that same Jesus, in whom all four threads are perfectly and inseparably one.

## **Chapter 14: The Bronze Altar — A Substitute Must Die**

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The moment a worshipper stepped through the colourful Gate into the outer court, every eye was immediately drawn to the largest and most imposing piece of furniture in the entire complex: the Bronze Altar, also called the Altar of Burnt Offering. Nothing could be seen beyond it without first seeing it. Nothing could be reached without first passing it. The beauty of the Gate gave way at once to the sobering reality of

blood, sacrifice, fire and death. Before there could be fellowship with a holy God, there first had to be atonement for sin. The Altar stood as God's unchanging declaration that justice must be satisfied before mercy can be enjoyed.

The layout of the Tabernacle was no accident. Neither worshipper nor priest could rearrange the furniture or choose another route, because God's order is fixed — His way of salvation is fixed. The sinner entered through the Gate (the decision), encountered the Altar immediately inside (the substitution), was cleansed at the Laver (the washing), and only then proceeded into ongoing communion in the Holy Place. Every offering testified that forgiveness is never inexpensive: justice requires satisfaction; sin brings death; an innocent substitute dies so that the guilty may live.

### **The anatomy of the Altar**

The Bronze Altar was a hollow wooden frame overlaid entirely with bronze, with horns projecting from each of its four corners. Its square dimensions declared the perfect balance, consistency and impartiality of divine justice — God's righteousness does not change according to circumstance or human opinion. Its four horns, positioned at each corner and covered with sacrificial blood, symbolised both divine power and gracious refuge; throughout Scripture, horns represent strength and authority, and those who grasped the horns of the altar appealed not to personal merit but to God's mercy made available through sacrifice.

| Element   | Tabernacle meaning                                      | Gospel fulfilment                                           |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Altar | God's appointed place where sin is judicially addressed | Calvary, where Christ bore the legal judgement for our sins |

|            |                                                     |                                                                |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Blood  | Life poured out to make atonement                   | Christ's substitutionary death, satisfying divine justice      |
| The Fire   | The holy judgement of God consuming the sacrifice   | Christ bearing the full weight of divine judgement against sin |
| The Bronze | Strength under judgement, endurance through testing | Christ enduring the full measure of judgement without failing  |

Many students of biblical typology have also seen significance in the bronze-covered acacia wood itself: protected beneath its bronze covering, the wood provides an evocative picture of Christ's humanity enduring the fire of divine judgement without corruption, recalling the prophetic promise that God's Holy One would not see decay.

Why do so many thoughtful people miss this picture entirely? The Tabernacle's own structure gives the answer. Anyone standing outside the white linen fence sees only a high wall of fabric — they can admire its "morality" from a distance, but they cannot see the Altar, the blood, or the smoke rising to heaven. Until a person steps through the Gate by faith, the true mechanism of the Gospel remains hidden from them; their natural intellect, however considerable, cannot save them (1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 4:4).

### **Fire from heaven**

One remarkable detail distinguished this altar from every altar devised by man: the fire upon it did not originate with human hands. It came from God Himself. When the Tabernacle service was inaugurated, Scripture records, "Fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces" (Leviticus 9:24). Centuries later,

when Solomon dedicated the Temple, God confirmed the same truth again: fire came down from heaven and consumed the offering, and the glory of the Lord filled the Temple (2 Chronicles 7:1). In both cases the message was unmistakable: the sacrifice was God's provision, the fire was God's fire, and the acceptance was God's acceptance. From beginning to end, redemption is the gracious initiative of God, not a human achievement.

This truth reaches its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. As Hebrews declares, "this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). Unlike the priests who stood daily offering sacrifices that could never fully remove sin, Christ offered Himself once for all. His work was complete; divine justice was fully satisfied; nothing can be added to it, and nothing needs to be repeated.

The seriousness of this principle became evident immediately after the Tabernacle's inauguration, when Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu offered "unauthorised fire" before the Lord — fire that had not been kindled by God's own provision — and were struck down (Leviticus 10:1–2). Immediately afterwards, God gave the priests a strict and lasting command: "The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out" (Leviticus 6:12). The lesson extends far beyond ancient Israel: the sacrifice God provides cannot be improved upon, supplemented, or replaced by human invention, however sincere. Human merit cannot ignite it — only God can.

The glory of the Lord had filled the Sanctuary, and divine fire had consumed the sacrifice upon the altar. Israel had witnessed the unmistakable sign that God Himself accepted the ministry He had established. Yet at the very moment when heaven's approval was most evident, a solemn warning was given through one of the most tragic events in the history of the priesthood. The account of Nadab and Abihu reveals that the Sanctuary was not merely a place of sacrifice and

forgiveness, but also a place where the holiness of God demanded reverence, obedience, and careful regard for His revealed will.

## **The Fire God Did Not Command — Nadab and Abihu and the Reverence of Worship**

### **A Solemn Lesson in the Sanctuary**

Among all the lessons taught through the Sanctuary, few are as sobering as the story of Nadab and Abihu. Their names are remembered not for faithful service, but for a moment of irreverence that ended in judgment before the Lord. The account is brief, yet its implications are profound.

The Sanctuary revealed God's grace, but it also revealed His holiness. Forgiveness was available through sacrifice, yet access to God was never casual.

The death of Nadab and Abihu stands as a permanent testimony that true worship is not shaped by human preference but by divine command.

“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.”  
(Leviticus 10:1–2)

These verses force us to ask an uncomfortable question: Why would God judge two priests so severely at the very beginning of Israel's worship system?

### **Who Were Nadab and Abihu?**

Nadab and Abihu were not strangers to God's work. They were the eldest sons of Aaron, the first high priest of Israel (Exodus 6:23). Their family occupied the highest spiritual office in the nation.

They had experienced privileges that few human beings ever received:

- They witnessed the miracles of the Exodus.
- They saw the Red Sea divided.
- They heard the voice of God at Sinai.
- They were among the leaders invited to ascend partway up the mountain with Moses (Exodus 24:1, 9–11).
- They participated in the covenant meal in God's presence.

Scripture says:

“They saw the God of Israel... So they saw God, and they ate and drank.” (Exodus 24:10–11)

This detail is astonishing. Nadab and Abihu were not ignorant men. They had been exposed to extraordinary revelation. Their sin was not the sin of those who never knew; it was the sin of those who knew and yet treated holy things lightly.

## The Consecration of the Priesthood

Leviticus 8–9 describes the solemn consecration of Aaron and his sons. For seven days they underwent a carefully prescribed preparation.

### Their Preparation Included

**Washing** — symbolizing cleansing from defilement (Leviticus 8:6).

**Sacred garments** — indicating that they represented God before the people (Leviticus 8:7–9, 13).

**Anointing with oil** — setting them apart for holy service (Leviticus 8:12, 30).

**Sacrifices** — emphasizing that even priests needed atonement (Leviticus 8:14–29).

**Strict obedience** — they were commanded not to depart from the tabernacle during the days of consecration (Leviticus 8:33–35).

At the end of this process, the glory of the Lord appeared, and divine fire came out from before God and consumed the offering on the altar (Leviticus 9:23–24). The people shouted and fell on their faces.

This is crucial: **God Himself had kindled the altar fire.** The fire on the altar was not ordinary fire; it originated from the presence of God and was to be maintained continually (Leviticus 6:12–13).

Immediately after this manifestation of divine glory comes the tragedy of Nadab and Abihu.

## What Was “Strange Fire”?

The text says they offered “profane” or “strange” fire “which He had not commanded them” (Leviticus 10:1).

The issue was not merely that the fire was different. The emphasis falls on the fact that it was **not commanded by God.**

In the Sanctuary service, every detail had been specified by the Lord:

- the altar,
- the sacrifices,

- the incense,
- the garments,
- the timing,
- the manner of approach.

Nadab and Abihu introduced something of their own choosing into the worship of God.

Many scholars believe they took fire from a source other than the altar God had sanctified. If so, they replaced God's appointed fire with humanly chosen fire. The symbolism is powerful: **they substituted human initiative for divine instruction.**

### **The Likely Influence of Intoxication**

Immediately after their death, God gave a striking command to Aaron:

“Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die.” (Leviticus 10:9)

The placement of this command strongly suggests that Nadab and Abihu may have been under the influence of alcohol when they entered the Sanctuary. Intoxication dulls judgment, weakens discernment, and reduces sensitivity to the distinction between the holy and the common.

God explicitly connects sobriety with the ability:

“to distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean” (Leviticus 10:10).

This principle extends beyond alcohol. Anything that clouds spiritual discernment—pride, emotionalism, entertainment-driven worship, self-exaltation, or disregard for Scripture—can lead believers to treat holy things as ordinary.

### **Why the Judgment Was Immediate**

Moses explained the reason to Aaron:

“By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.” (Leviticus 10:3)

The severity of the judgment corresponded to the privilege of their position. As priests standing closest to the Sanctuary, they represented God before the nation. If irreverence had been tolerated

at the very inauguration of the priesthood, the entire worship system would have been corrupted from the beginning.

Throughout Scripture, God sometimes acts with unusual immediacy at pivotal moments:

- Nadab and Abihu at the establishment of the priesthood.
- Uzzah when the ark was mishandled.
- Ananias and Sapphira at the beginning of the New Testament church.

These events are not evidence of arbitrary anger; they are warnings that God's holiness must not be trivialized.

### **The Deeper Issue: Casual Worship**

The real sin of Nadab and Abihu was not merely incorrect ritual. It was a heart that no longer trembled before God.

They had become familiar with sacred things. The altar, the incense, the priestly garments, and the presence of God had become routine. Familiarity had bred irreverence.

This is a danger for every generation of believers.

We can handle Bibles daily, speak of Jesus regularly, participate in church services weekly, and yet lose the sense of awe that should accompany the worship of a holy God.

The decline of reverence rarely happens suddenly. It begins when:

- Scripture is treated as optional.
- Worship is evaluated primarily by personal enjoyment.
- Entertainment replaces adoration.
- Emotional experience is valued above truth.
- God is approached as a casual companion rather than the sovereign Lord.

### **The Sanctuary and the Holiness of God**

The entire Sanctuary proclaimed that God is holy.

- The veil separated sinful humanity from the Most Holy Place.
- The sacrifices testified that sin brings death.
- The priest could not enter God's presence according to his own will.
- Even the high priest entered the Most Holy Place only at the appointed time and with blood.

Nadab and Abihu ignored this central lesson. They approached God on their own terms.

Modern Christianity is often tempted to emphasize God's love while neglecting His holiness. Yet the cross itself reveals both. Jesus died because God is loving enough to save sinners and holy enough that sin cannot simply be ignored.

Grace does not abolish reverence; it deepens it.

### **Christ and the True Fire**

There is a striking contrast between Nadab and Abihu and Jesus Christ.

They brought fire God had not commanded.

Christ came to do only the Father's will.

Jesus repeatedly said:

"I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me."  
(John 5:30)

Where the priests introduced self-will into worship, Christ offered perfect obedience. He is the true High Priest who approaches the Father without impurity, presumption, or rebellion.

Through His sacrifice we are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16), but boldness is not the same as irreverence.

The New Testament still declares:

"Let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:28–29)

The author of Hebrews deliberately echoes the language of Sinai and the Sanctuary. The God revealed in Christ is the same holy God revealed in Leviticus.

### **Lessons for Christians Today**

#### **1. God determines how He is worshiped**

True worship begins with listening, not inventing. Scripture must govern our worship, doctrine, and practice.

#### **2. Spiritual privilege does not guarantee spiritual safety**

Nadab and Abihu had exceptional experiences, yet they fell. Past encounters with God do not replace present obedience.

#### **3. Reverence is a mark of genuine faith**

A heart transformed by grace does not become careless about God's presence. Love for God produces humble awe.

**4. Leaders bear greater responsibility**

Those who teach, preach, lead worship, or shepherd others influence how people view God. Public ministry must never become a platform for self-expression detached from biblical truth.

**5. The greatest danger is gradual desensitization**

The loss of reverence often occurs slowly. We stop trembling at God's Word, stop examining our hearts, and begin treating sacred realities as common.

**A Final Appeal**

The story of Nadab and Abihu is not recorded merely to frighten us. It is recorded to call us back to a proper view of God.

The same Lord who judged irreverence also provided the sacrifice, the priesthood, and ultimately His own Son for our salvation. The Sanctuary points us to Jesus—the Lamb who died for our sins and the High Priest who now ministers on our behalf.

Therefore, the lesson is not “Stay away from God,” but “Come to God in the way He has provided.”

In an age when worship is often shaped by preference, performance, and personal taste, the Sanctuary still speaks:

**God is holy. God is gracious. And those who draw near to Him must do so with obedient hearts, reverent worship, and complete dependence on Jesus Christ, the true and perfect High Priest.**



## **Chapter 15: The Five Offerings — A Sacrificial System for Every Soul**

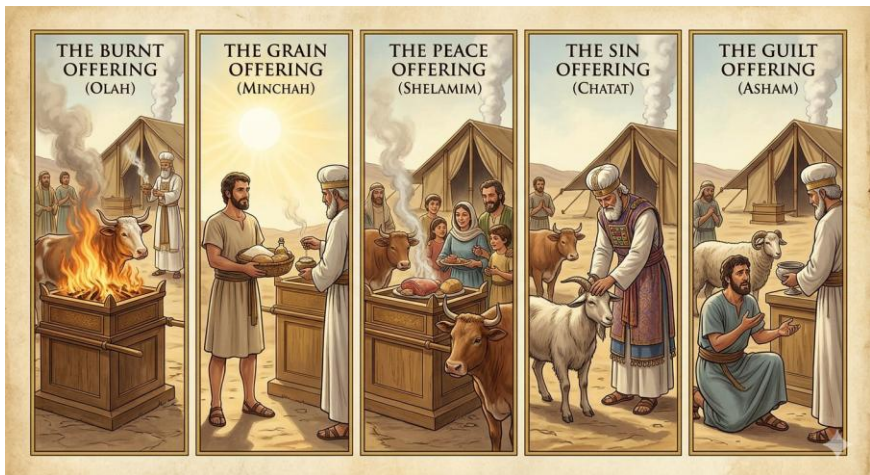
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The sacrificial laws given in Leviticus reveal remarkable compassion. While certain offerings required valuable animals, God made gracious provision for those who possessed very little. For many sin offerings, the normal requirement was a female lamb or goat — yet if a worshipper could not afford this, they could bring two turtledoves or young pigeons instead, and if even that was beyond their means, a small offering of fine flour was accepted (Leviticus 5:7–13). Grace was never for sale, but neither was it reserved for the wealthy: sin always carried a real cost, and yet grace remained available to everyone, regardless of means. The beautiful example of Mary and Joseph, who themselves brought the offering of the poor at the dedication of the infant Jesus (Luke 2:24), shows that even the family of the Messiah

entered the sanctuary system by the same humble provision available to the poorest worshipper.

Israel's sacrificial system centred on five major offerings, each illuminating a different aspect of the relationship between God and His people:

1. **The Burnt Offering** — wholly consumed upon the altar, symbolising complete surrender and consecration.
2. **The Grain Offering** — a tribute of fine flour, oil and frankincense, symbolising devotion and gratitude for God's provision.
3. **The Peace Offering** — shared between God, the priest and the worshipper, symbolising restored fellowship and communion.
4. **The Sin Offering** — addressing unintentional sin, restoring the worshipper to right standing with God.
5. **The Guilt (or Trespass) Offering** — addressing sin requiring restitution, where a wrong against another person also had to be made right.



*The five offerings of Israel's sacrificial system: the burnt, grain, peace, sin, and guilt offerings*

### **The Grain Offering — devotion without blood**

Unlike every other major offering, the grain offering, or *minchah*, required no blood at all. Worshippers brought fine flour, mixed with oil and frankincense, a portion of which was burned upon the altar while the remainder was eaten by the officiating priests (Leviticus 2:1–3). Salt was required in every grain offering, as “the salt of the covenant,” while honey and leaven were strictly forbidden (Leviticus 2:11–13).

The absence of blood is the very point: this was not an offering for sin, but an offering of devotion, gratitude and consecrated labour — the worshipper’s own daily toil, represented in the fruit of the field, presented back to God as an act of worship. The frankincense, burned entirely, speaks of a devotion withheld from no one but God; the salt, a substance of preservation and lasting covenant loyalty (cf. Matthew 5:13), speaks of an offering that does not spoil or grow stale; and the absence of leaven — Scripture’s frequent symbol of corruption and pride (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:6–8) — speaks of an offering free from any hidden, swelling self-interest.

Christ fulfils the grain offering in His sinless humanity, offered to God not merely in death but in an entire life of pure devotion, free from any trace of corruption. As the perfectly unleavened offering, He alone could present to the Father a life wholly without the swelling of self-will. And believers, who no longer bring literal flour to an altar, are nonetheless called to the same spirit of consecrated devotion: presenting the ordinary labour of daily life — work, time, skill, and care — back to God as an act of fragrant worship, “whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NKJV).

### **The Peace Offering — a shared meal of fellowship**

The peace offering, or *shelem* (from a Hebrew root meaning wholeness or completeness), occupies a unique place among the five: it alone was eaten in a shared meal involving all three parties — a portion burned for the Lord, a portion given to the officiating priest, and the remainder

eaten by the worshipper and his family and friends, often that very day (Leviticus 7:11–18). No other offering involved this kind of communal celebration.

Where the burnt offering proclaimed total consecration and the sin offering addressed guilt, the peace offering celebrated restored relationship — fellowship already secured, now being enjoyed. It was frequently brought voluntarily, as an expression of thanksgiving (a *todah* offering) or simply out of devotion, rather than in response to a specific need or failure. The presence of the worshipper's own family and friends at the meal turned an act of individual worship into a shared celebration before the Lord.

This offering finds a vivid New Testament echo in the Lord's Supper, where Christ's own body and blood become, for His people, the basis of an ongoing meal of fellowship — not earning peace with God, but celebrating a peace already secured through His finished sacrifice. Paul writes, "having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1, NKJV) — and just as the peace offering was shared among worshipper, priest and the Lord Himself, the Christian's communion with God is never a private, solitary transaction, but is meant to be enjoyed within the gathered fellowship of His people.

### **The Sin Offering — addressing the condition**

The sin offering, or *chatta'ah*, addressed sin understood broadly as a condition — an offence against God's holiness requiring atonement, whether the specific transgression was fully realised by the worshipper or not. Leviticus 4 outlines different sin offerings according to the status of the offender — the High Priest, the whole congregation, a leader, or an ordinary individual — with the value of the required sacrifice increasing according to the offender's position and responsibility, reflecting the principle that greater knowledge and authority bring greater accountability (cf. Luke 12:48).

Crucially, the sin offering provided atonement even for sins of which the worshipper had not been fully aware: “If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity” (Leviticus 5:17, NKJV). This detail carries a sobering implication — guilt before a holy God is not limited only to consciously recognised wrongdoing. David captures the same awareness in his prayer: “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults” (Psalm 19:12, NKJV).

Christ fulfils the sin offering completely. Paul states it with startling directness: God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21, NKJV). Where the Old Testament sin offering addressed the worshipper’s condition before a holy God, Christ did not merely make an offering for sin — in some profound and mysterious sense, He became the offering itself, in the place of the sinner.

### **The Guilt (Trespass) Offering — making restitution**

The guilt offering, or *asham*, addressed a narrower category: sins involving a definite wrong against another person or against sacred property, where restitution as well as atonement was required. Leviticus 6:1–7 lists specific examples — deceiving a neighbour, theft, extortion, or finding lost property and lying about it — and prescribes a clear remedy: full restitution of what was taken, plus an additional twenty per cent, together with a guilt offering brought to the priest.

The structure of this offering teaches an important principle that the other sacrifices do not address as directly: genuine repentance, where harm has been done to another person, involves more than inward sorrow or vertical reconciliation with God. It also requires tangible, costly restoration of what was wrongfully taken — repentance expressed not only in word but in restitution. Zacchaeus grasped this principle instinctively the moment he encountered Christ, promising

to repay everyone he had defrauded fourfold (Luke 19:8), and John the Baptist's call to repentance likewise demanded practical, ethical fruit: "Bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8, NKJV; cf. Luke 3:10–14).

Christ fulfils the guilt offering as well, though in a deeper register than mere financial restitution. Sin is, among other things, a debt — a real wrong committed against God's own glory and against our neighbour — and Christ's sacrifice does not simply excuse that debt; it satisfies it fully. As Colossians states, He has cancelled "the handwriting of requirements that was against us... having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14, NKJV). Where the guilt offering required the wrongdoer himself to make restitution, the Gospel reveals something even more remarkable: Christ Himself makes restitution on behalf of the guilty, satisfying what we could never have repaid.

### A summary glance

| Offering       | Hebrew name | Blood required? | Primary focus                   | Fulfilled in Christ as...                       |
|----------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Burnt Offering | Olah        | Yes             | Total consecration              | The life wholly surrendered to God              |
| Grain Offering | Minchah     | No              | Devotion and gratitude          | The sinless life, offered in pure devotion      |
| Peace Offering | Shelem      | Yes             | Restored, celebrated fellowship | The basis of communion with God and one another |

|                |           |     |                                            |                                             |
|----------------|-----------|-----|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Sin Offering   | Chatta'ah | Yes | Atonement for the sinner's condition       | The One who became sin for us               |
| Guilt Offering | Asham     | Yes | Atonement plus restitution for wrongs done | The One who makes restitution on our behalf |

Beyond these individual offerings, Israel maintained a rhythm of corporate sacrifice. The Daily Burnt Offering, or *Tamid*, was offered every morning and evening on behalf of the whole nation (Exodus 29:38–42; Numbers 28:3–8), continually testifying that the nation stood before God only through an unbroken provision of atonement. On the Sabbath, this offering was doubled, marking the day's special holiness, and further offerings marked the new moon and the great festivals of the year — so that the rhythm of Israel's sacred calendar was, quite literally, a rhythm of continual sacrifice.

### **Were the sacrifices effective for every kind of sin?**

A critical question arises when examining the sanctuary service: were these sacrifices effective for every imaginable kind of sin? The Old Testament makes a sharp and vital distinction between sins committed out of human frailty, weakness or ignorance, and sins committed with deliberate, defiant rebellion against the Almighty. The standard sacrificial system provided atonement for the former — sins of weakness, oversight, or unintentional transgression. For high-handed, deliberate defiance of God, no animal sacrifice within the regular system was prescribed as sufficient; such sin required a deeper repentance of the heart, of the kind the Day of Atonement alone addressed for the nation as a whole, and which finds its only ultimate remedy in Christ.

Every sacrifice, of whichever kind, pointed beyond itself to Christ. God Himself would, in time, provide the perfect sacrifice — the one offering capable of dealing not only with weakness but with the deepest rebellion of the human heart.

## **Chapter 16: The Olah — The Offering That Held Nothing Back**

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Among all the offerings of Israel's altar, the burnt offering — in Hebrew, the *olah* — occupied a unique place. Many offerings were shared between God, the priests and the worshipper. The *olah* was different: nothing was retained, nothing was reserved, nothing was held back. The entire offering belonged to God alone, consumed completely upon the altar so that its smoke ascended as "a pleasing aroma." Its very name captures its meaning — derived from the Hebrew root '*alah*, "to ascend," the *olah* describes that which rises upward. In this sense, the burnt offering looked beyond mere atonement for sin and pointed towards the complete consecration of a redeemed life.

Every burnt offering pointed beyond itself to One who would offer not merely an animal, but His own perfect life. Jesus Christ is the true and final *Olah*. He did not come merely to satisfy a legal requirement or pay the penalty for sin — although He certainly accomplished both — but to live a life of absolute obedience, perfect love and complete submission to the Father's will. From Bethlehem to Calvary, every thought, word and action was an offering ascending to God. As Paul writes, "Walk in love, as 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). Just as the smoke of the ancient burnt offering continually rose heavenward, Christ's entire life ascended before the Father as a fragrant offering of perfect obedience. He withheld nothing — even in Gethsemane praying, "Not My will, but Yours, be done"

(Luke 22:42). The cross was therefore not simply the place where Jesus died; it was the final expression of a life that had already been completely surrendered.



## THE OLAH

The Olah describes that which rises upward.

As the entire sacrifice was consumed upon the altar, its smoke ascended heavenward as a visible expression of worship, consecration, and total dedication to the Lord.

### **Becoming a living burnt offering**

Because Christ fulfilled the entire sacrificial system, believers no longer bring animals to an altar. Instead, through the indwelling Holy Spirit,

God calls His people to become the offering. Paul deliberately echoes the language of the *olah* when he writes, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1, NKJV) — one of the most striking transformations in all of Scripture. The altar has not disappeared; it has moved into the believer's heart. The fire is no longer physical; it is the refining work of the Holy Spirit. The sacrifice is no longer an animal; it is the consecrated life of the disciple. Unlike the Old Testament offering, which died once upon the altar, the Christian becomes a *living* sacrifice — one who continually chooses to surrender, day after day.

What does this look like in practice? It means **complete consecration** — nothing was withheld from the ancient burnt offering, and Christ calls His followers to surrender every part of life, not merely religious activity but every relationship, ambition, possession and decision; true discipleship leaves no compartment untouched. It means **worship rather than self-interest** — the burnt offering sought nothing for itself, and genuine Christianity is centred not on what God can give us but on what He deserves, so that love replaces selfish ambition and obedience replaces convenience. It means **daily surrender** — the Christian life is not a single moment of dedication but a continual act of yielding, as Jesus said: "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23); the living *Olah* is renewed every morning. And it results in **a fragrant aroma to God** — every act of obedience, every quiet prayer, every hidden sacrifice and every act of love becomes spiritual worship ascending before His throne, just as surely as the literal smoke once rose from the altar.

This same pattern of confession, costly repentance and decisive turning runs through the wider sacrificial system. The laying on of hands over the sacrifice was a public acknowledgement that guilt was real; genuine transformation likewise begins with honest confession, for healing

cannot begin while sin is denied or excused (1 John 1:9). The remains of certain sacrifices were carried outside the camp and removed completely — a vivid picture that repentance is not merely feeling sorrow for sin, but a decisive turning away from it (compare John 8:11). The movement is deeply significant: first comes atonement, then comes consecration; grace always comes before service, and salvation always precedes surrender. We do not dedicate ourselves to God in order to earn acceptance — we dedicate ourselves because, through Christ, we have already been graciously accepted.

The *olah* gently asks each of us the same searching question that it asked every Israelite who watched the smoke rise from the altar: what part of my life am I still withholding from the One who withheld nothing for me?

## **Chapter 17: The Bronze Laver — God's Wash Basin**

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Beyond the altar stood the laver, a bronze basin filled with water, mounted on its own bronze stand (Exodus 38:8). Having been forgiven at the altar, the worshipper — or, in ongoing service, the priest — was now washed and cleansed here. The laver beautifully symbolises baptism, spiritual cleansing, and the beginning of a transformed life: Christ not only forgives, He cleanses; not only pardons, He renews. The One who shed His blood also washes His people and begins the lifelong work of making them holy.



*The courtyard pathway: from the Bronze Altar, to the Bronze Laver, and into the Holy Place*

Among the furnishings of the Tabernacle, the bronze laver occupies a curious place: Scripture gives no measurements at all for its height, width or capacity, even though precise dimensions are carefully recorded for nearly every other piece of furniture. As Isaiah later declared, on the same theme of cleansing, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18) — perhaps fittingly, the very extent of that cleansing defies exact measurement.

### **Daily cleansing and the once-for-all bath**

The New Testament speaks of two distinct but complementary kinds of washing in the believer's life, both pictured in the Tabernacle's arrangement: regeneration — the initial bath, received once — and sanctification, the ongoing, repeated cleansing pictured by the laver. Jesus expressed this beautifully when He washed His disciples' feet at the Last Supper, telling Peter, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean" (John 13:10, NKJV). The one who has been regenerated does not need to be saved all over again every time they sin — but they do need the ongoing cleansing of confession and the Word, exactly as a clean person's feet still gather dust on a daily

walk. As Paul writes of Christ's love for the Church, He continues "to sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26, NKJV), and Jesus told His disciples, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3, NKJV).

James captures the danger of neglecting this ongoing washing: "Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror" and then promptly forgets what they saw (James 1:23). Cleansing, in other words, is not a permanently portable possession but a repeated return to a divinely appointed place of encounter.

### **The laver as a check against a superficial Gospel**

A serious concern within contemporary Christian life is the tendency towards a reduced, overly simple presentation of salvation, in which a verbal profession of faith — raising a hand, repeating a short prayer — is treated as the full and final expression of conversion, without any corresponding expectation of ongoing transformation. When outward declaration is not accompanied by inward change, the credibility of that testimony is weakened.

The Tabernacle's own design corrects this. The Altar of Burnt Offering is not the endpoint of the journey — it is the entry point. The Bronze Laver functions as a continual corrective against reducing faith to a single moment or a single emotional response: its presence insists that those who approach God must also be engaged in ongoing purification. Cleansing is not permanently carried; it is repeatedly applied. Any framework that treats conversion as a completed event at the moment of verbal confession fails to reflect the Tabernacle's full pattern, which presents salvation consistently as both a decisive act and an ongoing transformation.

It is worth pausing, then, to ask: what does my walk before God look like today? The invitation of God remains open and clear — "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13, NKJV).



Bronze altar of burnt sacrifice

## PART FOUR: THE HOLY PLACE

### Chapter 18: Crossing the First Veil — Justification and Sanctification

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Passing through the first veil, the believer enters an entirely different environment. Unlike the courtyard, lit by open sky, the Holy Place contains no windows — its only light comes from the golden lampstand. The lesson is profound: God's people are not called to live by the wisdom of the world, but by divine illumination. This chamber illustrates the inward work of God as He renews the mind, transforms the heart, and shapes the character of His people, and reveals Christ's continual ministry on behalf of those He has redeemed.

To understand this movement from the outer court into the heart of the sanctuary, we need to grasp two distinct yet inseparable doctrines: justification and sanctification. They are two sides of the same coin of salvation, and confusing them leads to spiritual stagnation, legalism, or despair.

#### **Justification: the legal declaration (the Altar)**

Justification is an instantaneous, legal act of God. The moment a sinner genuinely accepts the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, a divine exchange takes place: in the heavenly courtroom, God declares the guilty sinner righteous. This is not a gradual process — it happens in a single moment. Our sins are blotted out, and we are clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus. At the altar of justification, we do not *become* inherently sinless; rather, we are *reckoned* righteous, because Christ has already paid the penalty in full. It is entirely a work of God *for* us, freeing us from the penalty of sin.

### **Sanctification: the lifelong transformation (moving inward)**

While justification changes our status before God, sanctification changes our state. It is the progressive, lifelong process of being made holy — if justification is the birth, sanctification is the growth: a cooperative work of the Holy Spirit *in* us, freeing us from the power of sin. As we step away from the altar and move deeper into the sanctuary, the Holy Spirit begins to align our character, thoughts and desires with the Law of God. This is the daily crucifying of the flesh, the gradual unfolding of spiritual maturity, and the constant feeding on the Word of Life.

### **The illusion of "arriving"**

In this life, the greatest danger in the walk of sanctification is the illusion of perfectionism — the belief that we might reach a spiritual plateau on our own, where we have finally "arrived." The reality of the Christian walk is that we will never, by our own strength, reach a point of absolute flawlessness on this side of eternity; the moment a believer thinks they have attained holiness by their own merit, they have fallen into the trap of self-righteousness. Scripture is unflinching on this point. The Apostle John warns, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8), and even the Apostle Paul, near the end of an extraordinarily faithful ministry, openly admitted, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me" (Philippians 3:12).

If Paul had not "arrived," neither have we. The sanctuary teaches that our need for the blood of the covenant never expires; we never outgrow our dependency on Jesus. Sanctification is not about becoming independent from God through spiritual strength built up over time — true sanctification is actually an *increase* in our awareness of how much we need Him. The closer we draw to the holiness of God within the sanctuary, the more clearly we see our own remaining flaws, and

the grander His grace appears. We must continuously press inward, content to grow, yet always humbled by the fact that our standing before God rests entirely on Christ's perfection, never our own. We have not arrived; we are simply pilgrims travelling deeper into His presence.

| Sanctuary Location                                                                                                | Physical Elements                      | Theological Meaning                       | Practical Experience                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The Outer Court</b><br>       | Altar of Sacrifice & The Laver         | <b>Justification &amp; Sanctification</b> | Legal pardon at the Cross;  cleansing from worldly defilement.                                                                                            |
| <b>The Holy Place</b><br>        | Showbread, Lampstand, Altar of Incense | <b>Daily Communion</b>                    | Feeding on the Word, walking in the Spirit, and a vibrant prayer life.                                                                                    |
| <b>The Most Holy Place</b><br> | Ark of the Covenant                    | <b>Ultimate Reconciliation</b>            | Absolute surrender, standing before God's throne covered by  grace.  |

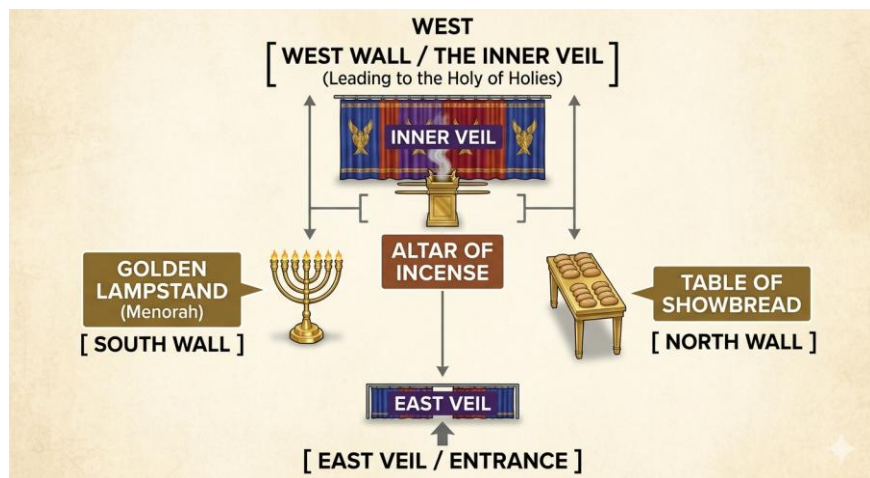
*How each part of the sanctuary corresponds to a theological meaning and a practical experience in the believer's life*

## Chapter 19: The Table of Showbread

Having passed through the first veil into the Holy Place, we encounter the Table of Showbread on the north side of the sanctuary (cf. Exodus 26:35). It helps to picture the layout as a whole: to the right, the Table

of Showbread; to the left, the Golden Lampstand, casting its light across the room; directly ahead, the Golden Altar of Incense, positioned immediately before the second veil; and beyond that veil, the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant rests as God's earthly throne.

This arrangement is no accident, but a deliberate spatial theology. The Table and the Lampstand stand opposite one another, in a dynamic relationship between bread and light, sustenance and revelation. Ahead of them both stands the Altar of Incense, aligned with the veil, representing worship and the ascent of prayer. Together the three furnishings trace a single movement through the Holy Place — from provision, through illumination, towards communion — all oriented towards the glory that lies beyond the veil.



*The layout of the Holy Place: the Lampstand to the south, the Table of Showbread to the north, and the Altar of Incense before the inner veil*

## The table's design

The table was made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold (Exodus 25:23–24) — in typological terms, the wood reflecting Christ's true and incorruptible humanity, the gold overlay His divinity, joined together without mixture or corruption. Its dimensions were modest: about two

cubits long, one cubit wide, and a cubit and a half high (roughly 90 × 45 × 67 cm). A distinctive double crown of gold ran around the table — one band around the top edge, a second around the frame beneath — securing the loaves of bread in place while also picturing a layered security, often understood as a picture of the believer's security in Christ, held not by a single line of protection but by the united authority of Christ as both King and High Priest. Four golden rings, one at each corner, held gilded acacia poles by which the Kohathite priests could carry the table without direct contact whenever Israel moved camp — a design that preserved both its holiness and its mobility. Accompanying the table were dedicated golden vessels — plates, dishes, bowls and pitchers (Exodus 25:29) — and Scripture also associates the table with continual drink offerings of wine (cf. Numbers 28:7), establishing a pattern of fellowship expressed through both bread and wine, provision and devotion.

### **The twelve loaves and "the Presence"**

Upon the table rested twelve loaves of bread, arranged in two stacks of six. In Hebrew this bread is called *Lechem haPanim* — "the Bread of the Presence," or more literally, "the Bread of the Face." Jewish tradition (recorded in the Talmud, Menachot 94b) describes the loaves as having raised or folded edges, allowing them to be stacked securely with golden rods or separators placed between them to maintain spacing — careful engineering that kept the bread properly presented throughout the week. Each stack of six loaves represented the twelve tribes together, with a golden dish of pure frankincense set atop each stack. This careful order reflects more than ritual tidiness: God's people are not scattered in His presence, but remembered, represented and held in ordered unity before Him.

The bread itself was prepared by the sons of the Kohathite Levites (cf. 1 Chronicles 9:32) as a sacred and skilled duty, and was replaced every Sabbath — incoming priests setting fresh loaves on the table as outgoing priests removed the old, in a weekly rhythm of renewal: the

table is never empty, never abandoned, always set before God. When the bread was replaced, the frankincense from the previous week was burned on the Altar of Incense as a fire offering, its sweet aroma symbolising that Israel's prayers and devotion were rising to God afresh (Leviticus 24:7).

### **Christ, the Bread of Life**

The bread on the table serves as a witness to the life-giving Word of God, ultimately fulfilled in the person of Christ, the incarnate Word (cf. John 1:1, 14). Jesus makes this connection explicit: "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) — a declaration that identifies Christ not merely as the provider of life, but as life itself. There is even a small but lovely geographic correspondence here: Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a name derived from the Hebrew *Beit Lechem*, "House of Bread" — the One who would declare Himself the Bread of Life entering human history from the House of Bread.

In the Tabernacle, the priests were required to eat the showbread once it was removed from the table, participating personally in what had been set before God. In the same way, spiritual life today is sustained not by a one-off act but by an ongoing reality of abiding in Christ, feeding continually on Him and being strengthened through Him.

This picture of bread reaches its fulfilment in the Upper Room, where Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, taking bread, breaking it and giving it to His disciples: "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24, NKJV). What was placed continually before God in the sanctuary becomes, in the life of the Church, a living ordinance pointing directly to the broken body of Christ given for His people. And the twelve loaves, representing the twelve tribes gathered as one before God's presence, anticipate the unity of God's redeemed people today — many yet one, distinct yet

gathered before the same presence, sustained by the same Bread of Life.

The Table of Showbread, in the end, reveals not only divine provision but divine fellowship. It testifies that God's purpose is not merely to rescue sinners from judgement, but to bring them into communion with Himself — saved at the altar, cleansed at the laver, and now sustained in fellowship at the table.

## **Chapter 20: A Posture of Readiness — No Seating in the Holy Place**

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A striking feature of the Tabernacle is that no seating furniture was ever prescribed for the priests within its service. Unlike later temple or royal contexts, where sitting can symbolise rest and completion, the Tabernacle environment is consistently one of active service and continual readiness. While Scripture does not explicitly state a "no-chair command," the structure of the sanctuary nonetheless presents a consistent picture: priestly ministry conducted in a posture of ongoing engagement, never detached, idle, or treated as complete in this present setting.

This theme finds a clear echo in the very first Passover, where Israel was instructed to eat in a state of readiness: "with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste" (Exodus 12:11, NKJV). Israel's first act of deliverance was marked by expectation and movement — redemption was something to remember, but also something that reoriented posture, readiness, and expectation. The Table of Showbread, the Lampstand and the Altar of Incense all function within this same living environment of service rather than rest. This does not deny the believer's eternal rest in God, but it distinguishes between *eternal rest as promise* and *present service as calling*. The believer stands in worship not as one who has

finished the journey, but as one actively participating in it, watching for the King who is still to come (cf. Matthew 24:42–44).

Christ, our Living Bread, is coming again, and Scripture consistently presents His return as sudden and decisive. The sanctuary's pattern turns this into a searching, personal question: will He find His people actively engaged in faithful service? Walking in the light and guidance of the Spirit, pictured by the Lampstand? Sustained by His Word, feeding on the true Bread of Life — or distracted from it? Within the Holy Place, provision, illumination and participation come together in a single theology of lived readiness — God's people sustained by Christ, guided by the Spirit, and called to faithful, watchful service while they await the fulfilment of all things.

## Chapter 21: The Golden Lampstand — Divine Light

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As the priest stood at the Table of Showbread on the north side of the Holy Place, he would turn towards the south wall, where the Golden Lampstand, or Menorah, stood, casting its light across the sacred room. God's instructions for it were exact and detailed:

*"You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand shall be of hammered work; its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and its 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... And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." (Exodus 25:31–40, NKJV)*

The repeated emphasis on its parts — "its shaft," "its branches," "its cups" — reflects the careful unity of its design, often understood as

pointing forward to Christ, who would later declare, "I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). The lampstand, together with all its utensils, was made from a single talent of pure gold (Exodus 25:39) — a substantial, unified mass of material highlighting both its value and the unity of its construction. Crucially, it was not assembled from separate pieces but hammered out of one solid piece of gold, requiring careful shaping and forming under pressure — a process many have seen as reflecting the suffering and affliction associated with Christ's own redemptive work (cf. Isaiah 53), glory emerging through what is shaped under pressure. Its decoration of almond-like cups, buds and blossoms drew on a tree that is the first to blossom in Israel after winter, making it a fitting symbol of awakening, watchfulness and renewal — light that is alert, living and continually renewed.



*The Menorah: one central shaft and six branches, hammered from a single piece of gold, bearing seven flames*

## Light with no natural source

A defining feature of the Tabernacle is that it had no windows; all illumination in the Holy Place came entirely from the Lampstand. This creates a deliberate contrast between natural light — ordinary human perception — and sanctuary light, divinely provided illumination. The

point is not a rejection of reason, but a statement about the nature of spiritual understanding: divine truth is revealed, not constructed by human effort. As Paul puts it, "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God... nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14, NKJV). Within the Holy Place, the Lampstand represents illumination that comes from God rather than from human origin — light that does not merely supply information, but defines reality itself: everything in that room is seen correctly only by its light.

### **The beaten oil**

Because the Tabernacle had no windows, the Holy Place would have remained in total darkness without the continual light of the Lampstand, fuelled exclusively by pure olive oil (Leviticus 24:2). Although other oils — sesame, flax, almond — were known throughout the ancient world, Scripture consistently sets olive oil apart for the worship of God, used for the lampstand, for anointing priests and kings, and in the grain offerings. But God required more than ordinary olive oil — He required *pure beaten* olive oil: "pure oil of beaten olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually" (Exodus 27:20). "Beaten oil" refers to the finest grade, produced by gently crushing the olives by hand; the first oil to flow from the crushed fruit was exceptionally clear and pure, burning with a bright, steady flame and very little smoke. Nothing inferior was acceptable before the Lord.

But, as with every article of the sanctuary, the deepest meaning is found in Christ. The olive could not produce light until it had first been crushed — and this points us to Jesus, who was "wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). Before the Light of the World could shine into humanity's darkness, He Himself was beaten, bruised and crushed beneath the weight of sin; the pure oil illuminating the sanctuary silently proclaimed the suffering Messiah long before He came into the world. The oil also represents the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit, who was poured out in fullness

only after Jesus had completed His work of redemption through His death, resurrection and ascension — the light of the Spirit shines because Christ first endured the cross. Every evening, as the priests filled the lamps afresh, the sanctuary testified that God's light would never fail. The lesson remains unchanged today: God has never asked His people to manufacture their own light. He simply calls us to remain filled with the oil He provides, so that, as the Spirit reveals Christ to our hearts, His light shines through us into a world still longing for hope.

### **Bread and light together**

The Lampstand does not stand in isolation — it shines directly across from the Table of Showbread, illuminating what is set before God. In this sense the sanctuary presents bread and light as a single, relational pair: the bread represents provision and truth — the Word; the light represents illumination and understanding — the Spirit. The two are meant to work together, because divine truth is not only given but also revealed. The Word of God is complete in itself, yet its meaning is made alive and discernible only through the illuminating work of the Spirit, who "searches all things, even the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10). Without this illumination, truth can be read but not truly grasped in a living way. The Lampstand and the Table are not separate realities, but interdependent witnesses within the Holy Place: truth revealed, and truth made known.

## **Chapter 22: The Altar of Incense**

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Directly ahead of the worshipper moving through the Holy Place, immediately before the second veil, stood the Golden Altar of Incense. The fragrant smoke rising continually before God here symbolises prayer and intercession; here we meet Christ as our great Intercessor, continually presenting His perfect righteousness before the Father on behalf of His people. Our prayers rise acceptably only because they are

united with His perfect mediation, and our confidence in approaching God rests not on the eloquence or merit of our own prayers, but on the continual intercession of our great High Priest (Romans 8:34).

Positioned as it was, aligned with the veil and standing between the believer and the innermost presence of God, the Altar of Incense completes the threefold movement of the Holy Place: provision at the Table, illumination at the Lampstand, and communion at the Altar of Incense — the whole of the believer's daily walk with God summarised in furniture and fragrance, sustained by His Word, guided by His Spirit, and lifted continually to the Father through the intercession of Christ.



The Altar of Incense

## **PART FIVE: THE VEIL AND THE MOST HOLY PLACE**

### **Chapter 23: The Veil — "Thus Far, and No Further"**

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Few moments in all of Scripture unite the Old and New Testaments more dramatically than the tearing of the Temple veil at the very instant of Christ's death (Matthew 27:51). To onlookers outside, it may have looked like nothing more than structural damage caused by the accompanying earthquake. To every priest familiar with the rituals of Leviticus, it would have been staggering.

According to Exodus 26, the veil was no ordinary curtain. It was woven from blue, purple and scarlet yarn and embroidered with cherubim — the very guardians that, since Eden, symbolised the holiness and majesty of God's presence. Jewish tradition, recorded by historians such as Josephus, describes the veil of the Second Temple as immense: roughly sixty feet high, thirty feet wide, and as thick as the breadth of a man's hand, requiring several priests to handle and maintain. Whether or not every traditional measurement can be verified, the overwhelming impression is unmistakable: this was no decorative partition. It was a barrier — a massive, silent proclamation that an immeasurable separation remained between sinful humanity and a holy God. For generation after generation, the veil proclaimed the same sobering truth: God is holy, humanity is sinful, and the way into His immediate presence remains closed.

The cherubim woven into the veil were not chosen for artistic beauty alone. They deliberately echoed the very first great separation in Scripture: after Adam and Eve sinned, God stationed cherubim at the entrance to Eden with a flaming sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life. Every priest who stood before the sanctuary veil was, in effect, standing once again before the gates of Eden. The message had not

changed — sin separates, and holiness cannot be entered casually. And yet hidden within the sanctuary itself was a promise: the very barrier declaring humanity's exclusion also anticipated the day when God Himself would provide a way home.

### A solemn exception

For nearly fifteen centuries, one exception stood against the absolute barrier of the veil. On the Day of Atonement alone, the High Priest would enter beyond the curtain with sacrificial blood and a cloud of fragrant incense, ministering before the Mercy Seat in God's very presence, according to His precise instructions. Yet even this privilege underlined limitation rather than freedom — access remained restricted, temporary and hedged with solemn warnings.

| The Yom Kippur shadow                                                                                                                                                     | The fulfilment in Christ                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Only the High Priest could enter beyond the veil                                                                                                                          | Through Christ, every believer is invited to draw near to God by faith (Hebrews 10:19–22)                                                                                                                                                |
| Access was granted only once a year                                                                                                                                       | Through Christ, access is continual and permanent, because His sacrifice was offered once for all                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>The priest entered with fear, under the protection of blood and incense</p> <p>The veil remained in place, testifying that the way had not yet been fully revealed</p> | <p>Believers are invited to approach the throne of grace with confidence, through Christ's finished work</p> <p>At Christ's death, the veil was torn from top to bottom, proclaiming that the new and living way had now been opened</p> |

### **Torn from top to bottom**

When Jesus cried, "It is finished," the impossible happened. The veil was torn — not from the bottom upward, as if by human hands, but from the top downward, declaring that the initiative belonged entirely to God. Matthew's careful detail that the tear ran from top to bottom is far more than an eyewitness observation; it is a theological declaration. Humanity did not tear open the barrier separating it from God — God Himself acted. From the moment Adam and Eve fell in Eden, the story of redemption has never been about humanity climbing up to heaven, but about God graciously reaching down to rescue fallen sinners. As Hebrews explains, believers now have "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" (Hebrews 10:19–20, NKJV). The torn veil does not diminish God's holiness; it proclaims that Christ has fully accomplished what every sacrifice, every priest, every altar and every Day of Atonement had anticipated. The way back to the Father has been opened — not by human merit, but by divine grace. The sanctuary's ancient warning has become the Gospel's joyful invitation: the way is open; come boldly, through Christ.

### **The opened graves**

Matthew records a second, often-overlooked event at this same moment: as the veil tore, the earth shook, the rocks split, and the graves were opened — yet the saints who had died did not actually emerge until after Christ's own resurrection (Matthew 27:51–53). The order matters. Although the earthquake at His death opened the tombs, the saints did not come forth until afterwards, so that Christ remained "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20) — His resurrection the source and guarantee of theirs. Just as the Feast of Firstfruits celebrated the beginning of the harvest and guaranteed that the full harvest would follow, these resurrected saints testified that Christ's resurrection had inaugurated the great harvest of all who will one day be raised to eternal life.

The torn veil proclaimed that the barrier between God and humanity had been removed through Christ's sacrifice. The opened graves proclaimed that the power of death had been broken through His resurrection. Together they announce the complete triumph of the Gospel: the penalty of sin paid, access to the Father opened, and victory over death secured. The Bible begins with humanity driven from God's presence, cherubim guarding the way back. It ends with the redeemed standing before God's throne, with no veil remaining and no barrier left between God and His people. From Eden to the Tabernacle, from Calvary to the New Jerusalem, the entire story of redemption is God's gracious work of bringing His children home.

## **Chapter 24: The Ark of the Covenant — Justice and Mercy Meet**

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Beyond the second veil lay the Holiest of All. This sacred place represents the deepest purpose of redemption: restored fellowship between God and humanity. Here stood the Ark of the Covenant, containing God's holy Law and covered by the Mercy Seat, upon which sacrificial blood was sprinkled once each year; above the Mercy Seat rested the glorious Shekinah — the visible manifestation of God's presence among His people.

### **Three witnesses inside the Ark**

Inside the Ark rested three objects, each rising out of a moment of Israel's failure, yet each transformed within the sanctuary into a testimony of grace.

- **The two stone tablets of the Law** — representing the moral covenant given at Sinai, a standard that reveals both God's holiness and humanity's inability to fulfil it.

- **The golden pot of manna** — recalling Israel's wilderness provision, and their repeated complaints against God's sustenance.
- **Aaron's rod that budded** — representing Israel's rebellion against God's appointed priestly authority, in the dispute recorded in Numbers 16–17.

In this way, the Ark becomes a meeting point: of human failure and divine grace, of broken covenant and faithful provision, of rebellion against God's appointed order and God's gracious vindication of it. At its core, the Ark reveals a single, central truth — God does not dwell where human perfection has been achieved, but where atonement has been made.

### **The vertical blueprint of grace**

The very structure of the Ark presents a striking visual proclamation of the Gospel, arranged in three levels.

At the top rested the **Shekinah Glory** — the visible manifestation of God's holy presence, dwelling above the cherubim, revealing both His holiness and His desire to dwell among His covenant people. Through Christ, God no longer desires merely to dwell *among* His people but *within* them, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, restoring intimate fellowship with humanity.

In the middle lay the **Mercy Seat**, the solid gold cover of the Ark, sprinkled with the blood of atonement on the Day of Atonement — God's own appointed place of reconciliation, where justice and mercy meet. Jesus Christ is our perfect Mercy Seat: through His once-for-all sacrifice, the righteous demands of God's holy Law are fully satisfied, allowing mercy to be extended to all who believe without compromising divine justice.

At the foundation, beneath it all, rested the **Tables of the Law** — the enduring expression of God's holy and righteous character, exposing sin and revealing humanity's need for redemption. The Law's standard

never changed, its holiness was never diminished, and its righteous demands were never relaxed; it remained exactly what it had always been — the perfect expression of God's own character.

The arrangement itself proclaims the Gospel. At its foundation lies God's holy Law, revealing His perfect righteousness and exposing human sin. Above the Law rests the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat, declaring that God Himself has provided atonement through the sacrifice of His Son. Above the Mercy Seat shines the Shekinah Glory, the visible manifestation of His presence. The message is breathtakingly simple: because justice has been satisfied through Christ's blood, God can dwell in the midst of — and ultimately within — His redeemed people, without compromising His holiness in any way.

The transformation of the Ark from a place of condemnation into a place where mercy is revealed came through one divinely appointed means: sacrificial blood. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest entered beyond the veil and sprinkled blood on and before the Mercy Seat — and the symbolism is profound. God did not abolish His justice; He fulfilled it. He did not lower His standards; He upheld them perfectly. The blood declared that atonement had been made through the substitute God Himself had provided, echoing the very first Passover: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). Mercy is never granted because righteousness is ignored. Mercy is extended because God's righteousness has been fully honoured through His own gracious provision.

## THE BLOOD: THE FOUNDATION OF ACCESS

The defining act of Yom Kippur is not the incense or the goat in the wilderness—it is the blood applied *within the veil*.

### BLOOD IS PLACED:

#### 1 BEFORE THE MERCY SEAT

Blood is sprinkled before the mercy seat, signifying that access is granted only through atonement.



#### 2 AND ON ITS SURFACE

Blood is applied on the surface of the mercy seat, covering the place where God's glory dwells.



THIS DECLARES THAT RECONCILIATION IS NOT SYMBOLIC—IT IS LEGAL, COSTLY, AND COVENANTAL.



#### THE BLOOD ATONES

It covers sin and satisfies divine justice.



#### ACCESS IS GRANTED

We may draw near because of the blood.



#### A COVENANT IS MAINTAINED

The blood seals God's promise and our belonging.



#### GOD'S PRESENCE IS HONORED

His holiness remains untouched by our sin.



*Where the blood was applied on the Day of Atonement, and what each act of sprinkling declared*

## Christ, our true Mercy Seat

The Apostle Paul removes any uncertainty about the ultimate meaning of this symbolism, writing in Romans 3:25 that "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood — to be received by faith." The Greek word translated "sacrifice of atonement," *hilastērion*, is the very word used in the Greek Old Testament for the Mercy Seat itself. This is no coincidence. Paul is declaring that Jesus Christ is the true Mercy Seat — the place where God and sinful humanity meet, where justice is fully satisfied, where mercy is freely extended, and where forgiveness and righteousness embrace without contradiction. Everything that the golden cover of the Ark once symbolised finds its complete fulfilment in the crucified and risen Son of God.

### **The double reality of salvation**

The sanctuary reveals two inseparable truths that must never be divided. First, Christ saves us *from* the guilt and condemnation of sin — through His atoning blood, we are forgiven, justified, and reconciled to God. Second, Christ saves us *for* restored fellowship with God — the One who justifies also sanctifies; the One who forgives also transforms; the One who removes our guilt also writes His Law upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit. The purpose of redemption is therefore not merely that sinners should escape judgement, but that they should once again become the dwelling place of the living God. At the Cross, justice was fully satisfied. Through the empty tomb, life conquered death. Through the ministry of our great High Priest, believers are continually drawn into deeper communion with God. And through the indwelling Holy Spirit, God no longer dwells only above the Mercy Seat — through Jesus Christ, He now dwells within His redeemed people. The sanctuary was always pointing here: to Christ, and to the restoration of God's image in those whom He has redeemed.

### **Chapter 25: The New Covenant — The Law Written Within**

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The sanctuary points beyond forgiveness to transformation. Under the New Covenant, God does not merely pardon sinners — He renews them from within. Through the prophet Jeremiah, He declared, "I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33), and the writer to the Hebrews repeats this promise, showing that it is fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 8:10). The same Law once preserved within the Ark is now written by the Holy Spirit on the hearts of God's redeemed people. Obedience is therefore no longer merely external compliance, but the fruit of an inwardly transformed life.

The entire sanctuary journey — from the gate, through the courtyard, into the Holy Place, and finally into the Most Holy Place — reveals God's great purpose of restoring His image within humanity. This is beautifully reflected in the words of the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who recognised that God's work of redemption embraces the whole person: "Body, soul, and spirit — that is, the whole reality of human existence — is intended to bear the image of God on earth." The restoration of that image cannot be achieved through moral effort, religious performance or behavioural modification; self-generated righteousness can never repair what sin has destroyed. Only the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and the transforming ministry of the Holy Spirit can restore the whole person to fellowship with God.

Jesus Christ became the true and perfect Temple of God on earth. In Him, humanity was seen exactly as God intended it to be — perfectly obedient, perfectly holy, in perfect fellowship with the Father. Now, through the Holy Spirit, Christ desires to reproduce His own life within His redeemed people, exactly as Paul writes: "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). God's purpose has always extended far beyond a legal declaration of forgiveness. He does not merely invite us through the gate and leave us in the courtyard — He draws us ever nearer to Himself. He forgives. He cleanses. He sanctifies. He transforms. He writes His Law upon our hearts. And through Christ, He makes His home within us.

The sanctuary is therefore much more than the story of an ancient tabernacle in the wilderness. It is the story of God's unwavering determination to restore fallen humanity into His own dwelling place — the Gospel in vision. And at the very centre of that Gospel stands Jesus Christ: the Lamb who was slain, the great High Priest who intercedes, and the King who now reigns upon the throne of grace.

## **Chapter 26: Personal Faith and Corporate Unity — The Lesson of the Half-Shekel**

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The silver foundation of the Tabernacle, formed entirely from the atonement silver contributed by the people, illustrates a profound Gospel truth: salvation is intensely personal, yet gloriously corporate. God does not merely redeem isolated individuals. Through Jesus Christ, He gathers redeemed men and women into one covenant family, one spiritual house, one Body, united under one Lord.

### **Faith cannot be borrowed**

Every Israelite was commanded to bring his own half-shekel of atonement silver. The rich could not contribute more; the poor were not permitted to contribute less. No parent could pay for a child, no husband for a wife, no friend in another's place — each person appeared individually before God. This vividly illustrates that salvation is deeply personal. No one is saved by family heritage, church membership, religious tradition, or another person's faith. Every individual must personally respond to God's invitation, as Paul declares: "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). Faith cannot be inherited, delegated, or borrowed; each person must come to Christ personally.

This remains just as relevant today. Many grow up in Christian homes, attend church faithfully, and possess considerable biblical knowledge — yet these blessings, valuable as they are, cannot replace a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. God has no grandchildren, only sons and daughters who have personally come to Him through faith. Each believer is called to know Christ for themselves, to walk with Him daily, to pray personally, to study His Word, and to respond in obedience to the Spirit's leading. No pastor, spouse, parent or friend can maintain our fellowship with God on our behalf; others may encourage, teach

and pray for us, but they cannot believe, repent, obey or persevere in our place. The half-shekel reminds every generation that, while Christ alone accomplished redemption, each individual must personally receive His grace by faith — for one day each of us will stand before Him individually to give an account of our own lives (Romans 14:10–12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). The sanctuary teaches a profound lesson: God calls His people collectively, but He saves them one heart at a time.

### **The Half-Shekel Revisited — Christ and the Temple Tax**

The half-shekel offering did not end with the wilderness generation. By the time of Christ, it had become an annual temple tax, collected from every adult Jewish male to support the ongoing Temple service (Exodus 30:11–16 had originally established it as a one-time atonement contribution; by the Second Temple period, Jewish practice had developed it into a yearly obligation). Matthew 17 records a striking moment when collectors approached Peter, asking whether his Master paid the tax.

Jesus' response is remarkable on two counts. First, He reasoned with Peter that, as the Son, He owed nothing to His Father's house: "then the sons are free" (Matthew 17:26, NKJV) — a quiet but unmistakable claim to a unique relationship with God that no other worshipper bringing the half-shekel could make. And yet, "lest we offend them," He chose to pay it anyway (Matthew 17:27) — not from obligation, but from voluntary humility, identifying Himself with the very people and the very system that the half-shekel had always pointed toward Him to fulfil.

The means by which He paid is just as striking. Rather than reaching into a purse, He sent Peter to catch a fish, in whose mouth a coin would be found sufficient for both their taxes (Matthew 17:27). The One who, centuries earlier, had instituted the half-shekel as a picture of His own coming ransom now provided the very coin required to pay it — a small, almost playful detail that nonetheless preaches the whole Gospel in

miniature: the Provider supplies, even for the very tax that symbolised His own redemptive work, the means by which it is paid. The half-shekel that once formed the literal silver foundation of the Tabernacle finds, in this brief episode, one more quiet confirmation that every demand the Law and its sanctuary ever made on Israel, Christ Himself was both willing and able to meet.

### **One foundation, one people**

Yet the sanctuary also reveals an equally important truth, on the other side of the same coin. The individual pieces of silver did not remain scattered as separate coins — they were brought together and formed into the very foundation on which God's dwelling place rested. God's saving purpose has never been merely to rescue isolated souls; He creates a covenant community. The redeemed become one people, one household, one temple, one Body. As Peter writes, "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5), and Paul describes believers as "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone... in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:20–22). The individual is not lost within the community, nor is the community merely a loose association of independent believers; through the Holy Spirit, Christ joins redeemed people together into one living temple, where His presence dwells.

The sanctuary illustrates this redemptive movement beautifully: God calls individuals by name, redeems them personally through the blood of His Son, transforms them by His grace, and then places them into something far greater than themselves — the living Body of Christ. The God who once dwelt above the Mercy Seat now dwells among His people and, through the Holy Spirit, within them. What began with one repentant sinner entering through the gate culminates in a redeemed community becoming God's living sanctuary on earth.

As you reflect on your own walk with Christ, it may be worth asking: which "room" of your life is presently experiencing the deepest work of the Holy Spirit? Is He refining your outward conduct? Renewing your thoughts and attitudes? Or calling you into a deeper surrender of the hidden places of your heart, where His presence desires to reign without rival?

## **Chapter 27: The Day of Atonement — A Master Sequence in Nine Steps**

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The Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, was one of the most solemn events in Israel's religious calendar — an extraordinarily rich, carefully choreographed ceremony in which every action was governed by God's explicit instructions, and careless or unauthorised approach invited divine judgement. More than an annual ritual, it was a living prophecy: a divinely designed shadow pointing beyond itself to the perfect and final work of Jesus Christ. Leviticus 16 records the day's sequence in remarkable detail.

**Step 1: The High Priest's stripping and bathing (Leviticus 16:3–4).** Before the day's ministry began, Aaron removed his magnificent garments of glory and beauty, washed his entire body, and clothed himself instead in simple white linen — a tunic, undergarments, sash and turban. This complete washing symbolised the purity required to approach God's holy presence, and beautifully foreshadows Christ, who willingly laid aside His heavenly glory and took on the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7); the white garments likewise point to perfect righteousness and humility before God.

**Step 2: Presentation and the casting of lots (Leviticus 16:5–10).** Standing before the congregation at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the High Priest presented two male goats and cast sacred lots over them. One lot fell "for the LORD," the other "for Azazel." Though the limits of symbolic ritual required two separate animals, together

they illustrate one complete work: the atonement of sin, and its ultimate removal from God's people.

**Step 3: The bull for the priesthood (Leviticus 16:11).** Aaron first sacrificed a bull as a sin offering for himself and his own household. Unlike Christ, the earthly High Priest was himself a sinner and required atonement before he could minister on behalf of others — a contrast that throws Christ's perfection into sharp relief, since He is our High Priest who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26, NKJV).

**Step 4: The protective cloud of incense (Leviticus 16:12–13).** Taking burning coals from the Bronze Altar and finely ground incense, the High Priest entered behind the veil and placed the incense on the fire before the Lord, filling the space with a cloud of fragrant smoke that covered the Mercy Seat and shielded him from directly beholding God's unveiled glory. Throughout Scripture, incense becomes a symbol of prayer ascending before God (Psalm 141:2; Revelation 8:3–4), and within the larger picture of redemption it points forward to the continual intercession of Christ on behalf of His people.

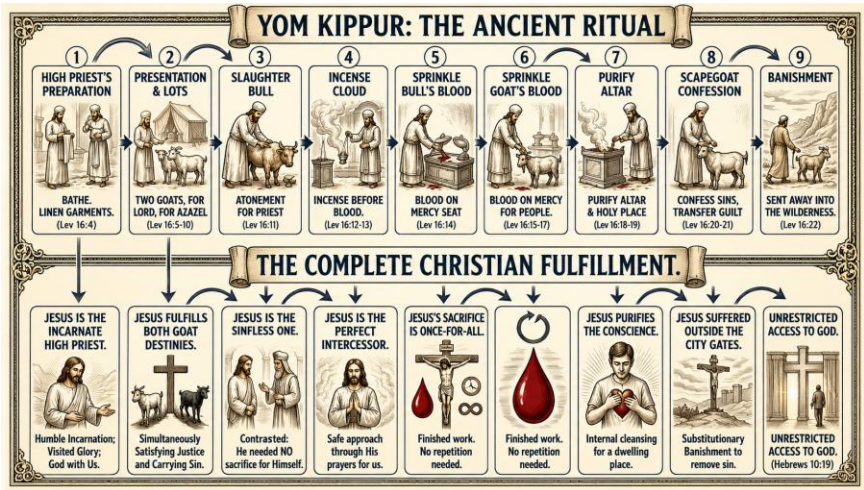
**Step 5: Sprinkling the bull's blood (Leviticus 16:14).** The High Priest sprinkled the bull's blood before the Mercy Seat exactly as God had instructed, with the repeated use of the number seven symbolising divine completeness and perfection. Through this act, atonement was made for the priestly ministry itself, so that mediation for the whole nation could proceed.

**Step 6: The sacrifice of the people's goat (Leviticus 16:15–17).** The goat chosen "for the LORD" was sacrificed, and its blood carried into the Most Holy Place and presented before God — pointing forward to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, fully satisfying God's righteous justice and securing redemption for His people.

**Step 7: Cleansing the altar (Leviticus 16:18–19).** The High Priest applied the blood of both the bull and the goat to the horns of the altar, sprinkling it seven times to consecrate and cleanse it. Even the sanctuary itself required ceremonial cleansing, because it ministered in the midst of a sinful people — demonstrating God's concern for complete purification, ultimately accomplished perfectly through Christ.

**Step 8: The living goat (Leviticus 16:20–22).** Aaron laid both hands on the head of the living goat and confessed over it all the sins, transgressions and iniquities of Israel. The goat was then led away into the wilderness by an appointed man — a moving ceremony that dramatically portrayed the removal of confessed sin from God's covenant people, vividly echoing the promise, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

**Step 9: Final cleansing and the restoration of glory (Leviticus 16:23–28).** Aaron returned to the Tent of Meeting, removed his linen garments, bathed once more, and clothed himself again in his glorious high-priestly garments before presenting the concluding burnt offerings. Those who had handled the scapegoat or the sacrificial remains likewise washed before re-entering the camp. The return of the High Priest, clothed once again in garments of glory, signalled to the waiting congregation that atonement had been accepted, judgement had been averted, and fellowship with God had been restored. The complete cleansing required of every participant emphasised that God's provision for holiness extended to every detail of the ceremony.



*The nine steps of the Day of Atonement, and how each one finds its fulfilment in Christ*

## The meaning of Azazel

The word *Azazel* (Hebrew, *ʾĀzāʾzēl*) is one of the most debated terms in the Hebrew Bible, appearing only four times — all within Leviticus 16, in the context of this ceremony — and never explicitly defined by the text itself. Several major interpretations have emerged over the centuries.

One longstanding view treats *Azazel* as a descriptive expression rather than a personal name, possibly connected to the Hebrew word for "goat" together with an idea of departure or removal — "the goat that goes away," or "the goat of removal." The ancient Greek Septuagint translated it as "the one sent away," and the Latin Vulgate rendered it *caper emissarius*, "the emissary goat" — from which William Tyndale, in 1530, famously coined the English word "scapegoat" (originally "escape goat"). On this reading, the emphasis falls not on any destination but on the complete removal of sin from the covenant community.

A second, later Rabbinic tradition associates Azazel with a remote and rugged wilderness location, perhaps connected to ideas of strength or ruggedness. Jewish tradition recorded in the Talmud describes the live goat, during the Second Temple period, being led to a steep cliff outside Jerusalem and pushed to its death, ensuring it could never return carrying the nation's symbolic sins — though it is worth noting that Leviticus 16 itself says only that the goat was sent into the wilderness; the cliff tradition belongs to later practice, not to the biblical text itself.

A third interpretation, accepted by many modern scholars, understands Azazel as a proper name referring to a supernatural being associated with the wilderness or the realm outside God's covenant community — an argument drawn partly from the grammar of Leviticus 16:8, where the parallel construction ("for the LORD"... "for Azazel") suggests two comparable, personal recipients. While this view has gained considerable scholarly support, Leviticus itself never explicitly identifies Azazel with Satan or any specific demonic figure.

Whichever interpretation one adopts, the central theological message of the ceremony shines through unmistakably. The first goat was sacrificed before the Lord, its blood making atonement according to God's appointed provision; only after that atonement had been completed was the second, living goat sent away, visibly carrying the people's confessed sins far from the camp. God's forgiveness, the ritual declares, is not partial but complete — sin is not merely covered, it is carried away, removed from His people and separated from them forever.

### **Why two goats?**

On the Day of Atonement, God appointed not one goat but two, and this was no accident of ritual. Sin creates both a judicial problem before a holy God and a real burden on the human conscience, and the two goats together portrayed God's provision for both. The goat "for the LORD" pictures propitiation — the satisfaction of God's righteous

justice through the shedding of innocent blood, since the penalty of sin is death, and life must be given in the place of life. The congregation watched an innocent victim die, impressed afresh with the truth that sin demands judgement and that forgiveness is never cheap. The goat "for Azazel" pictures expiation — the removal of confessed sin and guilt from among God's people. The congregation watched their sins symbolically carried away into the wilderness, disappearing from sight, illustrating God's promise that He removes our transgressions as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). Taken together, these two goats proclaim one complete Gospel: sin is both judged and removed; justice is satisfied and mercy is extended. Even today, the word "scapegoat" — someone unfairly bearing blame for the failure of others — preserves, often unknowingly, the memory of this ancient ceremony.

### **From shadow to substance**

The repeated sacrifices of the Old Covenant were never intended to accomplish the final removal of sin in themselves. Rather, they pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice Christ would one day offer; their continual repetition reminded Israel, year after year, that the ultimate atonement was still to come, for "the blood of bulls and goats" could never, by itself, remove sin (Hebrews 10:4). Calvary fulfilled what Yom Kippur could only foreshadow. The believer no longer looks ahead with uncertainty to another sacrifice, but looks back with grateful confidence to a finished work and an empty tomb. Christ has entered once for all into the true heavenly sanctuary with His own blood, obtaining eternal redemption for all who trust in Him. The sanctuary's whole message reaches its conclusion here: its sacrifices, its priesthood, its incense, its altar, its Mercy Seat, and every drop of blood proclaim one truth — Jesus Christ is God's complete answer to humanity's deepest problem. In Him we receive not a temporary covering, but full justification, complete forgiveness, everlasting reconciliation, and the sure hope of eternal life.

## Chapter 28: The Shofar and the Conclusion of the Day

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After hours of fasting, prayer, confession and profound solemnity, the Day of Atonement reached its dramatic conclusion with a single, piercing sound: the *Tekiah Gedolah*, the Great Blast of the shofar.

Among all the instruments known to history, few carry the spiritual weight of the shofar. According to Jewish tradition and halakhic practice, it must be fashioned from the horn of a ceremonially clean animal, carefully prepared according to long-established requirements. One of the most moving testimonies to its significance comes from one of history's darkest chapters: accounts from the Holocaust era describe Jewish prisoners, at extraordinary risk to their own lives, smuggling and sounding a shofar within the concentration camps on the Day of Atonement — a single voice of hope and covenant memory refusing to be silenced even amid horror, a faith that could not be extinguished even when almost everything else had been taken.

This same instrument carries a profound New Testament echo. The individual entrusted with sounding the shofar in Jewish tradition is sometimes called the *Ba'al Tekiah*, "the Master of the Blast." Paul draws on this same imagery when he writes of Christ's return: "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16, NKJV), and again, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52, NKJV).

Under the Mosaic covenant, the annual Day of Atonement provided God's appointed means of ceremonial cleansing and covenant restoration, while simultaneously pointing forward to the perfect work of the coming Messiah. As the psalmist declares, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). The Bible begins with humanity driven out of Eden;

then God gives the sanctuary — a visible promise that a way back is being prepared, with every sacrifice, every priest, every curtain and every drop of blood pointing forward to Christ. At Calvary, the veil is torn. Through the risen Lord, sinners are invited home. And in Revelation, the story reaches its glorious conclusion: there is no more barrier, no more curse, and no more separation. The shofar's final blast on the Day of Atonement, sounding the end of the solemn fast, anticipates that last and greatest trumpet — the one that will finally announce that redemption's work is fully and forever complete.

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## **Chapter 29: The Sacred Calendar — Seven Feasts, One Story**

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The Day of Atonement did not stand alone on Israel's religious calendar. God appointed seven sacred feasts throughout the year (Leviticus 23), and when read together, in their given sequence, they trace the entire redemptive story from Calvary to the new creation with startling precision — so much so that many students of Scripture have called them “God's calendar of redemption.”

### **Passover and Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:4–8)**

The calendar opens with the feast that commemorates Israel's deliverance from Egypt through the blood of a slain lamb, applied to the doorposts of every household that would be spared (Exodus 12). Paul makes the fulfilment explicit and direct: “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7, NKJV). It is no small detail that Jesus was crucified at the very hour the Passover lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple (cf. John 19:14, 31, 36) — the timing of His death was not incidental but precisely appointed, fulfilling on the very calendar day what the feast had pictured for centuries. Unleavened Bread, eaten for seven days immediately afterward, called Israel to remove every trace of leaven from their homes — Scripture's frequent

symbol of corruption and pride (1 Corinthians 5:6–8) — picturing the purity that follows redemption.

### **Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:9–14)**

On the day after the Sabbath following Passover, Israel brought the first sheaf of the spring harvest before the Lord, as a pledge that the full harvest would follow. Paul draws the connection unmistakably: “Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20, NKJV) — and remarkably, the timing again matches precisely, since Christ’s resurrection occurred on this very feast day. As the firstfruit sheaf guaranteed the coming harvest, Christ’s resurrection guarantees the future resurrection of all who belong to Him.

### **Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks (Leviticus 23:15–22)**

Fifty days after Firstfruits, Israel celebrated the wheat harvest with an offering of two loaves of bread, baked *with* leaven (Leviticus 23:17) — the one offering in the entire sacrificial calendar in which leaven was deliberately included, since the loaves represented redeemed humanity, not yet perfected. It was on this very feast day, fifty days after the resurrection, that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the gathered disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1–4), birthing the New Testament Church. The two loaves, many scholars have noted, may picture Jew and Gentile, baked together into one new body through the Spirit (cf. Ephesians 2:14–16) — a Church still containing the leaven of imperfection, yet truly one in Christ.

### **Trumpets, or Yom Teruah (Leviticus 23:23–25)**

A solemn blast of trumpets in the autumn called Israel to attention, ten days before the Day of Atonement — a sound of warning, gathering, and preparation. The New Testament repeatedly associates the sound of a trumpet with Christ’s own return: “the Lord Himself will descend from heaven... with the trumpet of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, NKJV),

and “the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible” (1 Corinthians 15:52, NKJV). Just as the trumpet blasts of Tishrei summoned Israel to prepare for the coming Day of Atonement, the final trumpet will summon the redeemed to meet their returning Lord.

### **The Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur (Leviticus 23:26–32)**

Already examined at length in the previous two chapters: the most solemn day of Israel’s year, in which the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place to make atonement for the nation, and the people afflicted their souls in fasting and self-examination. Positioned here, in the wider calendar, the Day of Atonement represents not merely Christ’s past sacrifice, but a future day of national, and ultimately global, reckoning and cleansing yet to be fully realised — the day when sin is finally and completely dealt with.

### **Tabernacles, or Sukkot (Leviticus 23:33–43)**

The calendar closes with seven days of dwelling in temporary booths, commemorating Israel’s wilderness wanderings and celebrating the full autumn harvest — the most joyful of all Israel’s feasts. It looks forward to the final, complete ingathering, when God’s dwelling will no longer be a tent of branches but an eternal home: “the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them” (Revelation 21:3, NKJV). Strikingly, Tabernacles is also the feast most directly associated with the Tabernacle itself — the very subject of this entire study — drawing the whole sacred calendar, and this whole book, back to its central theme: God’s unceasing desire to dwell among His people.

### **One story, seven movements**

Read together in their appointed order, the seven feasts do not present seven unrelated rituals, but a single redemptive drama: redemption secured (Passover), the old life put away (Unleavened Bread), resurrection guaranteed (Firstfruits), the Spirit poured out and the Church born (Pentecost), a final warning and gathering (Trumpets), a

day of ultimate reckoning and cleansing (Atonement), and the eternal dwelling of God with His people fully realised (Tabernacles). Spring fulfilled at Christ's first coming with uncanny precision of timing; autumn almost certainly awaiting fulfilment at His return.

This same four-phase pattern has already appeared throughout this study — the blueprint, the substance, the present reality, and the eternal consummation (see Chapter 34) — and the feast calendar simply confirms, in yet another form, what the sanctuary itself has been declaring from its very first chapter: the entire Bible tells one story, and every appointed time God has ever given His people quietly points toward the same conclusion. Jesus Christ is not merely the fulfilment of the Tabernacle's furniture and offerings — He is the fulfilment of time itself, the One around whom God's entire calendar of redemption has always turned.

## ONE STORY, SEVEN MOVEMENTS

Read together in their appointed order, the seven feasts do not present seven unrelated rituals, but a single redemptive drama: redemption secured (Passover), the old life put away (Unleavened Bread), resurrection guaranteed (Firstfruits), the Spirit poured out and the Church born (Pentecost), a final warning and gathering (Trumpets), a day of ultimate reckoning and cleansing (Atonement), and the eternal dwelling of God with His people fully realised (Tabernacles).

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| <b>1</b><br><b>PASSOVER</b><br>Redemption Secured<br><br>Exodus 12<br>1 Corinthians 5:7<br>Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. | <b>2</b><br><b>UNLEAVENED BREAD</b><br>The Old Life Put Away<br><br>Exodus 12:15<br>1 Corinthians 5:8<br>We are called to a life of holiness. | <b>3</b><br><b>FIRSTFRUITS</b><br>Resurrection Guaranteed<br><br>Leviticus 23:10<br>1 Corinthians 15:20<br>Christ has risen, and so shall we. | <b>4</b><br><b>PENTECOST</b><br>The Spirit Poured Out and the Church Born<br><br>Leviticus 23:16<br>Acts 2<br>The Holy Spirit comes, the Church is born. | <b>5</b><br><b>TRUMPETS</b><br>A Final Warning and Gathering<br><br>Leviticus 23:24<br>1 Thessalonians 4:16-17<br>A call to wake up, repent, and be ready. | <b>6</b><br><b>ATONEMENT</b><br>A Day of Ultimate Reckoning and Cleansing<br><br>Leviticus 23:27<br>Hebrews 9:7, 28<br>Sin is judged, and the people are cleansed. | <b>7</b><br><b>TABERNACLES</b><br>God's Dwelling with His People Fully Realised<br><br>Leviticus 23:34<br>Revelation 21:3<br>God dwells with us forever. |
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**SPRING FULFILLED**  
AT CHRIST'S FIRST COMING  
WITH UNCANNY PRECISION OF TIMING



**AUTUMN AWAITING FULFILMENT**  
AT HIS RETURN  
THE HOPE OF GLORY YET TO COME



**ONE PLAN. ONE SAVIOUR. ONE DESTINATION.**  
TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORIOUS GRACE.

## **PART SIX: THE NEW COVENANT REALITY**

### **Chapter 30: From Sacred Places to Sacred People**

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In the Old Testament, God's presence among humanity was uniquely associated with sacred space. It began with the Tabernacle — a carefully designed, portable sanctuary for Israel's wilderness journey (Exodus 25–27) — and later, Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6), which became the central place of worship and the visible symbol of God's covenant presence among His people.

The New Testament brings this theme to its glorious fulfilment, shifting the focus from a physical sanctuary to the far greater reality of God dwelling in and among His people through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. In John 2:19–21, Jesus declared, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" — and John immediately explains that He was speaking of His own body. In doing so, Jesus identified Himself as the true meeting place between God and humanity, the ultimate fulfilment of everything the Temple represented. In Christ, God dwells with humanity in the fullest possible sense. The theological circle is complete: the transcendent God who once manifested His glory in the Tabernacle has now revealed Himself fully in Jesus Christ, who took on human flesh and dwelt among us — the One who created the world is the same One who entered the world to redeem it.

Through union with Christ, believers themselves become part of God's spiritual house. Peter describes Christians as "living stones" who are "being built into a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5), and Paul reminds the church, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16, NKJV). Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, God now makes His home among His redeemed people, forming them into His living temple. This remarkable shift does

not eliminate the biblical reality of the heavenly sanctuary or Christ's continuing ministry there. Rather, it reveals that God's presence is no longer represented merely by an earthly building, but is fully revealed in His Son and, through Him, in His people, who together become His living dwelling place on earth. Through Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit, God's presence is no longer associated merely with a tent in the wilderness or a temple of stone — He now dwells within His redeemed people, making them His living temple.

## **Chapter 31: Hidden Glory and the Need to Be Born Again**

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If the Tabernacle so beautifully proclaims the Gospel, why do so many people fail to see it? The Tabernacle itself provides the answer.

The outermost covering of the Tabernacle was made of tough, weatherproof skins, chosen not for beauty but for strength and protection. To the casual observer passing through the wilderness, the Tabernacle appeared plain, weathered and entirely unremarkable — nothing on its exterior hinted at the splendour concealed within. The brilliant gold furnishings, the finely woven curtains, and the radiant manifestation of God's presence were all hidden behind an ordinary-looking covering. The glory was real. But it was concealed.

This finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophesied of the coming Messiah, "He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isaiah 53:2, NKJV). To many who looked on Jesus, He appeared to be nothing more than an ordinary carpenter from an obscure Galilean village. They saw His humanity but failed to recognise His deity; they looked on His outward appearance while remaining blind to the eternal glory dwelling within Him. The same principle applies to the Gospel itself — its deepest beauty is not perceived merely through natural observation or

intellectual ability, but is revealed by God to hearts willing to believe. This is precisely why Jesus declared to Nicodemus, "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, NKJV). Notice the wording: Jesus did not merely say a person cannot *enter* the kingdom — He said they cannot even *see* it. The new birth is not simply the doorway into eternal life; it is the opening of spiritually blind eyes. As Paul puts it, "the god of this age has blinded" the minds of those "who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ... should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:4, NKJV).

### **Nicodemus at the threshold**

John's Gospel introduces us to a remarkable man named Nicodemus — a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, and someone Jesus Himself called "the teacher of Israel" (John 3:10). Few people of his day possessed greater religious knowledge or stood in greater respect. Yet despite all his learning, Nicodemus stood at the threshold of a reality he could not fully see. He approached Jesus with careful, reasonable observation: "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him" (John 3:2). His evidence was genuine, his conclusion sound — but his understanding remained incomplete. In the language of the Tabernacle, Nicodemus had examined the exterior, admired the visible evidence, and recognised that something extraordinary was present, but had not yet entered into the hidden glory within. Jesus' reply moved the conversation beyond human reasoning entirely: the issue was not Nicodemus's intelligence, but the necessity of spiritual rebirth. The hidden glory of God cannot be discovered merely by observation or analysis; it must be revealed by God Himself, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

### **Was the new birth a New Testament invention?**

When Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again, He was not introducing an entirely new concept — indeed, Jesus seemed almost

surprised that a respected teacher of Israel did not already understand what He meant: "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?" (John 3:10, NKJV). This raises a fair question: if the new birth was essential for entering God's kingdom, how did it occur before the Cross? The answer is that regeneration did not begin in the New Testament. What changed was not the method of salvation, but the clarity with which it was revealed. Throughout the Old Testament, God was already transforming hearts through the work of His Spirit; men and women were saved by grace through faith in the *promised* Redeemer, exactly as believers today are saved by grace through faith in the *revealed* Redeemer.

Perhaps the clearest Old Testament description of the new birth comes from Ezekiel: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes" (Ezekiel 36:26–27) — a new heart, a new spirit, the indwelling Spirit of God, a transformed life: precisely the realities Jesus described as being "born again," even if the terminology differs. King David understood the same need after his great sin, crying out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10) — he wanted more than external cleansing; he longed for a renewed heart. God repeatedly taught Israel that outward religious signs were insufficient without inward change, instructing them to "circumcise... the foreskin of your heart" (Deuteronomy 10:16), and later promising, "The LORD your God will circumcise your heart... so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart" (Deuteronomy 30:6) — physical circumcision pointing towards a deeper spiritual reality that only God could perform. And Abraham, the father of faith, was declared righteous simply because he believed God's promise (Genesis 15:6) — a faith that was never mere intellectual agreement, but a grace that drew him out of idolatry and taught him to walk in trust and obedience, by the same Spirit who works in believers today.

The Sanctuary illustrates this beautifully. The sinner entered through the Gate and came first to the Bronze Altar, where atonement was provided; then to the Laver, where cleansing took place before approaching the Holy Place. Spiritually, this sequence illustrates the believer's experience in every age: the Gate points to Christ, the only way to God; the Altar points to justification through His sacrifice; the Laver points to cleansing, regeneration, and the new life produced by the Holy Spirit. No Israelite was ever saved merely by participating in the ceremony — the rituals pointed beyond themselves to spiritual realities only God could accomplish within the heart. The new birth did not begin at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was already bringing conviction, faith and transformation throughout the Old Testament era; what changed after Christ's coming was not the way of salvation, but the fullness of its revelation. Old Testament believers looked forward to the promised Messiah; New Testament believers look back to His finished work. Yet both are saved by the same grace, through the same faith, by the same Spirit, and ultimately through the same Saviour.

### **The limits of reason alone**

Nicodemus's famous reply reveals the struggle of the natural mind confronted with spiritual truth: "How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" (John 3:4). He instinctively interpreted Jesus' words in physical terms, because he had not yet grasped their spiritual meaning. This does not diminish the value of careful thought — Scripture repeatedly calls believers to love God with all their minds and to search His Word diligently — but reason alone cannot produce spiritual life. A person can examine the white linen fence, study the dimensions of the Tabernacle, catalogue every piece of furniture, even admire the moral beauty of Jesus and acknowledge the historical evidence surrounding His life — yet only the Holy Spirit can open blind eyes to behold His true glory, draw back the curtain, and reveal the hidden gold. To

experience the beauty of redemption, a person cannot remain a spectator standing outside the sanctuary, content with intellectual agreement alone. They must enter through the one appointed Gate. The greatest treasures of the sanctuary were never visible from the outside — they are revealed only to those who enter God's way.

## **Chapter 32: From Tent to Temple — and Why the System Is No Longer Needed**

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The movement from the portable Tabernacle to the permanent Temple marks one of the great turning points of biblical history — not merely an architectural development, but a significant stage in God's unfolding redemptive plan. Several factors contributed to the change: Israel was no longer a wandering nation but settled in the land God had promised; David, dwelling in a palace of cedar, desired to build a permanent house for the Ark (2 Samuel 7:2), and although God reserved that privilege for his son Solomon, He established with David an enduring covenant that would ultimately find its fulfilment in the Messiah; and worship, which had moved between several locations during the period of the Judges, became centralised in Jerusalem exactly as Deuteronomy had anticipated.

Although Solomon's Temple kept the same essential pattern of courtyard, Holy Place and Holy of Holies, its theological emphasis expanded. Where the Tabernacle had emphasised God's gracious presence accompanying a pilgrim people through the wilderness, the Temple emphasised His royal majesty and established throne among His people — the simple Bronze Laver, for instance, becoming the enormous Bronze Sea, supported by twelve bronze oxen.

## **The empty Holy of Holies**

One of the more remarkable developments in Israel's later history concerns the Holy of Holies itself. Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC, and Scripture does not record the Ark's final fate — its ultimate whereabouts remain unknown. According to Jewish tradition recorded in the Talmud, by the time the Second Temple was completed under Zerubbabel (around 516 BC), the Holy of Holies no longer contained the Ark, the Mercy Seat and cherubim, the sacred heavenly fire, the visible Shekinah glory, the Holy Spirit in its prophetic manifestation, or the Urim and Thummim — and on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest is said to have sprinkled blood towards the bare Foundation Stone, since the Ark itself was no longer present. These details come from respected Jewish tradition rather than Scripture itself, but they offer a striking historical window onto the condition of the Temple in Jesus' own day.

The same tradition records that approximately forty years before the Second Temple's destruction in AD 70 — that is, at roughly the time of Christ's crucifixion — several unsettling signs began to recur: the crimson thread used in the Day of Atonement ritual no longer turned white as expected, the western lamp of the Temple failed to remain continually lit, and the Temple doors were reported to open unexpectedly on their own. These reports, again, come from later tradition rather than the biblical text, and caution is appropriate in how much weight is placed on them — but many believers down the centuries have noted the striking correspondence with the timing of the Cross as a remarkable, if extra-biblical, testimony to the passing of the old covenant order.

## **The danger of an empty religion**

Perhaps the greatest lesson of the Second Temple is not architectural but spiritual: it is entirely possible for a religious system to possess magnificent buildings, impressive ceremonies and carefully

maintained tradition while lacking genuine communion with the living God. The warning addressed to the church at Laodicea carries striking parallels: "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17, NKJV) — and the risen Christ is pictured standing outside that very church, knocking (Revelation 3:20). The geographical progression is itself striking: in the wilderness, God's presence occupied the very centre of the camp; by the time of Laodicea, the Lord Himself stands outside the door, patiently calling for entrance. It is entirely possible to maintain religious activity while neglecting living fellowship with Christ — to sing about Him, preach about Him, organise ministries in His name, and still slowly replace communion with mere routine. Activity is not necessarily anointing. Growth is not necessarily revival. Organisation is not necessarily spiritual life. Religious machinery, history shows, can keep running long after genuine spiritual vitality has begun to fade. The remedy Christ offers Laodicea is not improved programmes or greater resources, but Himself: "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20, NKJV). Only His presence transforms an empty structure into a true dwelling place of God.

In AD 70, following the Jewish revolt against Rome, Jerusalem was besieged and the Temple destroyed by the Roman armies under Titus — exactly as Jesus had foretold decades earlier: "Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2, NKJV). The Temple has never been rebuilt. Its destruction marked far more than the end of a building; for Christians, it stands as a solemn historical reminder that magnificent structures cannot substitute for obedience, repentance and living fellowship with God — and that God's deepest purpose has always pointed beyond earthly architecture, towards redeemed people whose hearts have become His living temple through Jesus Christ.

For the believer, this destruction also serves as a kind of historical confirmation of what Christ had already accomplished. When Jesus cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30), the work of redemption reached its completion, and at that very moment the Temple veil was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51) — symbolising that access to God had already been opened through Christ's finished work, not through the continuing ministry of an earthly sanctuary. The Temple's destruction some forty years later simply confirmed publicly what had already happened spiritually: an entire era of redemptive history had reached its appointed conclusion. The Temple sacrifices had testified for centuries that sin required the shedding of blood, yet Scripture is equally clear that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4, NKJV) — they had only ever pointed beyond themselves to the coming Messiah. When Jesus, the true Lamb of God, offered Himself once for all, the reality arrived to which every previous sacrifice had merely pointed, and the system that had faithfully prepared the way for two thousand years was no longer required.

### **Chapter 33: "Seated" and "Serving" — Christ's Present Ministry**

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At the cross, Jesus declared, "It is finished" (John 19:30) — a statement that refers to the completed work of atonement. The sacrifice for sin is fully accomplished: perfect, final and unrepeatable. Nothing can be added to it. Yet Scripture also reveals that Christ's priestly ministry did not end at the Cross. After His resurrection and ascension, He entered the heavenly reality of which the earthly Tabernacle was only ever a shadow: "We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary

and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1–2, NKJV).

The contrast between these two words — *sat down*, and *serves* — is intentional and profound. The earthly priest stood continually, because his work was never complete; the sacrifices had to be repeated, day after day, year after year. Christ, by contrast, sat down, because His sacrificial work is finished — and yet He also serves as our High Priest, because the benefits of that finished work are continually applied to His people. This does not imply any repeated sacrifice, but an ongoing priestly ministry rooted in a completed atonement. Jesus does not offer new sacrifices in heaven. Rather, He functions as our exalted High Priest, interceding for His people, representing them before the Father, and securing the continuing benefits of His once-for-all sacrifice — as Hebrews states, "He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25, NKJV).

Because Christ is both the finished sacrifice and the living High Priest, the believer's salvation rests on a dual foundation: the Cross, where atonement was accomplished, and the throne, where intercession is ongoing. The believer is therefore sustained not by repeated sacrifices, but by the living presence of Christ Himself before the Father.

| Earthly priest                                | Heavenly Priest (Jesus)                     |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Stood continually (unfinished work)           | Sat down (finished sacrifice)               |
| Entered once a year, with fear and limitation | Entered once for all, with divine authority |
| Offered the blood of animals, repeatedly      | Offered His own blood, once for all         |

|                               |                                     |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Served in a copy and a shadow | Serves in the true heavenly reality |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Christ's priesthood is unique in uniting what no earthly priest could ever combine: a finished sacrifice that never needs repetition, and an ongoing intercession that never ceases. He does not continue to atone afresh for sin, but He continually stands as the living guarantee that His atonement remains eternally effective. In this, the heavenly ministry of Christ reveals the final fulfilment of the entire sanctuary system: the altar finds its completion in His Cross, the veil is opened through His flesh, the Holy of Holies is entered through His ascension, and the priesthood continues forever in His intercession. Salvation, then, is not maintained by human effort, but secured by a living High Priest who has already finished the work — and now reigns because of it.

## Chapter 34: Four Phases of One Story

Standing back from the details, the whole sweep of the sanctuary's story can be traced across four phases, each fulfilling the one before it.

**Phase 1: the sanctuary blueprint (the shadow).** The Tabernacle, and later the Temple, revealed the foundational truths of redemption in visible form. Every piece of furniture, every sacrifice, every priestly garment and every ritual proclaimed the Gospel long before Christ appeared in the flesh.

**Phase 2: Christ the living sanctuary (the substance).** When Jesus came, the shadows gave way to their fulfilment. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14) — in Him, the true meeting place between God and humanity finally stood among His people in person.

### Phase 3: the Church and the believer (the present reality).

Corporately, believers are now "being built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5); individually, every believer becomes "a temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19). The dwelling place of God is no longer a tent or a building of stone, but a people indwelt by His Spirit.

**Phase 4: the eternal reality (the consummation).** The story reaches its perfect conclusion in the closing chapters of Revelation, where John records an astonishing observation: "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Revelation 21:22). The progression is complete. The shadow has given way to the substance; the earthly picture has given way to eternal reality. What began in Eden as unhindered fellowship between God and man — symbolised in the Tabernacle, fulfilled in Christ, and presently experienced through the indwelling Holy Spirit — will one day be enjoyed in perfect fullness forever. No veil will remain. No sacrifice will be needed. No laver, no lampstand, no earthly priest, no temple building will be necessary, for "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them" (Revelation 21:3, NKJV).



*The four phases of the sanctuary story: the blueprint, the substance, the application, and the ultimate reality*

The entire Bible tells one magnificent story: God redeeming a people through His Son, so that He might dwell with them forever. From Genesis to Revelation, the sanctuary silently proclaims the same glorious message — that Jesus Christ is the way into God's presence, the provision for our salvation, the sustainer of our lives, our eternal High Priest, and ultimately the very dwelling place of God Himself. Every curtain, every sacrifice, every article of furniture, every drop of blood, every feast and every priest pointed forward to Him. He is the substance of every shadow, and the fulfilment of every promise.



**Hebrews 9:11–12 (NKJV)**

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

## **PART SEVEN: THE CLOSING APPEAL**

### **Chapter 35: What Is Jesus Christ Doing Today?**

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Most believers can readily say that Christ died for our sins, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will return in glory. These are foundational truths of the Gospel. Yet Scripture reveals that, between His ascension and His second coming, Christ is not inactive. Heaven is not waiting in silence for the close of history. The risen Saviour is engaged in a living ministry that lies at the very heart of God's plan of redemption.

The New Testament consistently presents Jesus as our great High Priest. Unlike the priests of the earthly sanctuary, whose ministry ended with death, Christ "continues forever" and "always lives to make intercession" for those who come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:24–25). Because He understands every weakness, every temptation and every sorrow of the human family, believers are invited to approach God's throne with confidence, knowing they will receive mercy and grace in their time of need (Hebrews 4:14–16).

This present ministry is not an isolated New Testament idea — it is the fulfilment of a pattern established thousands of years earlier. When God delivered Israel from Egypt, He instructed Moses, "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). The sanctuary was far more than a place of worship: God commanded that every detail be constructed exactly according to the pattern shown on the mountain (Exodus 25:9, 40), because the earthly sanctuary was designed, from the very first nail, to reflect a greater heavenly reality. The writer of Hebrews confirms this directly, explaining that the earthly priests served in "a copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5). The wilderness sanctuary was therefore never the

ultimate reality — it was God's illustrated prophecy of the work His Son would accomplish.

Every part of its service pointed to Christ. The altar of sacrifice proclaimed His sacrificial death. The laver illustrated the cleansing He provides. The table of showbread pointed to Him as the Bread of Life. The lampstand testified that He is the Light of the world. The altar of incense revealed His continual intercession. And beyond the veil, the Ark testified to God's eternal government of righteousness and mercy, perfectly united through the ministry of Christ. The sanctuary was, in effect, the Gospel presented in symbols long before the birth of Jesus: its sacrifices taught substitution, its priesthood taught mediation, its blood taught atonement, and its annual services revealed God's purpose not merely to forgive sin, but ultimately to remove it forever.

Without the sanctuary, many passages of Scripture seem disconnected — the ceremonies of Leviticus appear mysterious, the book of Hebrews becomes difficult to follow, and much of biblical prophecy loses its context. Yet once the sanctuary is understood, the Bible unfolds as one magnificent, unified revelation centred on Jesus Christ.

The Cross was never intended to be viewed in isolation. It stands at the centre of a complete work of redemption: Christ first offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice, then ascended into heaven as our victorious High Priest, where He now ministers in the true sanctuary, presenting the merits of His sacrifice on behalf of all who trust Him. His intercession is not an attempt to persuade a reluctant Father to love humanity — the Father Himself sent the Son because He already loved the world (John 3:16). Rather, Christ's priestly ministry is the continual application of His completed sacrifice, ensuring that every repentant believer has constant access to God's mercy, grace, forgiveness and transforming power.

This truth changes the way we understand the Christian life. Prayer is no longer a lonely cry into the unknown — every prayer ascends to a

living Saviour who hears, understands and intercedes. Confession is no longer an exercise in fear, but an approach to One who has already borne our guilt and now serves as our Advocate. Temptation is faced with confidence, because our High Priest has experienced the full reality of human weakness without ever yielding to sin. Our assurance rests, not on the strength of our own faithfulness, but on the unchanging faithfulness of the One who ministers continually on our behalf.

The sanctuary reveals something even greater still. Salvation is not merely about escaping condemnation — it is God's work of restoring fallen humanity completely. From the altar in the courtyard to the glory of God's presence beyond the veil, every step of the sanctuary reveals His desire to bring His people ever closer to Himself. This has always been God's purpose. In Eden, God walked with humanity. In the wilderness, He dwelt among His people in the sanctuary. In heaven, Christ ministers as our High Priest. And at the close of redemption, God's dwelling will once again be with humanity forever.

The sanctuary, then, is not simply an Old Testament institution. It is the great framework that unites the entire Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, it reveals one unfolding story — the story of God's determination to dwell with His people through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. It teaches us not only what Christ accomplished at Calvary, but what He is accomplishing today, and what He will ultimately complete when sin, death and sorrow are forever removed from God's universe. Everything in the sanctuary points to Jesus Christ. He is the Sacrifice, the Priest, the Mediator, the Advocate, the Judge, the King — and, ultimately, the One who brings redeemed humanity safely into the very presence of God.

## **Chapter 36: Beyond Admiration**

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It is entirely possible to sit in a church pew week after week, to respect Jesus deeply, and to admire His perfect life, His compassion, His teachings and His sacrifice. It is possible to know the facts of the Gospel without ever personally embracing the Saviour of the Gospel. Admiration cannot save. Salvation begins when we stop trusting in ourselves and come to Christ exactly as we are — guilty, broken, helpless and in need of mercy — receiving by faith the cleansing power of His shed blood, and entrusting our lives completely to Him. Jesus is not merely asking for our respect. He is inviting us to receive His life.

It is possible to study every measurement of the Tabernacle and still remain outside its only gate. Historical knowledge cannot save. Religious activity cannot save. Moral effort cannot save. Only Christ saves. The invitation remains open: do not merely admire the Gate — enter through it. Do not simply study the Lamb — trust in Him. Do not merely appreciate the sanctuary — come to the Saviour to whom the sanctuary has pointed from the very beginning.

If, after closing this study, a reader remembers only dimensions, measurements, metals, colours, curtains and ceremonies, then the sanctuary has not yet accomplished its deepest purpose. But if the reader closes these pages with a greater love for Jesus Christ, with a deeper confidence in His finished work, with a richer appreciation of God's unchanging grace, and with a clearer understanding that every sacrifice, every priest, every altar, every veil, and every drop of blood pointed to Him — then the sanctuary has fulfilled its divine mission.

For the sanctuary was never ultimately about a tent in the wilderness. It was always about Jesus Christ. He is the true Temple. He is the true Sacrifice. He is the true High Priest. He is the true Mercy Seat. He is the true Door. He is Emmanuel — God with us.

## **Chapter 37: Who Is Your Greatest Enemy?**

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As we come to the end of this study, an important question remains. If asked to name our greatest enemy, many would point to Satan; others would mention war, crime, corruption, disease, persecution, or the many hardships of life. While these are real enemies that bring suffering and destruction, the sanctuary reveals a deeper problem still.

The greatest message of the sanctuary is the Gospel of salvation. From the gate to the Most Holy Place, every aspect reveals God's loving plan to reconcile fallen humanity to Himself through Jesus Christ — its sacrifices, its priesthood, its cleansing rituals and its sacred furniture all pointing to God's provision for our redemption. Yet the sanctuary also exposes something else: it reveals the true condition of the human heart. Throughout this study we have seen God's solution to sin, but before a cure can be appreciated, the disease must first be understood. Scripture teaches that humanity's greatest problem is not merely external. The greatest battlefield lies within. The greatest enemy exposed by the sanctuary is "self."

From the very beginning in Eden, the root of sin was self-will — the desire to choose our own way rather than God's. Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan, but their fall occurred the moment they chose to place their own judgement above the word of God. Ever since, humanity has struggled with the same enemy. Jeremiah wrote, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Jesus taught that "from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts" (Mark 7:21). And Paul described the struggle every believer knows: "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice" (Romans 7:19).

Scripture confirms this pattern again and again. Cain's greatest enemy was not Abel, but the jealousy and resentment within his own heart. Saul's greatest enemy was not David, but his own pride, insecurity and

self-will. Judas was not destroyed by a lack of opportunity or knowledge — he walked with Christ, heard His teaching, and witnessed His miracles, yet was overcome by desires he refused to surrender. Even Peter had to learn that self-confidence could be every bit as dangerous as fear; only after his own weakness was exposed could he become the servant God intended him to be.

The same battle continues today. Many blame circumstances for their failures while ignoring the habits, attitudes and choices that keep them in bondage. Relationships are often damaged more by pride than by genuine injustice; financial struggles are frequently worsened by a lack of discipline; addictions persist because the battle is deeper than the substance itself — it is a battle of the heart. One of the clearest signs that self remains our greatest enemy is our tendency to blame others — Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, yet God called each one to account for their own choices. Another sign is our resistance to correction: pride defends itself, while humility listens, learns and grows.

Ironically, the same principle appears at the very origin of sin. We naturally think of Satan as humanity's greatest enemy, and rightly so — yet Scripture reveals that Satan's greatest enemy was, in the end, himself. Before there was a fallen world, before there was temptation in Eden, before there was rebellion on earth, there was pride in the heart of Lucifer. His downfall did not begin with an external enemy, but with an internal one: self-exaltation, self-will, and a desire for supremacy corrupted one of God's most exalted creatures. In this sense, Satan became his own greatest enemy long before he became the enemy of humanity — the rebellion that began in heaven was, at its core, the triumph of self over submission to God. The tragedy of sin, whether in heaven or on earth, is always the same: whenever self occupies the throne that belongs to God, destruction follows. Lucifer lost heaven because of it. Adam and Eve lost Eden because of it. Relationships are broken because of it, and souls are lost because of it.

The sanctuary points us to the only remedy. It teaches that redemption is not merely the forgiveness of sin, but the surrender of self — the Gospel calling us to exchange self-rule for Christ's rule, self-glory for God's glory, and self-reliance for complete dependence on Him. The first sin began with the words, "I will ascend" (Isaiah 14:13–14). The Christian life begins with different words altogether: "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42, NKJV).

The sanctuary reveals that God's answer to this problem is not merely forgiveness, but transformation. Christ came not only to pay the penalty of sin, but to break its power. The altar speaks of justification. The laver speaks of cleansing. The Holy Place speaks of continual growth and communion with God. The Most Holy Place points to complete restoration and reconciliation with Him. The purpose of the Gospel is greater than pardon alone — it is the restoration of the image of God in humanity. The sanctuary therefore teaches that salvation is not merely about escaping judgement. It is about becoming a new creation in Christ.

When self is placed upon the altar of surrender, the message of the sanctuary becomes a living reality, and the believer discovers that true freedom is found not in serving self, but in yielding to God. Then the words of Paul become our own: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). Perhaps this is the final lesson of the sanctuary: the path to the Most Holy Place passes through the Cross. There, self dies, Christ reigns, and the work of redemption accomplishes its purpose.

The sanctuary reveals the way of salvation, but it also reveals the greatest obstacle to experiencing that salvation fully. Our greatest enemy is not ultimately around us, but within us. Yet through Christ, even this enemy can be overcome. The final victory of the Gospel is not merely that sinners are forgiven, but that they are transformed into the likeness of the One who redeemed them.

Lucifer said, "I will ascend." Adam said, "My will." Christ said, "Not My will, but Yours." In many ways, the entire sanctuary message can be seen as God's answer to the problem of self — a problem that began in heaven, entered Eden, and continues in every human heart, until it is surrendered to Christ.

## **Chapter 38: A Sanctuary for Today — Walking the Pattern in Daily Life**

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Every station of the sanctuary has now been examined in turn — the Gate, the Altar, the Laver, the Table, the Lampstand, the Altar of Incense, the Veil and the Ark. What remains is the most personal question of all: what does it look like to walk this same path, today, in an ordinary life crowded with ordinary cares? The God who once gave Israel a visible, walkable pattern for approaching Him has not changed His method. He still meets His people through the same sequence — only now the sanctuary is no longer a tent in the wilderness, but the daily rhythm of a surrendered heart.

What follows is not a new doctrine, but a practical rhythm — a way of letting the sanctuary's own order quietly reshape the pattern of a single day, or a single season of prayer.

### **The Gate — a daily decision**

Each day begins, whether we notice it or not, at a gate of decision. Before any task is undertaken, before any plan is made, the believer faces the same choice the worshipper faced at the entrance to the courtyard: come God's way, or attempt the day in self-reliance. To pause before the rush of the morning and consciously choose God's way over one's own is to step, however briefly, through the Gate again. It is a small thing — a moment, a breath, a single sentence of surrender — yet it sets the direction for everything that follows.

### **The Altar — naming what needs to die**

At the Altar, the worshipper brought something specific: a named animal, a particular sin, an actual debt of guilt. Vague sorrow was never enough; the substitute had to be brought into contact with the real offence. The same specificity matters today. A general sense of falling short rarely leads anywhere, but naming the actual impatience, the actual resentment, the actual compromise — and bringing it honestly to Christ rather than managing it alone — is what the Altar still asks of every worshipper. Confession that is specific is confession that is real.

### **The Laver — washing before the day's work**

Forgiveness and cleansing were never the same act in the sanctuary, and they are not the same act now. The Laver stood beyond the Altar precisely because pardon is the beginning of a relationship, not its conclusion. A few minutes with Scripture before the day's first task — letting the Word do for the mind what water did for the priest's hands and feet — keeps yesterday's dust from being carried into today's service. This is not a ritual to be performed for its own sake, but a simple acknowledgement that the mind, like the body, gathers grime in ordinary living and needs daily, not occasional, washing.

### **The Table — receiving before giving**

The Table of Showbread stood before the priest as provision he did not produce himself. So much of daily life runs on the unspoken assumption that strength must be generated from within — through willpower, caffeine, ambition, or sheer determination. The Table corrects this. Before a single demand of the day is met, the believer is invited to receive: to read a portion of Scripture not as a task to complete but as bread to be eaten, slowly enough to actually taste it. Service that has not first received from Christ will eventually run on empty, however sincere it began.

### **The Lampstand — asking what gave today its light**

At the close of the day, it is worth asking a simple question the Lampstand keeps placing before us: what actually illuminated the choices made today — God’s Word and Spirit, or merely instinct, mood, and the opinions of others? The Holy Place had no natural window; everything within it was meant to be seen by light God Himself provided. A brief evening review — not anxious self-examination, but an honest glance back over the day’s choices in the light of His Word — keeps the Lampstand burning rather than letting the day simply happen unexamined.

### **The Altar of Incense — turning the day’s weight into prayer**

Whatever the day has left behind — its unresolved conversations, its unanswered questions, its quiet anxieties — has somewhere to go. The Altar of Incense stood immediately before the veil precisely because intercession is the last word before entering God’s presence, not a desperate measure reserved for crises. Naming the specific people and burdens that surfaced during the day, and lifting them deliberately in prayer rather than carrying them silently to sleep, is what this station has always pictured. Christ’s own intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25) is the assurance that no concern brought this way is ever lost or ignored.

### **The Veil and the Ark — the rest that remains**

The sanctuary’s final lesson belongs least to effort and most to rest. The veil has already been torn; the worshipper does not labour to open a way into God’s presence but simply walks through a way already opened (Hebrews 10:19–20). At the close of the day, or the close of this study, the same posture remains available: not striving to earn nearness to God, but resting in the nearness His Son has already secured. The Ark’s lesson stands unchanged across every generation — justice has been satisfied, mercy has been extended, and the believer’s standing before God depends, this day and every day, entirely on

Christ's finished work rather than on how well any of these stations were observed.

### **A pattern, not a performance**

None of this is meant to become a new law, measured and graded like the very legalism the sanctuary was always designed to dispel. Some days will move through this pattern in five quiet minutes; others may dwell at the Altar for an hour and never reach the Lampstand at all. The value of the pattern is not in its completion but in its direction — a daily reminder that the God who once walked Israel through a structured path into His presence still walks ordinary lives through the same sequence: decision, substitution, cleansing, provision, illumination, intercession, and rest. The tent has gone. The pattern remains, written now not in silver sockets and gold-covered boards, but in the unhurried rhythm of a life that keeps returning to Christ.

Whatever shape tomorrow takes, the sanctuary's invitation has not changed since the day the cloud first covered the tent of meeting: come near, by the way He has provided, and stay near, for as long as this life lasts and into the life that has no end.

### **A Closing Word**

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As you close these pages and step back into the rhythm of your everyday life, may you carry the essence of the sanctuary within you. May your heart always find a quiet space to rest when the world grows too loud, and may you be a shelter of kindness for others in need of grace. Wherever your path leads next, may it be paved with peace, illuminated by hope, and blessed with the gentle reminder that you are never truly alone.

THERE IS ONE WAY TO GOD:

# JESUS CHRIST



## THE GATE

Jesus said, "I am the gate;  
whoever enters through Me  
will be saved."

JOHN 10:9



## THE ALTAR

Where surrender  
begins.

EXODUS 27:1



## THE LAVER

Where cleansing  
takes place.

EXODUS 30:18



## THE HOLY PLACE

Where we grow in  
His Word and grace.



## THE MOST HOLY PLACE

Where we meet  
with God.

ONLY ONE GATE

# WALKING WEST

RETURNING TO THE  
PRESENCE OF GOD

SEEK THE LORD  
WHILE HE MAY  
BE FOUND.  
ISAIAH 55:6



## BE LIKE A BEREAN

They received the word with all readiness  
and searched the Scriptures daily to find out  
whether these things were so.

ACTS 17:11

✦ TURN FROM EXILE. ✦ WALK THROUGH THE GATE. ✦ DRAW NEAR TO GOD. ✦





Moving from the Tabernacle to the Temple wasn't just about switching from tents to stone. It marked the evolution of a people from a loose collection of fleeing tribes into a centralised, powerful ancient state.

King Solomon built the First Temple in 960 BCE, which stood proudly for 410 years until it was destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE, leading to the exile of the Jewish people to Babylon. Around 100 years later, the people returned to Israel under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. With the Holy Land now under Persian rule, they were permitted to begin rebuilding the Second Temple in the exact same spot as the original one.

This Second Temple was completed in 517 BCE and was later renovated and massively expanded by King Herod in 19 CE. However, it was eventually destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.

From a Christian theological perspective, the temple was never to be built again. Its destruction marked the definitive end of the Old Testament sacrifice system, fulfilling Jesus's own prophecy that not one stone would be left upon another.

For Christians, this architectural demise aligned with Jesus's promise: that he was the ultimate, once-and-for-all sacrifice, permanently shifting the dwelling place of God from a physical building of stone into the hearts of believers.



## About the Authors

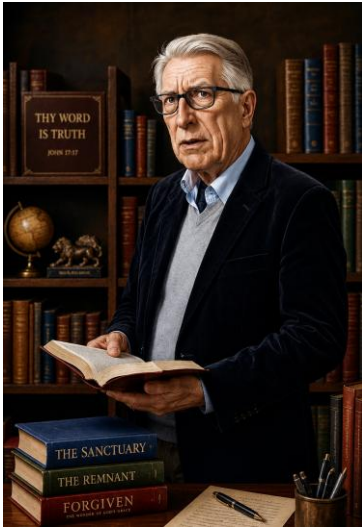
Nico Thorne is an ordained elder and lay preacher from South Africa with a lifelong passion for biblical truth. He worked alongside George Ross as a Scripture editor for nearly two years on projects such as *The Remnant*, *Forgiven*, and *The Sanctuary*. While collaborating on *The Sanctuary*—a project that originated from George Ross's vision—Nico's extensive study of the biblical sanctuary uncovered a wealth of Christ-centred typology and biblical insights that could not be included in the original work.

Those additional studies became the foundation for this companion volume, allowing themes that could not be fully explored in the original tract format to be presented in greater depth. While this is Nico's first book as the principal author, it remains the fruit of a close partnership with George Ross, whose encouragement, counsel, and shared commitment to the authority of Scripture have shaped this work from beginning to end.

Together, Nico and George invite readers to discover how the Tabernacle reveals God's plan of redemption, points unmistakably to Jesus Christ, and presents the gospel woven throughout Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

**Nico Thorne**

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BE A  
**BEREAN**  
DURING TIMES WE LIVE IN,  
**TRUTH**  
HAVE NEVER BEEN  
SO SO IMPORTANT.

THE BEREANS  
WERE MORE NOBLE  
THAN THOSE IN THESSALONICA.  
THEY RECEIVED THE WORD  
WITH ALL READINESS,  
AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES  
DAILY TO FIND OUT WHETHER  
THESE THINGS WERE SO.  
ACTS 17:11

BE A BEREAN. • LOVE THE TRUTH. • LIVE BY THE TRUTH. • SHARE THE TRUTH. ✦

*In a world of noise and deception, God calls us to know the truth — and the truth will us so free. John 8:32*  
THE WORD OF GOD IS OUR ONLY STANDARD. THE TRUTH IS OUR ONLY SAFETY. JESUS IS OUR ONLY HOPE.

# All Scripture is God-breathed

and is useful for teaching, rebuking,  
correcting and training in righteousness,  
so that the servant of God may be thoroughly  
equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17



*The developers:*

*Nico Thorne & George Ross*

I said to the man that  
stood at the gate of the  
year, "Give me a light  
that I may tread safely  
into the unknown."

And he replied: Go out into the darkness, and put  
your hand in the hand of God. That shall be to you  
better than light and safer than a known way.

*Minnie Louise Haskins*



*Dear Reader! May the Almighty hand guide and  
uphold us all as we read and discover the **Truth** that  
**never Changes.** – Nico Thorne and George Ross*

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