

# MEET ME IN THE DESERT

A SERIES OF TEACHINGS,  
DEVOTIONS,  
AND COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
TABERNACLE OF MOSES

THE REV. BILL BLOMQUIST

# Meet Me in the Desert

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*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.*

*Worship the LORD with gladness;  
come before him with joyful songs.*

*Know that the LORD is God.  
It is he who made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise;  
give thanks to him and praise his name.*

*For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;  
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

*Psalm 100, NIV*

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## YOU ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE

*Come, fill this temple with Your presence;  
come, fill this temple with Your praise;  
come, breathe upon these fiery pillars,  
in the power of Your Name.*

*O Holy Wind blow through this temple;  
forgive and cleanse me with Your grace.  
I am Your holy habitation;  
purify me in Your Name.*

*Jesus,  
Jesus,  
Jesus, You are welcome in this place.*

*Sweet tongues of fire fall upon us;  
shake the foundations of this place.  
Stir up a passion for the nations,  
for every tongue and tribe and race.*

*Jesus,  
Jesus,  
Jesus, You are welcome in this place.  
You are welcome in this place.  
You  
are welcome  
in this place.*

# About This Book

Herein is a summary of Sunday school teachings I taught based upon the Tabernacle of Moses. Thus, it is written in a conversational, devotional manner. I encourage the reader to read it slowly, taking time to pause, ponder, and pray through the text at the Lord's pace. Use your inspired imagination to picture what you're reading.

Why the Tabernacle of Moses? A number of years ago there was a song called, "Dance as David Danced." It was a Hebraic-sounding praise song that said, "When the Spirit of the Lord moves within my heart, I will dance as David danced." I wondered, "Where did David dance?" and opened my Bible to learn he danced around the Ark of the Covenant as it was being returned to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:16). Then I wondered, "What is the Ark of the Covenant?" "Where did it come from?" "Who built it?" "Why was it built?" - and so on down the line - all of which led me into what has become a lifetime study on the Tabernacle of Moses.

The technical information in these pages is secondary. My main hope is you will be able to flesh-out the pages of this book into your heart and mind, thus becoming more Christ-like. That being said, "Meet Me in the Desert" is best read on three different levels:

## Read

Read it, enjoy it, and let it resonate with your heart. It stands alone as a devotional. You will find lyrics to songs/poems that speak directly to the truths being illuminated in each part of the book. Take time; linger on a word or phrase that strikes you at the moment. Take as long as you need. Make your time with this book a window of relationship between you and the Lord.

## Mark

The second level is to work through the book, using it as a study guide; with your Bible open and everything. It will take a bit longer, but will come with great reward. Numerous Biblical references and my personal commentary will assist you

in this. You will discover how everything in the Tabernacle - its walls, tents, curtains, and ministry stations - reveal Jesus Christ.

If you have a study Bible, make use of the additional insights of its commentators. "Meet Me in the Desert" only scratches the surface.

## Inwardly Digest

The third level of reading includes all of the above with the additional admonition to integrate the devotion into your daily walk with Christ - to actually *put into practice* the truths outlined in these pages. For example, in Chapter VII, "Using the Tabernacle as a Weekly Devotion," I take the reader from one end of the Tabernacle to the other in a week's time. Each ministry station has its own uniqueness and builds on the previous station in the journey into the Holy of Holies. By the end of the week you will have had an enriching experience with the Lord and will want to do it again and again! It is a powerful experience which I have practiced for years.

Finally, I invite you to pay close attention to the "insignificant" things - size, location, metals, accessibility, and so on - of the Temple. At first it may seem tedious but stick with it. As you get deeper into the progression, it will begin to connect with other things that you have learned and experienced throughout your Christian pilgrimage.

Paul wrote, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4, NKJV). The author of Hebrews writes, "In the volume of the book it is written of Me" (Hebrews 10:7b, NKJV). Everything about the Old Testament anticipates the day when God will send the promised Messiah. If the Tabernacle of Moses was the first temple of worship for the Jewish nation - which it was - then you can be sure the prophetic essence of Jesus the Messiah is embedded in every detail of the structure - which it is!

## About This Book

*May God reveal to you the Person of Jesus  
in each step of the journey;  
may you see Him symbolized  
in new and rich ways;  
may your life be marked  
with the sweet fragrance  
that can only come  
from spending seasons of intimacy  
with your Heavenly Father,  
in the  
Holy of Holies.*



# I. An Ordinary Day in the Life of a Priest

*“This is what the LORD Almighty says:  
‘If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements,  
then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts,  
and I will give you a place among these standing here.’”*

*Zechariah 3:7, NIV*

As the first rays of sunlight beam across Sinai’s jagged mountains, you rub the sleep from your eyes, push a chicken off your waist, and rise to meet the new day.

You put on your ephod, robe, and turban, notice a piece of pita left over from last night’s dinner, pick it up, kiss your family goodbye, and rush out of the tent. The smoke of smoldering campfires hovers above the Bedouin neighborhood like a gray, translucent linen. A goat bleats. A rooster crows. An infant cries.

As you chomp on the pita, passing one tent-dwelling after another - each with its own family, livestock, and possessions stirring with the dawn of this new day - you can’t help but see the temporality of it all. You are, after all, only passing through this desert wilderness. You look to the dust rising from your scuffling feet and wonder how long it will be until the cloud moves again.

Soon you arrive at the center of camp where a small, rectangular structure has been assembled. It sits at the heart of the twelve tribes of Israel. You silently gaze across the Outer Courts and Tent of Meeting. You see the softly lit, illumined cloud rising from the Holy of Holies into the morning sky like a silent, softly-swirling tornado.

In that moment, you again recall the mighty acts of Yahweh and how you were rescued from the bondage of Egypt by God’s strong arm of deliverance. He has led you to this place through an abundance of mighty signs and wonders: the parting of the sea, rocks bursting with water, and the continued supernatural provision of manna which He provides so faithfully, each and every morning.

And there before you, just over that white linen fence, He dwells; silently churning in power, longing to have fellowship with you.

Working your way around the east side, you slip through the Gate and step into the Outer Courts, instinctively glancing ahead to the fiery Altar of Sacrifice. There is another priest there, weary from the night's ministry. His face brightens with your presence. His shift is over.

“Shalom.” ‘Peace.’

“Shalom.”

You meet each other at the Laver, about twenty feet behind the altar, where you splash water over your face, hands, and feet to prepare yourself for the ministry of the day; where he splashes water over his face, hands, and feet to clean himself from the ministry done through the night. You exchange small talk. As you head up the ramp of the Altar of Sacrifice, he leaves the courts.

From the top of the ramp, you peer into the consuming fire and smoke rising from the glowing pit below. You lift the brass grid and hang it on a hook. It clangs abrasively into the new day. Pulling out a long tool, you stoke the fire. Raking through the coals, you notice the residue of last night's ministry: dried blood staining the sides of the altar and blackened bones and ash piled below. You toss fresh wood into the hellish pit until it becomes too intense to bear. You throw the brass grid in its place, creating a hollow, metallic sound that echoes through the courts like a hammer hitting a metal stake.

Below, just off the ramp and towards the Gate, you hear wrestling. You turn to see a family of five. Their garments show you they're from the tribe of Judah: a father, mother, two teen daughters, and a young boy trying to handle an unruly heifer.

“Shalom!”

Your first customers.

“Shalom. Bokah tov.” ‘Good morning.’ You beckon them closer, walk down the ramp, and meet them at the base of the altar.

They approach cautiously. The father steps forward. He points to the sacrificial animal and begins a litany of the confession of sin - confessing both his own sin and the sin of his family.

After hearing confession, you take hold of the rope and draw the animal close to your side. With the animal unaware, you pull a blade from a leather sheath and thrust it into the heart of the beast. It screeches and lets out a howl heard through the courts. Its blood sprays across your face, forcing you to squint and turn away. The victim grows limp and falls to the ground, its blood forming pools in the desert sand. Within a few minutes you have skinned and filleted the slain victim, carried its head and other interior portions up the ramp and positioned them onto the fiery-hot brass grid, where the animal's remaining blood drips and sizzles in the fires below and its smoke rises and disappears into the sky above - all while the family is looking, sometimes looking away: offended, distraught, and teary-eyed.

You look down to the family and shout the words they are longing to hear: "God has received your sacrifice. You are forgiven!"

"Todah, todah!" 'Thank you, thank you!'

The absolution is received with clapping hands and joyful voices. The family from Judah hugs and wipes each other's tears, filled with the joy of forgiveness. As they pass out of the Gate they meet up with another family, this one from the tribe of Benjamin - a family of eight. The mother is holding a newborn and a younger pregnant woman struggles to keep the family's bleating goat at her side.

You glance to the pillar of fire, rising into the hazy sky from the back of the Tent of Meeting.

"Looks like it's going to be a long, long day."



As the sun blazes into midday, the heat becomes almost unbearable. Somewhere between your twentieth and thirtieth sacrifice, a whistling priest emerges at the Gate, makes his way over, and stands at the bottom of the ramp.

"Shalom!"

He is alert, perky, dressed with clean white robes and tightly wrapped tunic. He sees your bleeding hands, your face blotted with blisters and soot, and your robes saturated with blood and covered with clumps of animal fur.

His voice drops. "I'm here to relieve you."

You muster a trace of a smile. “Shalom.”

He points back to the Laver. “Why don’t you come down, get cleaned up, head into the Tent and change out the Table bread?”

You nod. “Sounds like a plan.”

You hobble down the ramp, cross the hot sand, and come to the brass pool of crystal clear water. You gaze into the mirrored pond to see your reflection and examine the residue of ministry smeared across your face. Pulling back your sleeves, you cup your hands, reach into the cooling waters, and cleanse your face, hands, and feet.

You leave the Laver, deeply refreshed, duck under the curtain of the Tent of Meeting and at once find yourself in a radically different world of darkness, softness, stillness, and serenity. Reflections of golden flames dance about you and the smell of fragrant incense fills the room with an ancient, other-worldly scent.

You have just stepped into the Holy Place.

As your eyes adjust, seven burning lamps radiating atop a four-foot high, magnificently sculptured Golden Lampstand slowly come into view. They have been burning through the night and need to be topped with fresh oil and have their wicks trimmed. You instinctively take the scissors and tongs and move from one lamp to the next, examining each lamp with care and diligence. Not all lamps are the same. Some need more oil; others less. Some wicks need clipping; others need to be pulled higher. One lamp needs an entirely new wick.

Afterwards, you step back and admire the seven freshly trimmed lamps atop each vine of the Golden Lampstand, each one bathing the interior of the small, tented room with a soft, pulsating light.

“My God,” you whisper, “You are awesome!”

Turning around, you see a golden table located opposite the Golden Lampstand. It is rimmed with two crowns of gold which reflect majestically in the lamplight. This is the Table of Showbread; a tiny, waist-high table with twelve loaves of pita, stacked within the bordering crowns of the Table. As you replace the old loaves with the new ones you again wonder why Yahweh needed the bread to be pierced with a sharp object before it had been baked.

“One day,” you mumble, “I’ll know what that means. One day...”

Back at the center of the Tent, and just at the bottom of a fifteen-foot high, wondrously embroidered curtain, is the smallest ministry station in the Tent. Barely eighteen square inches around by three feet high, the Altar of Incense, is rimmed with a golden crown which shines under the flickering light of the seven lamps. Drawing nearer, you lean over and bathe your face in its heavily scented smoke which rises day and night before the Holy of Holies.

You stoke the flame, toss an additional handful of scented spices upon its coals, and step back. You are now standing within a Trinitarian relationship between the Golden Lampstand, Table of Showbread, and Altar of Incense.

“I love this place!”

Now there - just behind the veil - is another place of ministry: the Holy of Holies. It's the actual dwelling place - the very seat of - the Lord Jehovah Himself. It's off limits, reserved exclusively for the High Priests. It's where Moses and God speak to each other as friends, face to face.

What would it be like to be able to pass through the curtain and slip into the Most Holy Place anytime of the day or night? What would you do if you were invited to enter in, to see the Ark of the Covenant in all its splendor and glory and to linger there, between the wings of the cherubim, in wondrous fellowship with God, just like Moses does?



Your prophetic daydream is abruptly pierced by a screeching animal being sacrificed at the Altar of Sacrifice. It's a lamb this time. You can tell by its cry.

“My God,” you look up. “Where has the time gone? I've got to get home!”

You emerge into the eye-squinting, blazing heat, hustle past the Laver and Altar and stealthily through the Gate and enter the bustling marketplaces of normal, every day life. The sun is a desert fireball, about to drop behind Mount Sinai.

Rushing home through the neighborhoods you pass by numerous groups of children playing hopping and skipping games with rocks. You see women and daughters cloistered around fires, preparing the evening meals. You pass groups of men, walking in deep conversations down the avenues of the tented city. They

notice your bloodstained, soiled garments and respectfully nod as you pass.

Soon you arrive home. A few chickens are pecking around the perimeter of the tent and your son is stirring a stew in the pot. He looks up and greets you.

“Abba, abba!” ‘Daddy, daddy!’

Your spouse looks up from within the tent where she and your daughter are playing a rope game with their fingers. They rise to greet you, faces brightening as they approach. You’re tossing your turban to the floor when you’re suddenly tackled, arms about your waist and faces buried deeply into your soiled garments.

“What is this about?” you laugh, holding your family tightly.

Your daughter’s voice is muffled but you can understand it. “We love it when you come home from Temple, abba!”

“You do?” You lean down and listen. “Why is that?”

She grows silent; her face still buried in your robes. She giggles.

You tap the top of her head. “I said, ‘Why is that?’”

Your daughter looks up, her eyes sparkling. “We love the way you smell, abba!”

“The way I smell?!” You laugh, “What are you talking about?”

Your wife draws near. “We love it when you come home from Temple. We can tell you’ve been with God. We can smell Him in your clothes.”

“And we love the fragrance of God upon you, abba.”



After supper, you settle in with your family in silence. Your kids are buried under blankets, the firelight flickering off their rosy cheeks. All the camps are quiet now. The day was long. And you are tired. You are hushed and humbled by the vastness of the star-lit sky.

Suddenly, like the sound of a mighty trumpet, a ram’s horn blares in the distance, then another horn - and then another!

“What is it, abba?” Your child stirs in her blanket.

You rise and face the center of town. The tribal neighborhoods have come alive with shouts of joy and excitement. The clanging of pots and pans are echoing throughout the desert valley.

“I’m not sure.”

Your family rises to join you as you peer down the slope towards the Temple.

“Look, abba - look!” Your son points ahead. “See it?”

You rub your eyes in amazement. The fiery pillar, the Shekinah Glory of God’s Presence, is growing two, three - no - four times its brilliance, illuminating the entire desert landscape with a spectacular radiance.

“Is it moving?”

Your wife peers at the pillar of Living Fire from behind your shoulder.

“I can’t tell. My eyes are playing tricks on me.”

Your wife is obviously startled. She whispers emphatically in your ear. “It can’t move now - not here, not today. I’m not ready to move. This is our home. Our children have lived here their entire lives. They know nothing else.”

You stare in disbelief. “I was wondering if it would ever move again. I mean, how long has it been - twenty years?”

Your daughter looks up to you, the reflection of the Shekinah pillar of fire reflected in her wide, darkened eyes. “Are we moving daddy?”

You think through the ramifications of the event, the logistics of the move: the camp broken down, supplies bundled up, toys and clothes in the chests, and food for the camels, donkeys, and goats.

Then it happens. The fiery pillar of the Lord’s Presence suddenly breaks away from the courts and heads straightforward into the open desert plain.

Within moments the desert is filled with the trumpeting of rams’ horns. Their sobering sounds slice through the atmosphere of indecisiveness with a rare and regal authority.

“That’s it. It’s official.”

God is on the move!

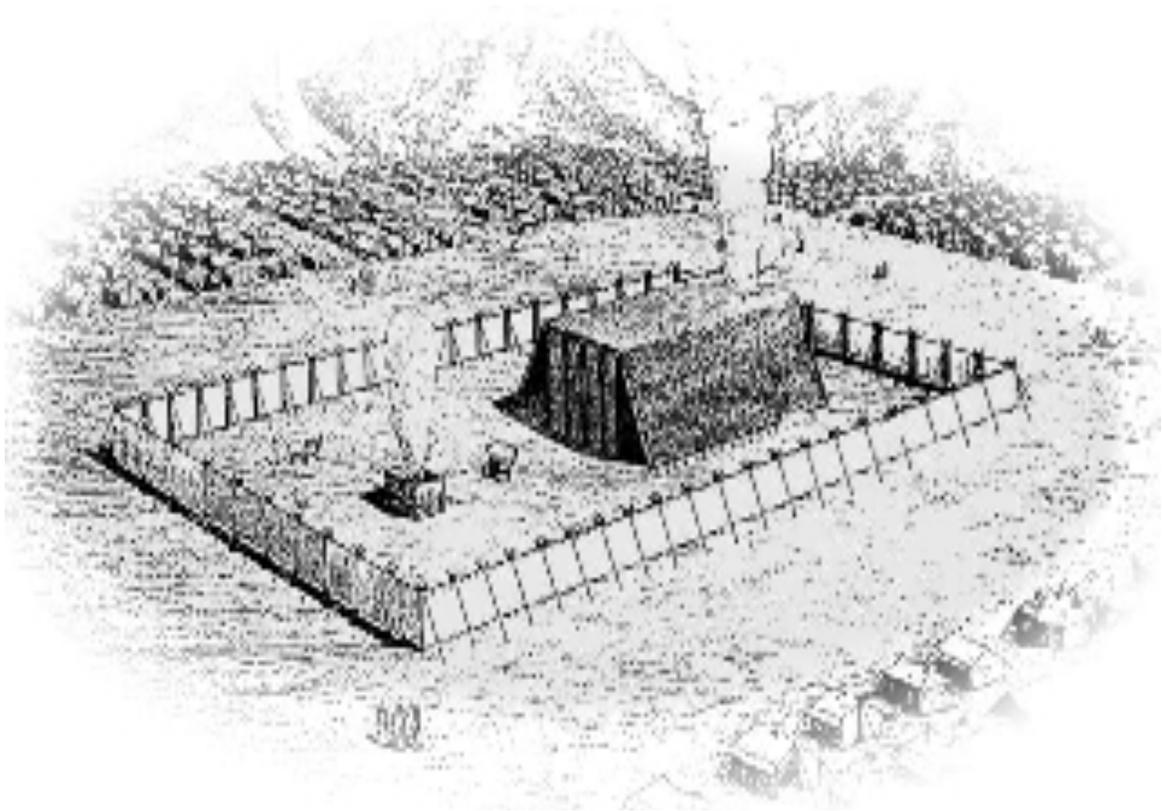


*Now whenever the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle,  
the people of Israel would set out on their journey, following it.  
But if the cloud did not rise,  
they remained where they were until it lifted.  
The cloud of the LORD hovered over the Tabernacle during the day,  
and at night fire glowed inside the cloud  
so the whole family of Israel could see it.  
This continued throughout all their journeys.*

*Exodus 40:36-38, NLT*



Meet Me in the Desert



*“So the Word became human and made his home among us.  
He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.  
And we have seen his glory,  
the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.”*

*John 1:14, NLT*

## II. Conception

*Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house,  
testifying to what would be said in the future.*

*Hebrews 3:5, NIV*

The Tabernacle of Moses is described as: ancient, barbaric, liturgical, portable, bloody, fiery, brassy, dark, mysterious, fragrant, ornate, royal, covered in animal skins, stiff rods, curved hooks, hanging curtains, wooden pillars, silver crowns, desert floor, shekinah dwelling. It is the center-being of past remembrance, present affirmation, and the foreshadowing of Promise all in one place. It is the chosen dwelling for “I AM.”

Built from precise blueprints given to Moses over a period of two forty-day stretches the Tabernacle of Moses was God's dwelling on Earth for over four hundred years. Curiously, it was replicated after the throne room in heaven (see Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4), yet scaled down to humanity's level so the children of God could worship Him.

It was the nexus between Heaven and Earth.

Scripture spends no less than fifty chapters on the Tabernacle; detailing its construction, rituals, duties and garments of the priests, and its method of transport. As we will see, within each measurement of the structure, from linen lengths to metals, from furniture to square footage, everything about the Tabernacle of Moses points to the Person of Jesus Christ.

Commentators have even speculated that, once assembled with the twelve Tribes of Israel encamped around its perimeter; the massive Israeli camp actually formed the shape of a cross, with the Holy of Holies at its center. It true, God's Passion for you and me is deeply (and wondrously portrayed) in the Tabernacle of Moses.

### Holy Moses

It all began with Moses.

It happened sometime between 1300 and 1150 B.C.. In order to manage the growing population of the Hebrew slaves Pharaoh was systematically slaughtering all male infants. Moses was born. His mother, seeing he was a beautiful baby and seeking to protect her son, placed him in a wicker basket, pushed him into the swirling currents of the Nile and watched her boy disappear. The basket was spotted, and “drawn out” (the meaning of the name *Moshe,*’ or Moses) from a woman who was bathing off one of the porches of Pharaoh’s palace who surmised it was a Hebrew infant, a boy (noting the scars from his circumcision). She took him from the Nile to the palace and raised him as her own. In an interesting twist, she summoned the help of a nearby “Hebrew woman” to nurse and wean the child who woman happened to be Moses’ mother.

So Moses was reared in royalty, under the influence of Egyptian gods and goddesses. He learned its culture, spoke its language, and eventually wound up overseeing the Hebrew slaves.

These Hebrew slaves composed a huge population who had originally settled in the Goshen when Joseph was sold into slavery (some four hundred years prior). In those days, Pharaoh was Hebrew-friendly. In Moses’ day, however, they had become a strong slave workforce of Egypt and pretty much regarded as the scum of the earth. Under the strong arm of Pharaoh, they were forced to build all manner of pagan temples and burial structures, perhaps even pyramids - all in an effort to satisfy the pride of Egypt. In their bondage they cried out to God.

And God heard them.

Moses’ heart was mysteriously stirred. All his life he had known he was really “one of them.” He was reminded of that each day when he urinated. He began to develop a strange compassion for those he would one day be leading, a sense of responsibility, his role in the place where God had placed him. Justice began to rise in his heart. One day, in his effort to break up a squabble between a Hebrew and an Egyptian, he wound up killing a man for the sake of a Hebrew “brother.” Of course, the Hebrew “brother” didn’t know that Moses was *his* Hebrew “brother” (stealthily dressed in Egyptian royalty) and he ridiculed Moses’ actions and publicized his sin. Conflicted and confused, Moses abandoned his plush life in Egypt. He left civilized Egypt, his life of luxury and comfort and prestige and honor, for the bleakness of the Sinai Desert.

During this initial desert season of 40 years, Moses learned its ways, its wildlife and the character of its terrain. He learned how to find water in the dry

desert plain and he learned how to stay warm in the high-altitude blizzards, which are common in that part of the world.

He met other wanderers such as himself, Bedouin tribes who knew nothing of his royal lineage. He liked them. He yoked himself with them, herded their sheep, and even married one of them. He was a humble man, and this had become his home. Who knows, as far as he was concerned, Egypt was a life of his past and he would be a shepherd for the rest of his life.

Little did he know that God was grooming him for a very special task, not unlike the way He grooms us in our spiritual deserts.

One day while Moses was shepherding his flock in the foothills of Mount Sinai, he was drawn to a peculiar site: a burning bush but not consumed. Curiously and soon to be terrified, he drew near. Once upon holy ground he was conscripted by Yahweh to return to Egypt where he would lead the Hebrews out of bondage and to the place where he was now standing.

He didn't feel qualified for the task. He was eighty years old at the time, probably had a few creaking bones, and couldn't articulate himself properly. (See Exodus 4:10.) Yet God assured him of His

*There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.*

*Exodus 3:2, NIV*

accompanying presence through a series of miraculous signs and wonders which would, in time, persuade Pharaoh to release the Hebrew nation from his dominion.

It was difficult. The problem was that Pharaoh needed the Hebrews for commerce and would have no part of the plan. Through a series of signs and wonders God got His way and Moses returned to the base of that same mountain with two million men, wives, children, livestock, camels, goats, sheep, supplies, and personal belongings.

God reunited with Moses on the mountaintop and enjoyed fellowship over a period of two 40 day stretches. Two things emerged as a result of their time together: the revelation of the Law, or "Torah" as we know it, and a precise set of blueprints given for the construction of a portable worship center, where God would not only meet with Moses but with his people. It was the desire of his heart to have a people who would worship Him, a place where they could know him, too. He would dwell and in the midst of His people.

## “The Word Dwelt Among Us”

The word “tabernacle” itself means “dwelling place.” The Tabernacle of Moses was where the God of the universe chose to dwell, or *tabernacle*, with His people in of all places, the desert.

It is here where we find the first of many foreshadowings of the promised Messiah. John 1:14, NKJV, reads, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The word for “dwelt” there is “tabernacled.” In the same way that God dwelt within the heart of the Tabernacle of Moses, so it was that Jesus came from heaven to dwell with us.

Furthermore, Paul describes our *bodies* as “tents” (2 Corinthians 5:1, 4). When a person receives Christ God takes up residence in his or her “tent.” He remains - dwelling in that heart’s temple - until the Day of his return. In heaven we will be in His heavenly courts forever, worshipping Him in the original temple - the one which served as a prototype for the blueprints that Moses used in his construction!

## “According to the Pattern”

The blueprints for the Tabernacle were meticulous. Each piece of wood was to be measured according to the pattern; each metal had to be chosen, hammered, and shaped according to the pattern; each linen length was to be dyed and folded,

*You must build this Tabernacle  
and its furnishings  
exactly according to the pattern  
I will show you.*

*Exodus 25:9, NLT*

hung and draped according to the pattern. Everything from dimensions to the heights, even down to the ingredients of incense to be burned, was in the blueprints. It was all to be built according to the pattern (Exodus 25:9, 40).

It took nine months to build it. Special men and women were consecrated for the oversight of the project (Exodus 35:30-36:1), while the Levites (the priests of the day) were appointed as head macho-men (Numbers 3:58). They worked construction for the massive project. They, no doubt, had built many pagan temples in the past. But this one was for the One true God.

It would be no easy task. Vast amounts of gold, silver, brass, fine linens, animal skins, and acacia wood were required to match the heavenly blueprints. While it was challenging, the Lord provided for much of it through a single offering.

He had made them wealthy for a reason (Exodus 3:22, 11:2; Psalm 105:37). Even before they left Egypt, they had everything needed to fulfill God's purposes for them.

## Dedication Day

The Levites carefully placed the Ark of the Covenant and Mercy Seat onto the Sinai's hot, desert sand. They erected the fifteen foot gold-covered pillars and fastened an ornately embroidered veil to the gold hooks above. They placed the Golden Lampstand, Table of Showbread, and Altar of Incense in a triangular formation. They surrounded them with gold-plated columns, ornately decorated veils for the ceilings and walls and covered the sacred space with four types of pre-dyed animal skins. From the outside it would resemble an ugly shoebox. But royalty awaited within.

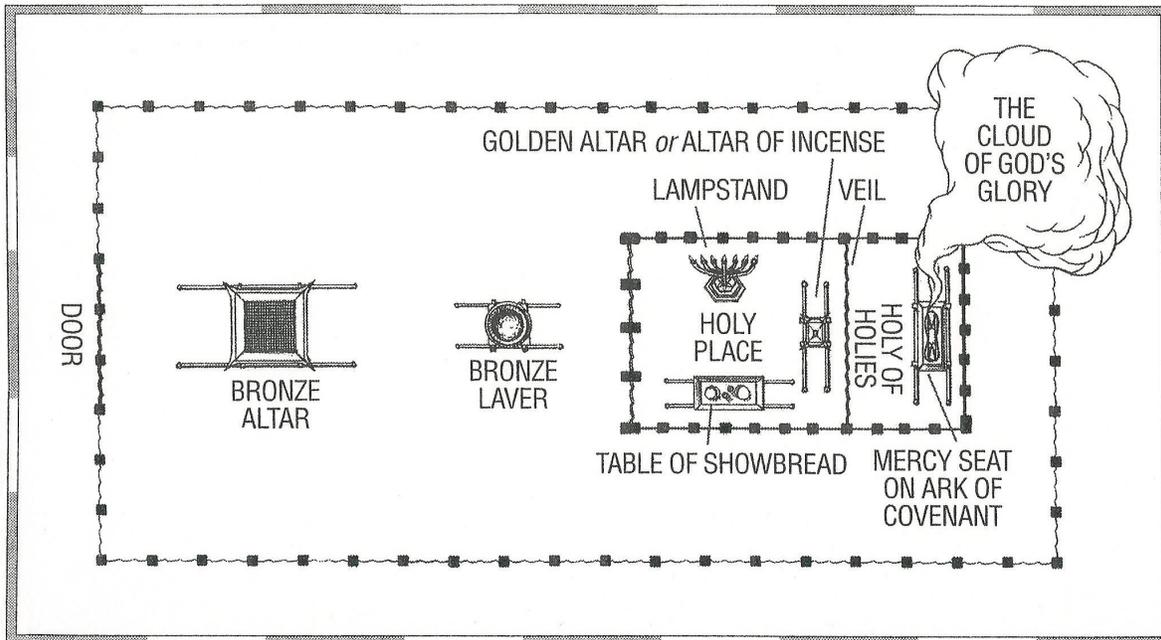
This "tented" area was known as the Inner Courts. It was divided in half in two sections. The far section, or the deepest part of the tent, was called the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place. The nearer section, closest to the entrance, was called the Holy Place. Together the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place made up the Tent of Meeting.

Just outside the Tent of Meeting a wash basin made of hammered metal and lined with women's looking glasses was placed onto the sand and filled with water. This was called the Laver. Further out, at the entrance of the tabernacle, they a cumbersome station of ministry called the Altar of Sacrifice stood ominously in the desert's heat. When all the furniture was in place it took on the shape of a cross.

Again, everything built according to the pattern.

The final step in preparation was to raise a series of sixty posts which stood around the perimeter of the Temple. Attached to the posts a seven-foot high wall of white linens enclosed the Courts, separating the newly formed sanctuary from the rest of the world. Once fully assembled, the Tabernacle measured a mere 75 by 150 feet; roughly half the size of a football field.

It was time for the dedication. All had been set up. There was nothing more to do. From here on out, whatever would happen, would in God's lap. The priests cautiously slid under the gate to the courtyard. They laid the lifeless bodies of sacrificial animals above the dry wood in the Altar of Sacrifice and stepped back.



They watched. They waited. Suddenly a noise of a howling wind erupted from Mt. Sinai. It whooshed down the cliffs, onto the desert plain, and ignited the wood with a pentecostal fervor. “Fire blazed forth from the LORD’s presence and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When the people saw this, they shouted with joy and fell face down on the ground” (Leviticus 9:24, NLT).

What a sight that must have been!

The flames were God’s provision for the ongoing maintenance of the temple. It fell in the Outer Courts but holy coals were hastily carried into the Inner Courts, where they would be used to light the fires of the seven lamps of the Golden Lampstand and burn the spices at the Altar of Incense.

After the fire fell the priests then collected a basin of blood from the animal slain and anointed everything in the Temple: The Altar of Sacrifice, Brass Laver, Golden Lampstand, Table of Showbread, Altar of Incense, Ark of the Covenant, and Mercy Seat. Everything needed to be consecrated by the blood of the lamb, which is yet another foreshadowing of the role of the Blood of Christ through which we have access to the Father (represented in the Holy of Holies).

When the Temple had been fully anointed and consecrated a curious thing happened. It’s reasonable to assume God was observing these events (construction, layout, anointing, and consecration) from high above and perched atop Mount

Figure 1: The Tabernacle of Moses

Sinai. He had been waiting for this exciting moment for ages! The cloud began to drift from the mountaintop, down the cliffs, and into the valley. Before the widening eyes of millions of men, women, and children, the ever-living God made His way through the dust-laden streets of common-place culture. Arriving at the temple gate, he passed into the Outer Courts, paused at the Altar of Sacrifice and gently entered into the dimly lit environment of the Tent of Meeting. He moved through the second veil and came to rest between the angels' wings of the Mercy Seat. There he stayed. There he would reside, filling that desperately dark place with the everlasting, Shekinah Glory of God. (See "The Cloud of God's Glory" in Figure 1: The Tabernacle of Moses above.)

When the Hebrews witnessed this they most likely fell to their knees, raised their hands, and shouted praises to the God of their redemption. (Perhaps those in Heaven were even shouting as well!) This was the first time God had been with His people since Eden.

## Following a Cloud

God dwelt in the very heart of the camp, with the Hebrew tribes encamped to the north, south, east and west of the spectacular pillar of fire. I have often thought of what it must have been like to live in the reflection of the God's Shekinah cloud.

Growing up in Cape Canaveral, Florida, I had the privilege of seeing numerous missiles lift off the launch-pads and rise into the sky. We always knew when a "shot" was scheduled because, in those days, prior to the launch, the lights were "on at the Cape." They were powerful spotlights which shone all around the rocket like a baseball field. At the time of "blast off," the lights went shut down, only to be replaced by intense flames shooting out from underneath the "birds." As they lifted into the sky, the flames would grow six to ten times longer than the missiles themselves! Their tails were impressive in daylight, but even more-so at night. They'd light the entire neighborhood with a soft orangey glow! (A good surfer could catch up to three waves during a nighttime, Saturn V launch!) With these images in mind, I can only imagine what it would have been like to witness God's burning, churning illumination over the Hebrew camps, glowing silently through the wee hours of the night.

The "Cloud of Presence" was not a stagnant column. It was alive. It moved. And when it moved, the assumption was that everyone would move with it. This is how God led His people around the desert for a full generation before bringing

them into the Promised Land. To some, following the cloud must have been an adventure. For others it may have been unsettling to follow an unpredictable God who led them into unpredictable places for their own good and probably frustrating at best.

*Whether the cloud  
stayed over the tabernacle  
for two days or a month or a year,  
the Israelites would remain in camp  
and not set out;  
but when it lifted,  
they would set out.*

*Numbers 9:22, NIV*

Sometimes it stayed in one place for two days, a month, or even a couple of years (Exodus 40:36-38). Whenever God moved, it required a total disassembly of the Tabernacle, and a complete breakdown and journeying of the entire Hebrew community as well. Stakes were pulled. Schools were shut down. Wells were covered. Schedules were interrupted. The entire camp was thrust into a spirit of transit, transition, and stress.

## Portable Temple

This is why the Tabernacle of Moses was built to be portable. Everything was designed with the idea of “pilgrimage” in mind. In fact, the Ark of the Covenant, Altar of Incense, Table of Showbread, and the Altar of Sacrifice each had rings built into their sides with long staves, or rods, running through them. They could be covered with skins and shouldered within minutes of God’s moving.

There were two pieces of furniture, however, that did NOT have traveling staves built within: the Brass Laver and the Golden Lampstand. Historians have speculated these articles may have been wrapped in animal skins and actually placed inside the upside-down Altar of Sacrifice while in transit. If so, it would suggest that the symbols found in these two stations (Brass Laver for cleansing and the Golden Lampstand as the Light of Christ) are deeply seated in the Cross, which is a symbol found in the Altar of Sacrifice - something we’ll spend more time later.

When in transit, the entire Tabernacle - rods, linens, utensils, veils, and ministry stations - was covered with the skins of dead animals; non-impressive to say the least. Any observing Bedouin tribes seeing the parading Israelites through the wadis and desert canyons could never imagine the glorious vessels of brass, silver, and gold residing there, just under the animal skins and coverings. These treasures of divinity would have gone unnoticed. This speaks to the fact that the beauty and wonder of the majesty of God is reserved for his own. The intimacies of praise and worship are essentially unrecognizable to non-believers. They see only brick buildings. But the beauty of holiness is reserved for those who, by faith entering through the Gate (Christ), transcend what is seen to worship Him in Spirit

and Truth.

I would imagine that following the cloud was no easy task. The desert was filled with ravines, valleys, dangerous slopes, and extreme climates, not to mention wild beasts, scorpions, snakes and a lion or two. In all their travels, however, they were assured that God was with them because they could see the cloud. They *knew* He was in their midst, leading them as a faithful Shepherd into the Promised Land.

He was then, as today, “Immanuel,” God *with us*.

## Progression

A brief here on the idea of “progression,” before we head into the Outer Courts.

A chief characteristic of a shepherd is the idea of “movement.” A shepherd needs to be leading his or her sheep into places where they can find food, drink, and sleep in safety. It is no surprise that Jesus, as our Great Shepherd, led these sheep in like fashion. They were always moving, a band on the run if you will. Everything about the Tabernacle of Moses is about the idea of “progression,” ascent, growth, and moving from glory to glory, for the welfare of his people.



*The Lord is my shepherd;  
I have all that I need.  
He lets me rest in green meadows;  
he leads me beside peaceful streams.  
He renews my strength.  
He guides me along right paths,  
bringing honor to his name.  
Even when I walk through the darkest valley  
I will not be afraid,  
for you are close beside me.  
Your rod and your staff  
protect and comfort me.  
You prepare a feast for me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.*

Meet Me in the Desert

*My cup overflows with blessings.  
Surely your goodness and unfailing love  
will pursue me all the days of my life,  
and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.*

*Psalm 23, NLT*

# III. The Outer Courts

*Then make the courtyard for the Tabernacle,  
enclosed with curtains made of finely woven linen.*

*Exodus 27:9a, NLT*

The Outer Courts made up the large, open-aired area of the Tabernacle of Moses. It was surrounded by a wall of finely woven linen and accessible only by a single Gate. The Courts were a gathering place where everyone could have fellowship and present their offerings to the Lord. It contained two stations of worship: the Altar of Sacrifice and the Brass Laver.

Before we get into the stations of ministry, let's take an overall look at the Outer Courts.

## Heavy Metal

The Altar of Sacrifice and Brass Laver were both made from **brass**.

In Scripture, the significance of metals carry symbolic "weight," if you will. Brass, for example, symbolizes "God's judgment upon the sins of humankind." You may remember that God made the heavens like brass above Israel for their many sins (Leviticus 26:18-20, Deuteronomy 28:23), meaning that their prayers would not pass through the wall of his judgment until his people humbled themselves and repented of their sin.

Other metals (silver and gold) carry significance, too. Silver speaks to the gift of redemption, while Gold symbolizes royalty. Approximately 2.5 tons of brass, 3.7 tons of silver, and 1 ton of gold were used in the construction of the Temple from end to end. These three metals were the core metals in the Tabernacle of Moses.

All the brass in the Temple, however, is found here, in the Outer Courts and nowhere else. This speaks to an essential function of the Outer Courts, that of revealing and removing barriers between our sin and God's judgment so the pilgrim could have fellowship with God.

## Living Pillars

The Outer Courts had a single entranceway, the Gate, through which everyone passed. After passing through the Gate, the worshipper immediately found himself surrounded by sixty pillars of wood. Each pillar had a silver hook at the top, to a white-linen curtain hung around the perimeter of the Courts.

The significance here is rich. Scripturally, they represent the sixty generations between Adam and Jesus.

Christians are oftentimes called, “pillars of faith” (1 Timothy 3:15).

The pillars themselves were made of acacia, or *shittim* wood. It is the only wood used in the Tabernacle and is famous for being to be the hardest wood in the world. This wood also has a deep meaning: it symbolizes humanity. Additionally, these sixty wooden pillars were mounted in sockets of brass. In this we have a striking example of personal redemption. The pillars were made from acacia wood (humanity) and mounted in sockets of brass (judgment). However, they have, or wear, silver crowns. (Remember: silver has to do with redemption.) The silver hooks actually hung fine the white linens which served as a 7’ high curtain around the temple. Within the walls of the curtains is where God met his people.

This is an amazing picture of who we are in the Lord. All of us, through sin’s stain, stand in judgment of brass. Yet, through no good reason of our own, God has redeemed us by his grace; “crowned” us with silver and clothed us with the robes of righteousness (Revelation 19:78). As we come to Christ, Jesus exchanges our sin with garments of purity (Zechariah 3:4; Isaiah 61:10). From here on out, it’s not a matter of who we are, but in Whom we are clothed.

It’s like the old song says:

*I am covered over  
with the robes of righteousness  
that Jesus gives to me.*

*I am covered over  
with the precious blood of Jesus  
and He lives in me.*

*What a joy it is to know  
my heavenly Father loves me so  
and gives to me my Jesus.*

*When He looks at me  
He sees not what I used to be,  
but He sees Jesus.*

Here is a wonderful reminder that He no longer sees who we used to be. We've been made new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)! Although we may remember who we used to be, He has chosen not to. When he looks to you, he sees only a white linen garb of righteousness, the righteousness of Christ. It hides everything we used to be.

*I am overwhelmed with joy  
in the LORD my God!  
For he has dressed me  
with the clothing of salvation  
and draped me in a robe of righteousness.  
I am like a bridegroom in his wedding suit  
or a bride with her jewels.*

## Church (the gathered Body of Christ)

The pillars also speak to who we are as the Body of Christ, or the church. It within the parameter of the saints wherein God chooses to do ministry.

I remember the song, "Lord, prepare me to be a Sanctuary." The idea that I am a sanctuary of the Most High is humbling at best. Yet, the Scriptures say, each time God's people gather, a living sanctuary is created wherein he chooses to dwell. God lives and breathes within the temple of His saints (sometimes referred to as "the Body of Christ" [1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:14-29; Ephesians 4:12, 25; 5:30; Colossians 3:15]).

The Apostle Peter writes, "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5, NIV).

Everything that happened in the Sanctuary - the sacrifices, fires, offerings, and fellowship - happened within linens, held by wooden pillars.

## The Gate

As mentioned, there was only one way into the Courts, through the Gate. This was a narrow, single entryway, located at the far east end of the structure. It was this only way into the temple.

This speaks to the exclusivity of Christ. Christ himself speaks of himself as being a

a “gate”(John 10:7). Many prophets have come and gone but he is the only way to have fellowship with the Father, which couldn’t be any more relevant than in this day and age. While God’s gift of salvation is free to us, it cost him everything, and is found nowhere else but in Jesus Christ (John 14:6), the Gate.

We all know people who say any religion will get them to heaven. “All roads lead to heaven,” they say. Or, “It doesn’t matter what you believe, just as long as you truly believe it in your heart,” and so on down the line.

If that were the case, it would have been a whole lot easier for Jesus (and the Father as well). But that’s not the way it went down. Crucifixion was a terrible, horrific way to die, so brutal that the Romans themselves outlawed it after Jesus’ death. If it was simply to provide an option for salvation, no father would even consider such a thing. If Jesus didn’t have to die he wouldn’t have. Theology of sacrifice and blood atonement runs deep here. The bottom line is Jesus was crucified for the sins of the world because he had to do it. There was no other way around it. He loved us so much and there was no other way to get to us.

The exclusivity of Christ, his exclusive claims of who he was as the only way to the Father (John 14:6), flies in the face of our politically correct culture which, as some have said, “are so open-minded that their brains fell out!” When people say they there are “other gates,” or “alternative routes,” for salvation and relationship with the Father we need to tell them about the exclusivity of Christ, and that for their own eternal good. Just as there was only one Gate into the Outer Courts in the Tabernacle of Moses, there is only one way to heaven, one Gate for the sheep.

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6, NKJV).



*Then one of the twenty-four elders asked me,  
“Who are these who are clothed in white?  
Where did they come from?”*

*And I said to him, “Sir, you are the one who knows.”*

*Then he said to me,  
“These are the ones who died in the great tribulation  
They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb*

The Outer Courts

*and made them white.*

*“That is why they stand in front of God’s throne  
and serve him day and night in his Temple.*

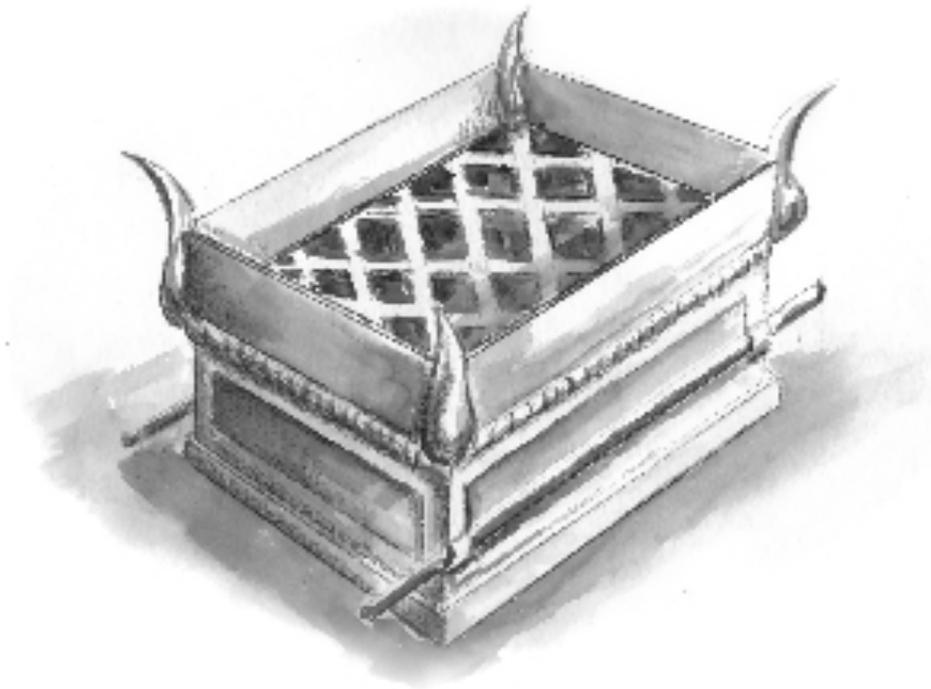
*And he who sits on the throne  
will give them shelter.*

*They will never again be hungry or thirsty;  
they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun.*

*For the Lamb on the throne  
will be their Shepherd.*

*He will lead them to springs of life-giving water.  
And God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”*

*Revelation 7:13-17, NLT*



*“Using acacia wood, construct a square altar  
7½ feet wide, 7½ feet long, and 4½ feet high.*

*Make horns for each of its four corners  
so that the horns and altar are all one piece.*

*Overlay the altar with bronze.*

*Make ash buckets, shovels, basins, meat forks, and firepans,  
all of bronze.*

*Make a bronze grating for it,  
and attach four bronze rings at its four corners.*

*Install the grating halfway down the side of the altar,  
under the ledge.*

*For carrying the altar,  
make poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze.  
Insert the poles through the rings on the two sides of the altar.*

*The altar must be hollow, made from planks.  
Build it just as you were shown on the mountain.”*

# A. The Altar of Sacrifice

*In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood,  
and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin.*

*Hebrews 9:22, NIV*

The first station of ministry in the Outer Courts was called, the Altar of Sacrifice. Measuring approximately 7½ feet square and 4½ feet high, it was the first thing the worshipper saw as they entered through the Gate. The Altar of Sacrifice was the largest ministry station in the Tabernacle, and it was made of brass.

This was a most gruesome, hideous place. It burned with intense fires and stained by the blood of thousands of sacrificial animals. A foot or so below the rim of the Altar was a fiery hot brass grid, not unlike a modern-day barbecue grill, on which the heads, stomachs, organs, and interior parts of slain animals were torched.

Biblical evidence suggests the animals were slain and skinned at the base of the Altar which formed muddy pools of blood in the desert sand. After filleting the animals, the priest would bring prescribed portions of them up the ramp to the fire and offer them before the Lord. Through the fires of the altar, they were consumed and turned to ash in the hellish flames below. There may also have been times when the animals may not have been slain at the base of the Altar, but may have been tied to the horns of the Altar and sacrificed across the burning flames (see Psalm 118:27, NKJV).

Day in and day out, sacrifices were offered over the fires of forgiveness, their blackened fumes rising into the desert sky for all to see. Over the course of time (including the sacrifices offered at David's Tabernacle, and the temples of Solomon and Herod), smoke became a visible reminder of Eden's sin. It also provided a poignant foreshadowing of the crucified Lamb of God, who would one day be pierced and burned through the fires of crucifixion.

This was definitely not "seeker-friendly worship," as it suddenly, and quite deliberately, confronted the worshipper with their unholy stance before a holy God. In this model of worship sin was felt with up front. It was that important.

## The Cross

It is difficult NOT to see the images of forgiveness and reconciliation reflected in the blood-stained, sun-blaring brass walls of the Altar of Sacrifice.

We know that, “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22b, NIV) and Biblical history attests to this. In the Exodus the Hebrews were spared from the angel of death by swabbing their doorposts with the blood of a Passover lamb (Exodus 12:12-13). Once the Temple system had been established, sacrifices continued to be offered in order to remain in God’s favor.

Today we are living under a New Covenant - the Covenant of Grace. Like the Hebrews, we too are spared from death as we swab our doorposts with the blood of the Passover Lamb. But, this time, it is the precious Blood of the Lamb of God. His Blood needs only be shed once - which it was. We receive total forgiveness as we place our faith in the Blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:19-25).

Hallelujah!

It’s both difficult and offensive to be so abruptly confronted with the old world notion of “sin” right off the bat. (Most of us would rather have God without the gore.) Yet Moses was obedient to the heavenly pattern and placed the Altar of Sacrifice here, at the beginning of the progression to the Holy of Holies to make a point: “In order to get to Me, you’ve got to deal with your sin.”

## My Rags for His Riches

Once when living in Homestead, Florida, I was driving home from work and noticed a construction crew putting a new roof on a church. They were busy ripping off the old layers, laying fresh tarpaper, smearing hot tar, and dropping stones. It was a gruesomely hot day and, by this time in the afternoon, the workers had taken off their tar-stained shirts and had hung them on the crossbeams of the cross.

I was horrified. I slowed down and peered out the windshield. “Lord,” I said, “Do you see what those guys are doing to Your Cross - they’re ruining it!”

“Don’t be so quick to judge. Take another look, Bill, a little closer this time.”

Suddenly, it all made sense. The Cross *is meant* to carry our filthy rags. It is

the only place in the world where we can exchange our stained rags with the righteousness of Christ. Those roofers were doing just what they should have been doing. They were hanging their burdens on the ever-so-competent arms of the the Saviour!

Since then, whenever I've been hesitant to approach the Lord with soiled garments I am reminded of this picture and the role of the Cross in my life. Jesus died to take away my sin. If I withhold my sin, I rob Him of that which He came to take.

## For the Wrongs Done to Us

While Calvary was a crude place, it was equally beautiful. There is an amazing component to the Cross that remains unseen until after we have committed ourselves to its Way.

As we pass through the Cross, we not only receive forgiveness for our sins but also receive healing from the times others have sinned against us. Randy and Terry Butler's song, "At the Cross," wondrously speaks to this:

*But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace  
was upon him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.*

*Isaiah 53:5, NIV*

*I know a place, a wonderful place,  
where accused and condemned  
find mercy and grace,  
where the wrongs we have done  
and the wrongs done to us  
were nailed there with Him,  
there on the Cross.*

*At the Cross,  
He died for our sin;  
at the Cross,  
He gave us life again.*

The Cross is so much more than my sin being removed and forgiven by God's grace. The Cross also serves as an avenue by which God's grace reaches into me and restores the wounded places in my own heart, places where I have been

victimized by the sins of others.

I call this the wondrous “backside” of the Cross. As we appropriate Christ’s Blood to the doorposts of our hearts it becomes a glorious fountain wherein the sins that others have done unto us can also be forgiven, cleansed, and healed, all this from a crude, fiery instrument of death.

Hallelujah!

## A Divine Doorway

While the Altar of Sacrifice is essential and perhaps the most important station in the temple, it serves a doorway which is ultimately designed to lead us deeper into relationship with God. In other words, we need the Cross, but we are not meant to *remain* at the Cross. The Altar of Sacrifice is the *first of seven ministry stations* in the Tabernacle of Moses, each one building upon the other as we progress into the Holy of Holies.

Is the Cross important? Yes, by all means. Without it we could go no further. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one can get to the Father but in Him (John 14:6). Yet, if we remain at the Cross we fall short of the majority of things Jesus died to give us.

I believe the Suffering Christ invites the grateful onlooker to move deeper into the Temple - to be washed in the Word, consumed by His glory, nourished by His sustenance, to commune with Him between the wings of the cherubim enter into His rest, there at the Mercy Seat. The Cross is the essential key into the doorway of deeper spirituality.

But it is only the first step.



*When you were dead in your sins  
and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature,  
God made you alive with Christ.  
He forgave us all our sins,  
having canceled the written code, with its regulations,  
that was against us and that stood opposed to us;  
he took it away, nailing it to the cross.  
And having disarmed the powers and authorities,*

The Outer Courts: The Altar of Sacrifice

*he made a public spectacle of them,  
triumphing over them by the cross.*

*Colossians 2:13-15, NIV*

## FORGIVING GOD

*Forgiving God, I come before You now,  
to offer You my sin and shame.  
From Your Altar of Living Sacrifice,  
shed forth Your grace to me.*

*O, I watched You die;  
O, I beat Your face.  
O, Your body crucified;  
I live; You're disgraced.*

*Forgiving God, I must confess to You,  
in word and deed, I've mocked Your Blood.  
Transfer from me the death that I deserve,  
onto the One on the tree.*

*O, I watched You die;  
O, I beat Your face.  
O, Your body crucified;  
I live; You're disgraced.*

*Forgiving God, I stand in awe of You,  
for by Your stripes, I am healed.  
Clothe me, I pray, in Your robes of righteousness,  
washed in the Blood of the Lamb.*

*O, I watched You die;  
O, I beat Your face.  
O, Your body crucified;  
I live; You're disgraced.*





*“Make a bronze washbasin with a bronze stand.  
Place it between the Tabernacle and the altar,  
and fill it with water.  
Aaron and his sons will wash their hands and feet there.  
They must wash with water  
whenever they go into the Tabernacle to appear before the LORD  
and when they approach the altar  
to burn up their special gifts to the LORD—or they will die!  
They must always wash their hands and feet, or they will die.  
This is a permanent law for Aaron and his descendants,  
to be observed from generation to generation.”*

*Exodus 30:18-21, NLT*

## B. The Brass Laver

*Make them holy by your truth;  
teach them your word, which is truth.*

*John 17:17, NLT*

The Brass Laver was perhaps the most elusive ministry station in the Tabernacle of Moses. It was located in the Outer Courts, made of brass, and sat under the same blazing sunlight as the Altar of Sacrifice. Yet, its size, weight, or even precise location in the sand is unspecified in the Scriptures.

In the years to come, other temples would have multiple lavers, some of them measuring fifteen feet across. But our Laver was most likely the size of a large baptismal font, perhaps three to five feet across and about waist high.

The Laver lies in stark contrast with the Altar of Sacrifice. While the Altar of Sacrifice was a sharpened, symmetrical fire-box associated with pain, death, and suffering, the Laver, with its rounded rims and crystal-clear water, was a place of solitude, refreshment, and renewal for the priests.

### Mirrors of the Word

The interior of the bowl-shaped Laver was lined with fragments of mirrors and looking glasses that came from a single offering given by the Hebrew women (Exodus 38:8).

When the Hebrews left Egypt God gave them vast quantities of brass, silver, and gold; precious gems, jewelry, art, ornate linens, coinage, and all manner of metals (Exodus 3:21; 12:35-36), everything needed to build the Tabernacle. God had made them rich for a reason: to build a house of worship. Of course, they didn't know why they had been blessed with such wealth until God revealed His plan. But when the call for a special offering, for a "building campaign," came, they gave freely to the Lord. This is a wonderful illustration of how God's plans are accomplished by His own gracious provisions, given through the people.

I've often reflected that ministry at the Brass Laver must have been an almost magical experience. Priests gazed into the basin to see a reflection of

themselves, revealing where the waters of cleansing and renewal needed to be appropriated. In addition, the fragmented reflections of the looking glasses no doubt pierced through the water with rainbow colors.

This is a strong illustration of the power and authority of the Word of God in our lives. Listen to what James says, "... Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey it, it is like glancing at your face *in a mirror*. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it" (James 1:22-25, NLT).

*As water reflects a face,  
so a man's heart reflects the man.*  
Proverbs 27:19, NIV

As we gaze intently into the Word (Laver), the Lord reveals where we need to be cleansed by the Living Water. We are convicted, cleansed, and sanctified with the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26).

The priests approached the Laver *before* and *after* doing ministry. All temple ministry was sandwiched between this ministry station. Like the priests of old we too need to prepare ourselves before, and wash afterwards, in ministry. So often we jump in and out of ministry to ministry without visiting the Laver. Ministry is messy. It can leave a sooty residue if we're not careful to appropriate the Word into the very fabric of our being.

That's why it is essential to be saturated in the Scriptures, peering into the water of the Word on a daily basis. When we spend time reading and studying the Word of God we are reminded of who we are in Christ, His glorious promises, and the assurance of our glorious future in heaven and cleansed from spiritual "smudge marks," refreshed in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we gaze into the very fountains of life we will be empowered, refreshed, and blessed, even in our bleakest, spiritual deserts.

*Singers and pipers will proclaim,  
"All my springs of joy are in You."*  
Psalm 87:7

## The Holy Spirit

"On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from

within him.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive” (John 7:37-39a, NIV).

Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as “Living Water.” Ministry at the Brass Laver also speaks to us the mystery of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, His infilling, His fruit, and his gifts.

The power of the Holy Spirit is crucial in the life of a Christian and cannot be underestimated. We have been born again into a spiritual world and nothing will equip and empower us to do his work without an ongoing dependence on the Holy Spirit. You may be highly skilled, well-read, and theologically astute yet nothing but your relationship and co-existence with the Holy Spirit will enable you to bear lasting fruit for the Kingdom of God.

Paul was a wonderful illustration of this. He was a well-educated, savvy debater, a theological whiz-kid of an Apostle. He knew the inherent danger of relying on his own power and chose to know nothing but the crucified Christ (seen in the Altar of Sacrifice) and the power of the Holy Spirit (seen in the Brass Laver). To the church at Corinth he wrote, “I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:3-5, NIV). Sure, he could have dazzled them with his skills, but he chose to kick back and present Christ in the power of the Spirit instead.

Later in life, Paul told the Ephesians, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18, NLT). The grammatical tense in the Greek here is called *the continuous present*, which means something that is continuously happening, something that needs to continuously happen. For Paul, being filled with the Holy Spirit was an ongoing reality in the life of a saint.

As we approach the Brass Laver we can expect Christ to wash us, fill us, and anoint us with the sanctifying Presence of the Living Water. At the Laver we are filled with the spiritual stamina to witness Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. At the Laver God cleanses us, equips us for ministry, and nurtures us to bear spiritual fruit. At the Laver we are saved through the washing and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:4-6).

## Holy Baptism

The Brass Laver also is as a symbol of Baptism.

Liturgically speaking, we are saved as we pass through the waters of Baptism. Baptism is where we symbolically descend to the depths and rise into new life in Christ. We are cleansed, filled with the Spirit, and Calvary is forever sealed in our hearts.

*This water symbolizes baptism  
that now saves you also—  
not the removal of dirt from the body  
but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.  
It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

*1 Peter 3:21, NIV*

We become adopted sons and daughters of God.

## Orthodox or Progressive Theology?

Finally, a culture where that continuously bombarded us with all manner of strange doctrines and popular Oprah “theologies” the Brass Laver serves as a litmus test for Biblical Orthodoxy.

Jesus said, in the last days, “False Christ's and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible” (Matthew 24:24, NIV). So we know that signs and wonders will mark false prophets. At the same time, we also note the genuine, ongoing, move of the Holy Spirit will be in full force, winning the world to Christ through anointed preaching, the displaying of miracles, and signs and wonders as well (Mark 16:15-18)! How are we to discern between the false and true prophets?

In a single phrase: The activities of the Spirit must be contained within the trajectory of the Word. If what we're seeing is grounded, or contained by Scripture then it is good. It's that simple.

The Laver itself (the brass structure sitting in the sand) is a symbol of holy Scripture. Within its “walls,” a basin of water is poured, symbolic of the Holy Spirit. The Laver and the water used for cleansing form a powerful relationship which can be described as “Spirit and Truth.” Together they balance one another. The water (Spirit) is contained within the parameter of the Laver (Truth). This is a wonderful revelation to us in order to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:13). If the proposed new theologies, teachings, or spiritual experiences flow within the parameter of the Laver - that is, if they are contained within the trajectory of

of what Scripture teaches, we can assume that what we're seeing is from God. If the so-called "revelation" promotes a non-Biblical experience, or drifts away from Biblical precepts, we can be sure it is not of God.



*Just as Christ loved the church,  
He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean,  
washed by the cleansing of God's word.  
He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church  
without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish.*

*Ephesians 5:25b27, NLT*

**FALL ON ME**

*Jesus,  
Jesus, come and heal my soul.  
Jesus,  
Jesus, come and make me whole.*

*With Your wind,  
breathe into my sin.*

*With Your rain,  
cleansing me once again.*

*With Your fire,  
make holy my desire.*

*In the stillness of this place,  
fall on me.*

*Jesus, fall on me.*

*Jesus, fall on me.*

*Jesus, fall on me.*

## C. Summary of the Outer Courts

*And Jesus Christ was revealed as God's Son  
by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross—  
not by water only, but by water and blood.  
And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony.*

*1 John 5:6, NLT*

The Outer Courts provided ministry *to the worshipper*. It was where he or she received forgiveness of sin by the blood and was cleansed and sanctified by the water.

The ministry stations were as different from one another as night and day. One was a harshly defined hot box of ruthless slaughter, saturated with blood, smoke, timber, harsh jagged edges, and the gruesome reality of sacrificial death; the other was a mysterious place with rounded curves, cooling waters, and refreshment. One was characterized by the heart-wrenching cries of its slain victims; the other lay ominously silent, tranquil in peace and solitude.

Both stations were essential in appropriating ministry and still are. At his death at the “Altar of Sacrifice” Jesus forgave our sin and removes the sting of death at the cross. By His holy Word and Holy Spirit at the “Brass Laver” he forms and fashions us into the image of God. One station provides forgiveness, the other sanctification.

Peter had a good handle on the relationship between the Altar of Sacrifice and the Brass Laver when, on the day of Pentecost, he “said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins [Altar of Sacrifice]; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit [Brass Laver]’” (Acts 2:38, NKJV).

### Blood and Water

The use of liquids was common-place at both ministry stations. The Altar is associated with blood; the Laver, with water. The Biblical relationship between

blood and water is simply astounding.

John writes: “And Jesus Christ was revealed as God’s Son by his baptism in *water* and by shedding his *blood* on the cross—not by water only, but by *water and blood*. And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony” (1 John 5:6, NLT; italics mine).

The Psalmist writes, “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has *clean hands* and a *pure heart*” (Psalm 24:34a, NKJV). Likewise, the author of Hebrews writes, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22, NKJV). When our hands have been cleansed in the *water* and our hearts forgiven through the *Blood*, we are then ready to “draw near to God” and pass through the veil into the Holy Place.

A striking foreshadowing of blood and water is seen at the crucifixion of Christ. Jesus was lifted high upon a cross in the heat of the day. (This speaks to the role of the Altar of Sacrifice - located in the Outer Courts, under the blazing heat of the noonday sun.) When He had given up His spirit, a Roman soldier “pierced his side with a spear.” That’s when an amazing thing happened: “Immediately blood and water flowed out” (John 19:34b, NLT).

*Instead, one of the soldiers  
pierced Jesus’ side with a spear,  
bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.*

*John 19:34, NIV*

## Truth and Spirit

Jesus calls His disciples to worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:23). Here, again, we see the unique relationship between the Altar of Sacrifice and Brass Laver.

We worship the Father in Spirit (recognized in Laver) and in Truth. (Jesus declared himself to be the “truth” (John 14:6). Here we are beginning to how both nations of the Outer Courts are essential, not only in our salvation, but in our worship of our Heavenly Father.

Visits to the Altar and Laver need to be made each and every day. I’m not suggesting returning to the Cross, time and time again, to get “re-saved,” or born again-again-again-again and *again*. No, Christ’s death was more than enough to

secure our eternal salvation the first go 'round. However, just by doing life, we tend to accumulate sins which routinely need to be taken to the Cross.

Likewise, with regard to the Laver, it isn't necessary to be submerged in the Spirit - washed, cleansed, sanctified, redeemed, healed, anointed and delivered from demonic oppression each and every day of our life. On the contrary, we only need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal *specific* areas needing His Spiritual attention for any given day. We have already been made clean by the Word spoken to us. "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean" (John 13:10, NIV).

## The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

I surrendered my life to Christ in November 1977 on a beach in Central Florida. For me it was all about "giving in" or "surrendering" to the Lordship of Christ. I had been wallowing in mud and squandering my wealth for far too long and it was time to get on with the things God had planned for me.

Late one night, sitting in the sand with the roar of waves in the background, I did it. It felt goofy. But I was just that desperate. I said, "God, I don't know who you are or what you are. But I've heard it said that I need to invite Jesus Christ into my heart and I will be saved. So, I now invite Jesus into my heart. I guess that's it. Amen."

When I arose from that beach I had a sense that something "very right" had happened. Over the course of the following months I bought a Bible, read it every day, and began to see the beauty of my Lord Jesus Christ everywhere I went.

While things on the inside had changed dramatically, things on the outside were still the same: I still lived in the same beach house, still hung out with the same people who still had their same parties each and every night. For a while I had great satisfaction in having the strength to be able to be in the same room with them without sharing in the same old activities. As the nights wore on, however, there were times when I lacked discipline to stay the straight and narrow road.

"Where is your power, Lord?" I prayed.

Previous to my conversion I had experienced cult and occult power, some of which was frighteningly powerful. I knew God was bigger than Satan yet, up to that

point, I had not experienced the fullness of God's power in my life. I grew increasingly frustrated and "backslid" more times than I care to admit. Where was this so-called "victorious life in Christ"?

Shortly thereafter I received a call from a friend who invited me to a "church meeting" at the *Quality Courts Hotel and Conference Center* on A1A, in Cocoa Beach. I hitchhiked up and we met in the lobby. The moment I walked into the banquet hall I was literally overcome with something I had never experienced: the power of God's love. I looked around in awe. People everywhere were laughing and hugging; the room was filled with electricity, and the band hadn't even played yet!

As the worship began, the Presence of God filled the songs with a sweet fragrance of grace. It was thick, almost cloud-like. And, though the people leading music looked normal, like me (young, blue jeans, t-shirts, and long hair), their faces were ablaze with the visible presence of God's undeniable joy. I didn't know any of the songs, but it didn't matter. I felt that even if I sang the wrong notes it would still be "right" somehow.

At one point the worship leader strummed one chord and invited us into a time of free-form worship. As I observed, everyone around me began singing their own words and melodies in adoration to the Lord. It was beautiful. None of it was rehearsed, but it was the most wonderfully choreographed piece of music I have ever heard. Most people were standing, eyes closed and hands upheld. I was astutely aware of the sacredness of the moment and slowly dropped to my chair, burying my head in my open palms.

I heard behind me a man singing, in what I now know to be "tongues." As he sang, my heart was strangely attracted, spiritually riveted to his voice. The more he sang, my entire being seemed to roll with the ebb and flow of his song. It was then that experienced the power of the Father's love poured out to me through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

I saw (in my mind) a vision of a door. It was cracked open about an inch with intense light gleaming from its sides, top and bottom. I gazed in awe and wondered how something so brilliant wouldn't hurt my eyes. I leaned forward and tried to get a better look.

That's when I heard God. "Bill, you know I love you, right?"

I nodded quickly. "Yes, Lord, I do."

“And, I will never love you any more, or any less, then I love you now, right?”

“Yes, Lord, I do.”

“There’s nothing you can do or say to make me love you any more, or any less, then I do at this moment. You got that, right?”

“Yes, Lord. I do.”

“But I have more for you.”

“‘More?’ For me?”

“Do you want more of Me?”

(Did I want more of Him? By that time in my life I had already realized that everything in the world paled in the face of the love and knowledge of Jesus. I was a fully devoted, fully sold-out, Jesus Freak and wanted - *needed* - anything and everything He died to give to me. Did I want more of Him? You bet I did!)

“Oh yes, Lord,” I cried. “You know I - ”

And before I could finish the statement, the door flew open and I was immersed in the overwhelming light of Christ. In an instant, I saw the horridness of my sin, its effect and stain, completely and wholly swallowed up by God’s unconditional, holy love. I keeled over in my chair and sobbed as the love of God cleansed, restored, and empowered me in the depth of my being.

My friends surrounded me, laid their hands on me, and blessed me. I was finally experiencing the power of God, filling me from head to toe, giving me the power I needed to be a victorious follower of Jesus Christ.

The whole time this man behind me was singing away, praising God in his own tongue; his voice rising and lowering with the ebb and flow of the miracle happening in my heart. God was breaking my stubborn pride. His unrelenting and overwhelming mercy was restoring the years the locusts had eaten and giving me a heart of flesh for a heart of stone, trading my sorrows for the joy of the Lord!

Afterwards I couldn’t wait to get home. I ran through the door, headed down the hallway, turned on the bathroom light and looked at myself in the mirror. The experience of God’s power had been so intense that I had to see if I had changed

on the outside! In my reflection I saw the radiant face of a young man who had finally found what he was looking for; the power of God in his life. The waters of the Laver had been poured out upon my heart, washing me clean of my sin and filling me with the unimaginable power of the Holy Spirit.

I remember seeing myself in the mirror and wagging my finger at the image ahead. “Don’t you ever *ever* lose this, you hear!” The image nodded back. “I won’t.” Today, some forty years later, by God’s grace and his everlasting faithfulness. I haven’t. Praise God!

A few years later I heard a song, “Your Love Broke Through,” by the late great Keith Green, which described the event better than I could ever say:

Like a foolish dreamer, trying to build a highway to the sky,  
All my hopes would come tumbling down, and I never knew just why,  
Until today, when you pulled away the clouds that hung like curtains on my eyes,  
Well I’ve been blind all these wasted years and I thought I was so wise,  
But then you took me by surprise.

Like waking up from the longest dream, how real it seemed,  
Until your love broke through,  
I’ve been lost in a fantasy, that blinded me,  
Until your love broke through.

All my life I’ve been searching for that crazy missing part,  
And with one touch, you just rolled away the stone that held my heart,  
And now I see that the answer was as easy, as just asking you in,  
And I am so sure I could never doubt your gentle touch again,  
It’s like the power of the wind.

Like waking up from the longest dream, how real it seemed,  
Until your love broke through,  
I’ve been lost in a fantasy, that blinded me,  
Until your love, until your love, broke through.

That was my first visit to the Laver. I have returned to it many, many times since then (remember Ephesians 5:18). I praise God for the Outer Courts. It’s a place all about me, a place all about you, where we are all saved, forgiven, sanctified, empowered, and infused with the Spirit.

## It’s All About Me

You may have surmised the Outer Courts is a place reserved solely for *us*. A place

where all the ministry is from God to us, where we are saved, we are forgiven, we are filled with the Spirit, and right on down the line. And that is a very good thing. This is rightly, all about “me.”

Some say there is no room in the Faith to be selfish. They would say we are called to lay down our lives for the sake of another, to put to death the things of the flesh, pick up our crosses daily and follow Christ into a life of simplicity and selflessness, all of which is true.

Yet, it is equally true, no priest could do ministry for the Yahweh in the Tent of Meeting without the personal preparation given in the Outer Courts. There would be a real price to pay if the priests chose to bypass these stations of ministry. They were meant to prepare them for a greater work.

The Apostle Peter says we are to “proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9b, NKJV). Truth is, we need these “me and Jesus” times to proclaim His praises with power, anointing, and authenticity. In order to proclaim the power of the Blood, we need to have had experienced the power of the Blood. In order for us to lay our hands and heal the sick, we need to have been healed ourselves. These “selfish” times in the Outer Courts are not for us, per sé, but looks towards a much greater work. It is here, in the Outer Courts, where God prepares us to minister selflessly in the Courts of the King.

Since the ministries of the Altar of Sacrifice and Laver are always there for us why not pause now to once again appropriate them into your own heart?

It may be the first time to commit yourself to the Lord, or a moment to reflect and renew yourself to His love and service. Or perhaps, like me, you are a man or woman self out to Jesus, yet lack the power in your life to stay on the straight an narrow. Either way, here is a prayer that may be useful.

Almighty Father,  
I come to You now through the Blood of Jesus.  
I believe that You were crucified for the sins of the world,  
including mine.  
I humble ask You to forgive my sin.  
Wash away all its residue,  
Fill me with Your Holy Spirit.  
Pour Your love into my heart through the Holy Spirit.

By the power of Blood shed at Calvary deliver me from the snares of the enemy.  
Through the water of the Word and the anointing of the Holy Spirit,  
empower me to live a victorious life,  
a life pleasing to my God.  
I embrace You as my Lord and Savior,  
In the Name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Linger in silence for a while, allowing him to answer your heart's plea with His magnificent love. Invite him to love on you and bless his presence as he prepares you for a great and mighty work!



*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence  
to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,  
by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain,  
that is, his body,  
and since we have a great priest over the house of God,  
let us draw near to God with a sincere heart  
in full assurance of faith,  
having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience  
and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

*Hebrews 10:19-22, NIV*

## IV. The Inner Courts

*I will meet the people of Israel there,  
in the place made holy by my glorious presence.  
Yes, I will consecrate the Tabernacle and the altar,  
and I will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests.  
Then I will live among the people of Israel  
and be their God.*

*Exodus 29:43-45, NLT*

Everything changes when we enter pass through the veil and head into the Inner Courts.

We've arrive from blazing sunlight into a darkened, shaded environment. As our eyes adjust, we find ourselves standing in a small room, with ornately decorated linens lining the walls and ceilings. Flickering lamps illumine and dance across the sculptured gold surfaces of the Lampstand, Table of Showbread, and the Altar of Incense.

The very essence of our ministry has changed as well. Here, there is no longer a need to be restored, cleansed or forgiven; indeed, no need to receive any ministry whatsoever. We are no longer preoccupied with our own needs, but with His. This is no longer about "me." It's all about "He."

### The Tent of Meeting

The Tent of Meeting resembled a tall shoe-box, some fifteen feet high. It was completely enclosed by thick and wondrously decorated curtains, linens, and skins. This "tent" was divided into two rooms by a hanging veil. This second veil separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies.

A striking feature of the Holy Place was the absence of all natural light. The only source of illumination was the seven oil lamps sitting atop the Golden Lampstand. Things have gotten darker, and will become even darker as we move on. Indeed, in this model of worship, the closer you got to God the *darker* things became.

This is where God's royalty really shines. The vast majority of all the gold was found within this small room. The Golden Lampstand (to the left, and parallel to the wall) was made completely of pure, sculptured gold. Both the Table of Showbread (to the right) and the second altar, the Altar of Incense (up against the curtain leading into the Holy of Holies), were made of acacia wood and covered with hammered gold. Can you imagine how beautiful this place was?

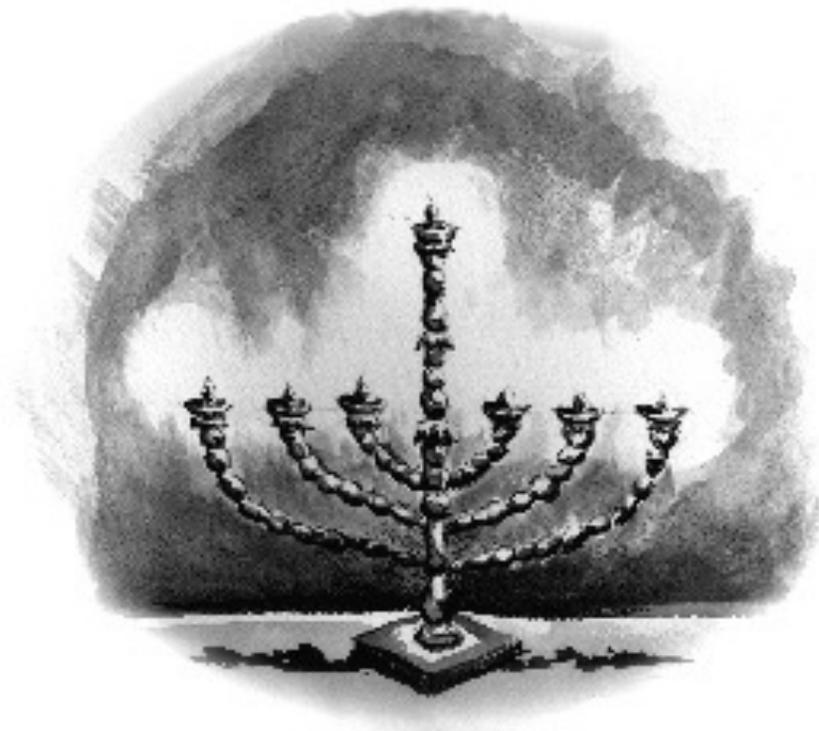
Arriving here, through veil, in my opinion, akin to a second conversion. It's a conversion to sacredness, a conversion to being a priest of the Most High God.



*It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord.  
He was sitting on a lofty throne,  
and the train of his robe filled the Temple.  
Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings.  
With two wings they covered their faces,  
with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew.  
They were calling out to each other,  
“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven’s Armies!  
The whole earth is filled with his glory!”  
Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations,  
and the entire building was filled with smoke.  
Then I said, “It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man.  
I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips.  
Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.”  
Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal  
he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.  
He touched my lips with it and said,  
“See, this coal has touched your lips.  
Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven.”  
Then I heard the Lord asking,  
“Whom should I send as a messenger to this people?  
Who will go for us?”  
I said, “Here I am. Send me.”*

*Isaiah 6:18, NLT*





*“Make a lampstand of pure, hammered gold.  
Make the entire lampstand and its decorations of one piece—  
the base, center stem, lamp cups, buds, and petals.  
Make it with six branches going out from the center stem, three on each side.  
Each of the six branches will have three lamp cups  
shaped like almond blossoms, complete with buds and petals.  
Craft the center stem of the lampstand with four lamp cups  
shaped like almond blossoms, complete with buds and petals.  
There will also be an almond bud beneath each pair of branches  
where the six branches extend from the center stem.  
The almond buds and branches must all be of one piece with the center stem,  
and they must be hammered from pure gold.  
Then make the seven lamps for the lampstand,  
and set them so they reflect their light forward.  
The lamp snuffers and trays must also be made of pure gold.  
You will need seventy-five pounds of pure gold  
for the lampstand and its accessories.  
Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern  
I have shown you here on the mountain.”*

*Exodus 25:31-40, NLT*

# A. The Golden Lampstand

*“I am the vine, you are the branches.  
He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.”*

*John 15:5a, NKJV*

Rising from the sandy floor of the Tent of Meeting was a lampstand that looked much like a modern day menorah, about four feet high and made of seventy-five pounds of pure gold. It had beautifully sculptured flowers, blooms, and buds decorating its main shaft and its three vine-like arms, to either side.

Resting atop each arm, or branch, of the Lampstand were seven oil lamps. They burned “through the night” and illuminated the Holy Place with enough light for the priests to carry out their ministry with tongs, clippers, and other utensils used during the trimming of the lamps. The lamps, sitting atop the seven golden vines of the Lampstand, provided the illumination under which all ministry was performed.

## The Branch

Isaiah writes with regard to the coming Messiah, “In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious...” (Isaiah 4:2, NIV).

Other prophets describe Christ in tree-like language as well. Jeremiah declared the Messiah, rising from the lineage of David, as a righteous Branch (Jeremiah 23:5 and Zechariah 3:8). The well-known passage from Isaiah, “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit” (Isaiah 11:1, NIV), is often read at Christmas. (I have often reflected on the interesting fact that Jesus, the Branch of Heaven, entered into the world on a *wooden* manger and left the world on a *wooden* cross, both objects symbolizing the hard wooden roots of this fallen world.)

Additionally, Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NIV).

King Jesus stands gloriously and proclaims himself in a darkened world as its

Light, the light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5). Additionally, He speaks of us, the church, as being lifted high, like burning lamps, giving light to everyone in the house (Matthew 5:15b, NIV). The church I am serving in is the only church in this small New Hampshire town. It towers above the entire community (and above the lake) as a city on a hill, shining its countenance into the world below. We are lamps, sharing Christ's light to those all sound us!

The Golden Lampstand gives us an amazing picture of Jesus and his *relationship to the branches* (which would be us). Christians can do many things on their own, yet thing will bear lasting fruit unless they remain grafted to Him (Romans 11:16-24) and His Word. This is done through fellowship, unity, and being grafted by the hearing of the Word and the receiving of the Sacrament. Only then will our works will take on eternal significance.

*I am the true vine,  
and my Father is the gardener.  
He cuts off every branch in me  
that bears no fruit,  
while every branch that does bear fruit  
he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.*  
John 15:12, NIV

In addition, as we abide in Him, we can ask anything we want and it will be given to us (John 15:7).

God wants us to bear fruit, fruit that will last but that fruit will only be as we are connected to the Vine, Christ.

## You're a Shining Star

Let's turn our gaze to the oil lamps.

Atop each "branch" of the Golden Lampstand sat an oil lamp. These seven lamps were most likely made of clay. They were filled daily with pure virgin olive oil which, when lit, burned through a cloth wick. Once lit, these lamps provided a unified radiance that shown as one light.

In the lamps we find a vivid illustration of the witness and ministry of the Body of Christ in the world. Scripture says, "We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves" (2 Corinthians 4:7, NLT). Beautiful, isn't it? Whether or not Paul is reflecting upon the symbols found in the Tabernacle of Moses, we can't be sure. Yet he does equate

us with clay lamps, formed from the earth (Genesis 1) and filled with the treasure of the Holy Spirit, who is often referred to as “oil” in Scripture.

“...You shine like stars in the universe.”

*Philippians 2:15c, NIV*

Later in his life, Paul wrote to the church at Philippians and reminded them they were shining stars in the midst of a darkened “crooked and perverse generation” (Philippians 2:15b, NKJV). This is especially poignant because the Tent of Meeting had no natural light.

Thus, we are to be reflectors of God’s majestic glory, the glory of the Vine. The end result will be that the world will see God burning through us, and they will know that this power is greater than ourselves.

## Trimming the Wicks: A Life Lesson

Among the various duties of the tabernacle was the priests’ responsibility to examine and maintain the lamps. They needed trimming. They needed to be filled with fresh oil, polished, set rightly on the branches, and down the line.

In order to do his work, the priest used special utensils, scissors, tongs, cloths, etc., for the task. Each lamp was made - each lamps *purpose* - was to burn a white-hot flame so as to burn as “as one light” into the room. Thus, as he approached the lamps every morning the priest examined and carefully and trimmed them into their full potential.

If the lamp was low on oil he’d fill it olive oil which had been hammered and filtered numerous times in order to secure its absolute and utmost purity. This was a foreshadowing of Jesus, our Great High Priest, who fills his people and fires us up with the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist said, “I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!” (Mark 1:8, NLT).

After assuring each lamp was filled to the brim it was then time to examine the wicks.

Wicks were trimmed one of two ways: too little or not enough. If the wick was barely burning, or burned out, the priest took tweezers and gently tugged the wick upwards, just enough to move it into the open. It would shine better that way. Conversely, if the wick was too long he would take the clippers and trim it back so it would burn like all the others in a row.

It's important to know that the wicks themselves were never meant to burn but designed so the pure olive oil would burn *through* them, which is a poignant illustration of the role of the Holy Spirit, burning *through* the lives of Spirit-filled Christians, for the entire world to see.

Like the priests of old, the Vinedresser (John 15) examines us and prunes us into our fully desired potential. His pruning may involve the clipping of attitudes; judgment, pride, envy, and or other impurities preventing us from burning pure for his ministry. Conversely, pruning may also involve a certain "tugging" to pull us out of our shells and into the purposes for which we were made.

Sometimes people think they're not educated enough, not good enough, not ready enough, not sinless enough, not "whatever" enough to do ministry at church. "One day," they say, "I'll be ready. Just not now."

If this is your this case, the Vinedresser may choose "pull you/tug you" into a ministry without giving you time to really think about it! That how it happens. God fashions further opportunities because he knows you, he loves you, and he knows what he's designed you for, even if you try to weasel out of it!

On the other hand, there are times when we need to be pruned back, time when we are simply burning out of control. Spiritual burn-out happens when we get so caught up in doing ministry we don't realize we're burning in the power of the flesh and not in the power of the Spirit. This happens particularly with new Christians. In their new-found fervor of "finding Christ" they immerse themselves in so many activities - Bible studies, fellowship groups, social outreach ministries, ushering, Vestry, men's/women's groups, etc., that they literally burn out. Some even leave the church.

I'm reminded of a poem that goes like this:

*Mary had a little lamb  
A tender, happy sheep  
It one day gave its life to Christ  
It died for lack of sleep!*

A final way the Vinedresser prunes us is when our public witness, or light, is incongruent with what's going on in our heart. In Scripture, this is called the "discipline of the Lord." And it is a very good thing. It proves we are his children and under his care (Proverbs 3:2 and Hebrews 12:6) and gets us in sync with the rest of those around us so our corporate witness to the world will be consistent.

Trimming usually happens through situations, events, or people who impact us in such a way that we are convicted, humbled, and brought back to the flames of our first love (Revelation 2:4).

As a young man I spent about a year living on a Kibbutz in Israel as a cotton farmer. I was in my early twenties, recently converted, and fully ablaze with the fire of God. (Being “ablaze with the fire of God” is a wonderful thing, yet being ablaze with the fire of God without having *the wisdom of the Lord* can be quite a smoldering effect indeed! Who wants to be in a tent with a lamp burning out of control and filling the place with smoke which makes you gag?)

In those days I prided myself upon being a linguistically gifted punster. I always needed to be the clever one, having the last laugh no matter what. Humor, of course, is wonderful and can be quite uplifting to others, but my humor had a tendency to be biting and sarcastic to the extent that I no awareness about the negative impact it had on others. All I cared about is that I got people laughing, no matter what the cost.

One day I went into town and was hanging around with some friends at the Jerusalem bus station. I was in rare form that day, thoroughly impressing everyone, including myself, with my remarkable gift of saying anything just to get a laugh. Everything was going quite well until I noticed one of the girls didn't seem as impressed with me as she should have been. She stood there, leaning against a column, arms folded with a soured smirk on her face. To my amazement, I couldn't even get her to crack a smile. In my effort to justify myself I poured it on all the more, pulling out all “stops” in my efforts to make her laugh at my wonderful humor.

It didn't work.

She took a deep breath, pulled herself away from the post and approached me. She was in her mid-twenties and from Holland. I can remember both her broken English accent and the intense look of righteous anger in her eyes as if it was yesterday.

“My son,  
do not make light of the Lord's discipline,  
and do not lose heart when He rebukes you,  
because the Lord disciplines  
[trims the wicks of]  
those He loves,  
and punishes everyone He accepts as a son.’  
Endure hardship as discipline;  
God is treating you as sons [and daughters].  
For what son is not disciplined by his father?”

Hebrews 12:5b7, NIV

“You think you are very funny, don’t you?”

I remained silent; but inwardly I had to agree. *Yes, I do.*

“Well, let me tell you,” her eyes opened to reveal a beautiful heart of compassion, “You are not.”

I froze. I had just seen the Vinedresser.

She continued, “You are grievous to me and to the Lord. Our Lord Jesus is not amused by what you have to say.”

I was immediately humbled. “You’re right.”

She was right. And I *knew* it. I regained my composure, apologized and thanked her. She turned and walked away.

I thought in silence for a very long time, examining the looseness of my tongue and the damage I had caused others by my prideful, flippant behavior. The last thing I would ever want to do is to grieve the Lord - or grieve one of His children.

That incident is definitive as to what it means to be “trimmed” by the Vinedresser. It was as if Jesus saw me burning out of control, so much so that the room was filled with a “Bill-stench” and not the sweet fragrance of God, and He reached slowly for the clippers. Using the sweet, sincere voice of my sister in the Lord, He trimmed me into a place where He would once again shine through me.

There have been other times when the “discipline of the Lord” has happened in my life, times when I’ve been asked to sit out of ministry for a season, times when God has called me out when I thought I was getting away with “it.” Regardless, we all need to be trimmed and, as his children, we know that he will see to it that we shine the brightest we can for his glory, and our well-being.

## A Unified Witness Around the Globe

Scripture says that when all the lamps were trimmed and aligned in order the he the golden Lampstand gave off a glorious illumination which, though composed of seven lamps, shone as one light.

This is a powerful symbol of the Church’s uniform witness of Christ around

the world. Jesus loves His church and prays for us all the time. He walks in the midst of the flames of the seven churches (Revelation 1:12, 13, 20, and 2:1) and maintains a worldwide “light” of Christ. His prayer for us is that we would all be made as one. In other words, he wants the Body of Christ to be in unity, a single unified Church, giving glory to the Father for all the world to see (John 17:20-23).

One of the remarkable things about the Body of Christ is that you can go anywhere in the world and experience a certain spiritual resonance with just about every Christian you meet. The same Spirit burning in the saints in Uganda burns through the saints in Australia. Wherever there are Christians you will see them illuminating their neighborhoods, villages, towns, cities, and nations with the same Light of Christ!

## Tongues of Fire

The lamps atop the golden Lampstand also speak to the “tongues of fire” which landed atop the heads of the 120 followers of Christ in the Upper Room (Acts 2:3). You’ll remember that the sound of a mighty wind filled the room and flamed branched out and rested on the heads of each person gathered. Through the power of that first Pentecost their hearts were ignited with the fire of God for mission work and evangelism. And within a few weeks thousands upon thousands of people were converted and bore witness to the amazing work of God in Jesus Christ.

The disciples were poised and ready, waiting for the promise the Father had promised. In other words, they were filled with pure virgin olive oil (the Spirit) and were waiting for God to light them up! When God lit their wicks they went out into the darkened world and shone God’s glory, unified and brilliant with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

“Fire” is an interesting study in the Tabernacle of Moses - one which we’ll look at later on.



*“You are the light of the world.  
A city on a hill cannot be hidden.  
Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.  
Instead they put it on its stand,*

Meet Me in the Desert

*and it gives light to everyone in the house.  
In the same way, let your light shine before men,  
that they may see your good deeds  
and praise your Father in heaven.”*

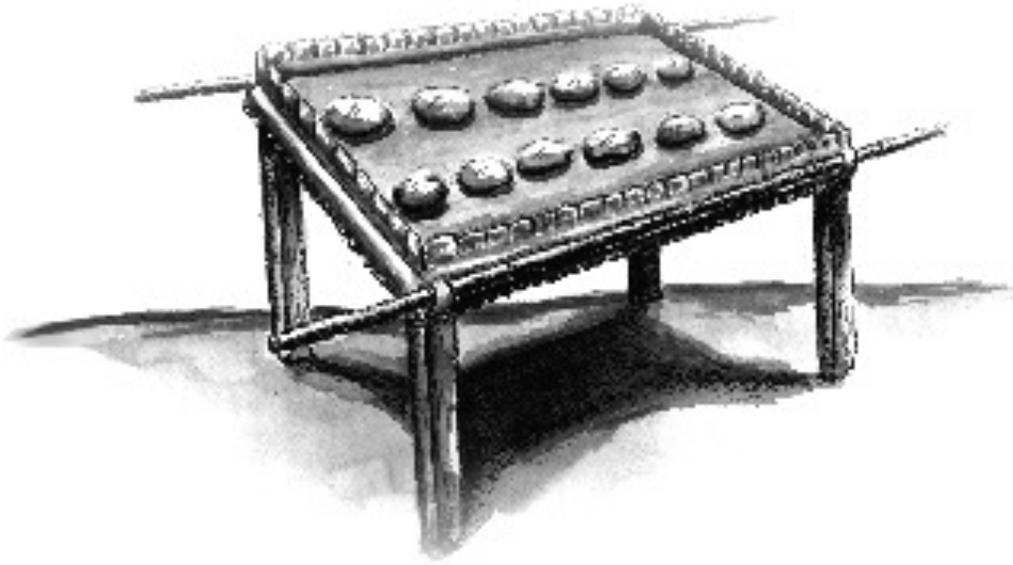
*Matthew 5:14-16, NIV*

**YOU O LORD KEEP MY LAMP BURNING  
(PSALM 18:28)**

*You, O Lord,  
keep my lamp burning.*

*My God, turns my darkness  
into light;  
into light.*

Meet Me in the Desert



*“Then make a table of acacia wood,  
36 inches long, 18 inches wide, and 27 inches high.  
Overlay it with pure gold and run a gold molding around the edge.  
Decorate it with a 3-inch border all around,  
and run a gold molding along the border.  
Make four gold rings for the table  
and attach them at the four corners next to the four legs.  
Attach the rings near the border  
to hold the poles that are used to carry the table.  
Make these poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with gold.  
Make special containers of pure gold for the table  
—bowls, pans, pitchers, and jars—  
to be used in pouring out liquid offerings.  
Place the Bread of the Presence on the table  
to remain before me at all times.”*

*Exodus 25:2330, NLT*

# B. The Golden Table of Showbread

*Jesus said, "I tell you the truth,  
Moses didn't give you bread from heaven. My Father did.  
And now he offers you the true bread from heaven."*

*John 6:32, NLT*

Located just across from the Golden Lampstand was the Table of Showbread. It was small table made from acacia wood and covered with hammered gold. The table measured one and a half feet wide by three feet. It was encircled by two golden rims, or crowns, one within the other around the parameter of the table.

Within the crown of gold twelve loaves of pita bread were laid out, most likely in two standing columns, "showing" the bread under the light of the oil lamps. Once a week, the priests' refurbished the table with new pita, assuring all offerings before the Lord were fresh. As the priests worked the table, they most likely exchanged conversation and enjoyed fellowship with each other.

The Table of Showbread foreshadows Jesus in so many ways. You may be thinking of them already.

## Kingly Royalty

The Table of Showbread, as well as all the statins of ministry in the Tent of Meeting, were fashioned out of acacia wood and then molded and covered with pure hammered gold.

Acacia wood is the hardest wood on the planet. Today you can still see it growing all over the Middle East. Being "wood," it is a symbol of *humanity*. Gold, on the other hand, as we've seen, speaks of *royalty and divinity*. Here we see a startling combination of humanity and divinity, together in one piece. Jesus Christ is the Son of *Man* and the Son of *God*.

Around the rim of the table were two golden crowns, one within another, which also speak to the dual natures of Christ, fully man and fully God, the first

crown given at His death (thorns), the second given His glorification through which his glory adorns Him and establishes Him as the authoritative King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

## Communion | Eucharist

Once I was at a church when the Pastor shared that we were going to have Communion. “The way they did it in the early church” he said. The instructions went something like this:

“We’re going to pass around this big basket of bread. When it gets to you, break off a large piece of it and pass it on to your neighbor and commune with them. While you’re eating your bread, I want you to enter into fellowship with the brothers and sisters sitting around you. Ask them what God is doing in their lives, share struggles, and pray for one another. If you need more bread, just ask for it. Through it all I want to invite you to engage in genuine, Christian *fellowship*, both with Christ and with one another.”

He then blessed the bread, passed the baskets passed around the room, and the whole enjoyed fellowship around the “breaking of the bread.” It was beautiful. By the end of forty-five minutes, people were laughing with each other, crying with each other, and praying for each other. We were having true fellowship at the Table of Showbread.

The true word for fellowship (Greek: *koinonia*,) far exceeds a casual “shooting the breeze.” In true *koinonia*, people sense God speaking to and through them. How exciting it is to share in this depth around the sacrifice of Christ with a brother or sister in the Lord. Times of *koinonia* are oftentimes energizing, joyful, and safe, with the essence of heaven laced therein. Indeed, it is a depth of relationship unknown to anyone who is not a follower of Christ. The activities of the church as described in Acts 2:42 reflect what true *koinonia* looks like in the real world.

*All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.*

*Acts 2:42, NLT*

But even *koinonia* can be abused.

The church of Corinth went far beyond *koinonia*. For them, it was party time. Not only did they add wine to their gatherings but they were getting drunk at

church. Paul was ruthless in his response. He reminded them of the total sacredness of Holy Communion and admonished them to examine themselves before taking it. If they partook in Communion without first examining their hearts (ministries accomplished, no doubt, in the Outer Courts) they could drink God's judgment upon themselves and might even die as a result of their Sacramental flippancy (1 Corinthians 11:27-30).

I knew a woman raised in the Dutch Reformed tradition and when they took Communion, *they took Communion*. Three weeks out the Pastor would say, "In three weeks we will be having Communion. Prepare your hearts." Two weeks out he would say, "In two weeks time we'll be participating in the Lord's Supper. Prepare your hearts." A week before Communion would happen, "Get yourselves right before God!"

The result? When they took Communion, people were ready; they had prepared their hearts before the Altar of Sacrifice and Laver. The significance of the symbolism of the Bread and Wine took on a whole new meaning, a far greater richness. They were receiving the Gift in a manner worthy of the life and death of our Lord Jesus.

## Living Manna

Jesus is perhaps most clearly seen in the Table of Showbread with regard to him self-describing himself as the "Bread of Life" (John 6:51).

In the tabernacle priests were the only ones who would eat the bread. Under the New Covenant we have all been declared priests unto God (Revelation 1:6) and we may gather at the Table of Showbread for nourishment, sustenance, and fellowship. In fact, the table is meant for these things.

During the forty years in the desert, God miraculously provided food for His children with the supernatural food of angels. "Manna" was a mysterious food which tasted a bit like the coriander seed. In the morning there would be dew on the ground. When the dew evaporated a white flakey-like substance was left behind. They had never seen it before so they didn't know what to call it. The word "manna" literally means, "what is it?," or "what it is?"

Throughout the forty years in the desert God provided just enough manna to make it through, one day at a time. The Israelites woke up, gathered the flakey

substance, and brought it back to the campsites where they would grind it down, fry it or bake it in any one of numerous ways for food. A daily provision of manna was given by God each day, except on Friday. Once a week, on Fridays a double portion of manna was collected, one for Friday and the other for Saturday. This was God's assistance in helping the Israelites to take a day off for the Sabbath Rest. I often think of this story when I say the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread..."

If the desert sun rose above a certain height (or perhaps when the temperature got too hot) something interesting happened. The manna went sour and rendered useless. It behooved the Israelites to get up early each day and collect the day's provision before it withered. This speaks to the importance of rising early to seek God's daily provision through having a morning quiet time with the Lord - a time to feast with the Living Manna before the cares of the world kick in and melt away our precious time with the Lord.

As the manna sustained the Hebrews in their journey through the desert, so does the Sacrament of Holy Communion sustain us in our walks with Christ. Communion empowers us, gives us hope, and reminds us of the life of Christ and the future Hope. As a priest, I have the opportunity to ask God to bless bread that will spiritually nourish our congregation. When I distribute the elements, I sometimes hand the piece of bread to the communicant and say, "The Bread of Heaven; food for the journey."

Finally, it's interesting to note that there were certain occasions wherein offerings of *wine* were presented before the Lord at the Table of Showbread! To our knowledge, the wine was never consumed but poured out into the desert floor before the Lord (Numbers 28:7).

## Known By the Scars

Our final observation about the golden Table of Showbread is a powerful foreshadowing of Christ. It has to do with the bread itself.

You may recall there were two columns of pita set weekly upon the gold-crowned table. Most experts believe they were twelve pitas total, divided into two layers. It's interesting that the number twelve is loaded with symbolism throughout the Bible: twelve sons of Jacob, twelve tribes, twelve apostles, twelve gates to the New Jerusalem, and so on. Also interesting to note the bread here was "yeast-

less.” Yeast is a symbol of sin, or compromise. Jesus told us to be careful of the “yeast of the Pharisees” (Mark 8:14-16). So this bread is pure.

Prior to forming the loaves into round pitas and placing them into a fiery furnace the priests were instructed to take a sharp object and pierce the bread (Leviticus 24:5). When the loaves were pulled from the oven the pitas had the marks, or scars, evident before the priests, resting for all to see in the Holy Place. The foreshadowing here is stunning, as it is prophetic of the day when Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, would be pierced for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5; Psalm 22:16) and points to the Roman soldier’s piercing Jesus’ side at his crucifixion.

Like the pita of old, Jesus too was pierced, baked in the fires of hell at the cross, and laid out in a darkened cave before the Father. Since then he has risen from the dead and reigns in heaven, the scars of His redemptive work (hands, feet, and side) for all eternity to see. Those same scars will earmark the glorious return of Christ as well. Scripture tells us that when Israel meets their Messiah they will look upon “the one they have pierced and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son” (Zechariah 12:10, NIV).

“If someone asks him, ‘What are these wounds on your body?’ He will answer, ‘The wounds I was given in the house of my friends’” (Zechariah 13:6, NIV).



*“I am the living bread that came down from heaven.  
Anyone who eats this bread will live forever;  
and this bread,  
which I will offer so the world may live,  
is my flesh.”*

*John 6:51, NLT*

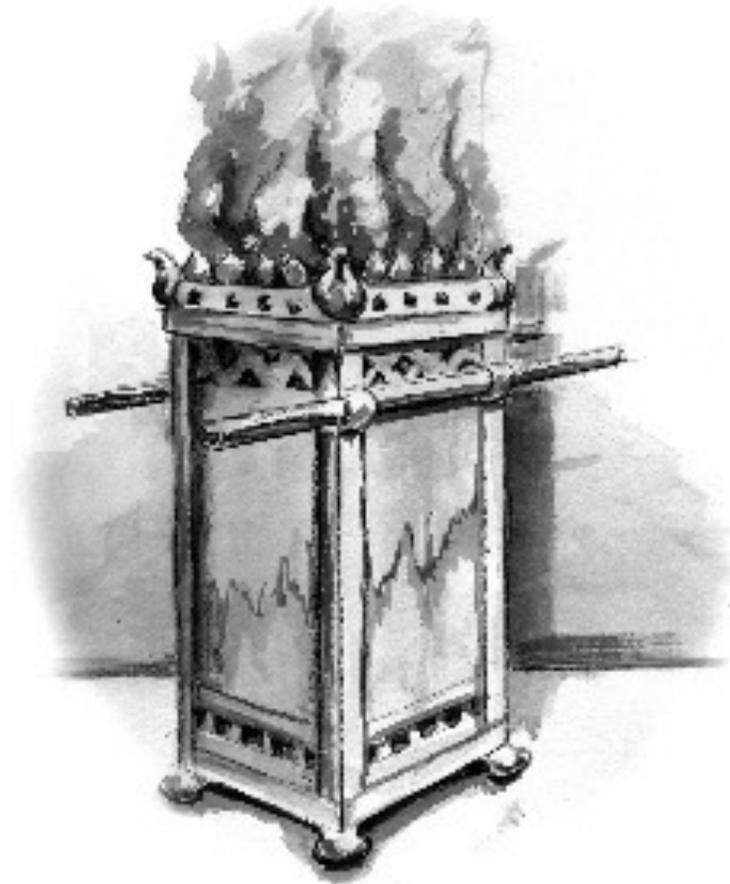
**I PREPARE MY HEART**

*I prepare my heart,  
I prepare my mind,  
to receive the precious flesh and blood,  
in bread and wine.*

*Poured out on the Cross,  
nourishing my soul,  
is my Lord and Savior Christ who died,  
and makes me whole.*

*Is my Lord and Savior Christ who died,  
and makes me whole;  
make me whole.*





*“Then make another altar of acacia wood for burning incense.  
Make it 18 inches square and 36 inches high,  
with horns at the corners  
carved from the same piece of wood as the altar itself.  
Overlay the top, sides, and horns of the altar with pure gold,  
and run a gold molding around the entire altar.  
Make two gold rings, and attach them on opposite sides of the altar  
below the gold molding to hold the carrying poles.  
Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold.  
Place the incense altar  
just outside the inner curtain that shields the Ark of the Covenant,  
in front of the Ark’s cover  
—the place of atonement—  
that covers the tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant.  
I will meet with you there.”*

*Exodus 30:16, NLT*

# C. The Golden Altar of Incense

*In every place of worship,  
I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God,  
free from anger and controversy.*

*1 Timothy 2:8, NLT*

Let's take a quick look back to where we began, as it has everything to do with where we are now:

- ❖ We have been nourished by the Living Manna, Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, and experienced the sweetness of *koinonia* at the Golden Table of Showbread.
- ❖ We have worshipped the Light of the World, shining through His Church in the Golden Lampstand.
- ❖ We have received cleansing, refreshment, and empowerment from the Living Water at the Brass Laver.
- ❖ We have received complete forgiveness of our sins and have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb at the Altar of Sacrifice.

## The Two Altars in the Tabernacle of Moses

In our study of the Altar of Incense we need spend a bit of time at the other altar in the temple, the Altar of Sacrifice. Only by comparing and contrasting the two altars in the tabernacle can we appreciate the significances. These two altars provide a necessary tension and balance in the overall scheme of things. As we'll see both altars are needed to get into the Holy of Holies, but for very different reasons. Below is a table illustrating the fascinating differences and similarities between the two altars. I invite you to linger here for a moment and consider the significance of these two altars.

	<b>Altar of Sacrifice</b>	<b>Altar of Incense</b>
<b>Location Where?</b>	Outer Court	Inner Court
<b>Size of Structure</b>	Largest	Smallest
<b>Materials Used</b>	Wood and Brass	Wood and Gold
<b>Purposes For</b>	Atonement	Prayer
<b>Ministry On</b>	My behalf	His behalf
<b>Smells of</b>	Burning animals	Burning incense
<b>Energy to Maintain</b>	Aggressive work	Gentle ease
<b>Ministry Was Done</b>	Public in Light	Private in Darkness
<b>Commonalities</b>	Blood, smoke, and fire	

## My Father's House - A House of Prayer

Let's leave the noon-day heat and slip through the veil into the Tent of Meeting.

Take some time to let your eyes adjust.

To the left is the Golden Lampstand providing you with light to see; to the right, the Table of Showbread. Directly before you, at the base of a thick veil of royal hues, is the Altar of Incense; its golden sides shimmering under the dancing fires of the gold menorah.

As you approach the Altar of Incense you see a perpetual outflow of scented smoke, rising from its tiny grill and miniature fire-pit. The fragrance is filling the dimly lit room with exotic fragrances and absorbed within the hanging ceiling and surrounding curtains and linens.

This may be the most important station of ministry. Its location certainly speaks to this, being inches away from the Holy of Holies and the very heart of the Temple. It was the place of prayer and intercession; a place near and dear to the heart of the God.

In the story of Jesus and the money-changers (John 2:13-22 and Matthew 21:12-17), Jesus became outraged at the free-market activities in the Temple Courts (this would have been Herod's temple). He flipped over tables, toppled kiosks, and violently insisted that no human institution - moneychangers, priests, scribes or otherwise - prohibit God's children from having access to their Heavenly Father.

“My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of ‘robbers’” (Matthew 21:13, NIV).

A “house of prayer.” How beautiful, how revealing! God so longs for us to draw near to Him through prayer. He so yearns to have fellowship with us that He actually becomes upset when human-made barriers prevent others from entering into His Almighty Presence.

*“These I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”*

*Isaiah 56:7, NIV*

To further the point, as Jesus gave up His spirit and died upon the cross the veil dividing the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was ripped in half from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51), signifying there were no more barriers between the Creator and His creation. This may be the most important, less publicized miracle of Christ. That veil is estimated by some to be somewhere between 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and four inches thick - with over 300 priests needed to handle it! The point still stands today: Jesus has torn the curtain between God and humanity and invites us to “come boldly to the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16, NKJV).

## Smaller is Bigger

Drawing nearer and peering into the center of the Altar of Incense, a couple of things capture your attention.

*But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ ‘I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’*

*Luke 18:13-14, NIV*

First, its size. It’s the smallest station in the Tabernacle. Measuring a mere eighteen inches square and standing only a few feet high it stands in stark contrast to the first Altar (the Altar of Sacrifice), which was a whopping 7½ feet square and 4½ feet tall.

This speaks to the fact that humility is a key component as one approaches the Lord in prayer.

## Only By the Blood

Secondly, you'll notice a smudge of blood there: a dried droplet smeared across the Altar's golden crown. The blood was placed there by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement and taken from an animal which was sacrificed for the sins of the people. It connects the ministry of prayer with the sacrifice of Christ and signifies our prayers are merited solely through the Blood of the Lamb.

## Strange Fire

Like the first Altar, a perpetual fire of smoldering embers burns silently at the base of the Altar of Incense.

People have asked me, "Where did this fire come from? How did it originate in the first place?"

This is the same fire which fell from heaven when the Temple was consecrated, back at Dedication Day. It was a holy fire, directly from the mountain of God. Although the flames were lit sovereignly, it was up to the priests to keep them burning. This speaks to our responsibility to keep ourselves in places where our flames remain strong.

There is a story about a pastor sitting with a man before a fireplace. The man was sharing that he had lost the fiery passion he once had for the things of the Lord. In short, his love had grown cold and he didn't know how to get it back. Without saying a word, the pastor took a fire-poker, leaned over and pushed a smoldering ember back to where the flames were strongest. Within moments the ember caught fire and recaptured its flame.

In a similar way, Paul encouraged Timothy to "fan the flame" that burned within his heart (2 Timothy 1:6). In essence, he was exhorting his young disciple to maintain the flame of the Holy Spirit in his heart - a flame which had originated from God and settled onto Timothy at some point in his youth. Today it's no different: God may have sent the fires which burn in our hearts, but it's up to us to keep them fired up in the Presence of Christ.

It has been said, with regard to the fires of the tabernacle, the fire was divinely lit but humanly maintained

God didn't like offerings of fire He didn't originate (he still doesn't) and

called them, “strange.” He only accepted offerings (of animals and incense) from fires which he himself had initiated. While “strange fires” from other sources may have been more convenient for the priests, or practical (coals from nearby campfires or refuse dumps, for example), they were an abomination before the Lord God Almighty (Exodus 30:9).

That is because it takes a holy fire to come before a holy God.

The sons of Aaron learned this lesson, first hand. At one time they presumed to bring a fire of their own origin before the Lord. They were immediately killed for doing so (Leviticus 10:13). These were High Priests, Moses’ nephews! To God, it didn’t matter who they were, or who their father was. He had warned them: ministry performed unto the Lord had to be exercised within the obedience “of the Lord,” or it would be rejected as “strange fire.”

*Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu  
took their censers,  
put fire in them and added incense;  
and they offered unauthorized fire  
before the LORD,  
contrary to his command.  
So fire came out from the presence of the LORD  
and consumed them,  
and they died before the LORD.*

*Leviticus 10:12, NIV*

Today, many sincere (but deceived) Christian leaders are seeking to do the same thing, offering strange fires before the Lord. But the offering of “progressive theologies” (the mixing of religious belief, politically correct doctrines, and other attempts to sneak under the back side of the Tent of Meeting without following the rules) is just as much as an abomination today as it was back then. Fires of man’s imagination, not of God’s initiation, will get us nowhere. Whenever I hear of another “strange fire” being offered to the Lord I am both humbled and thankful for the continued promise of God’s steadfast mercy which, in this day and age, triumphs over judgment (James 2:13b).

## Holy Smoke!

The psalmist writes, “May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice” (Psalm 141:2, NIV).

A wonderful, precisely measured mixture of incense (gum, resin, onycha, stacte, galbanum, and pure frankincense) burned within the golden grid of the Altar of Incense. The incense itself was to be “salted and pure and sacred” (Exodus 30:34-38). Its fragrance rose from the altar and filled the Holy Place with a mystical, other-worldly fragrance which, no doubt, permeated the curtains, veils,

and ceilings, indeed the very garments of the priests with rich, musky aromas.

We all know people who seem to always be in the Presence of the Lord. If they had their way they'd linger for hours in prayer, intercession, and abiding conversation with the Lord. There is something beautiful about them! They have, for lack of a better word, an attractive "fragrance" about them that simply cannot be hidden.

I think non-Christians - people living outside the white-linen walls of the Temple - can smell it too. They may not be able to articulate it as such, but they will recognize "something" about a person - a certain gentleness, a translucent countenance, a deep spiritual contentment. They can smell it with their spiritual sniffers.

*"Pray continually."*

*1 Thessalonians 5:17, NIV*

Paul says it like this: "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphant procession in Christ, and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the fragrance of death; to the other, the fragrance of life" (2 Corinthians 2:14-16, NIV).



*"And when he took the scroll,  
the four living beings  
and the twenty-four elders  
fell down before the Lamb.  
Each one had a harp,  
and they held gold bowls filled with incense,  
which are the prayers of God's people."*

*Revelation 5:8, NLT*

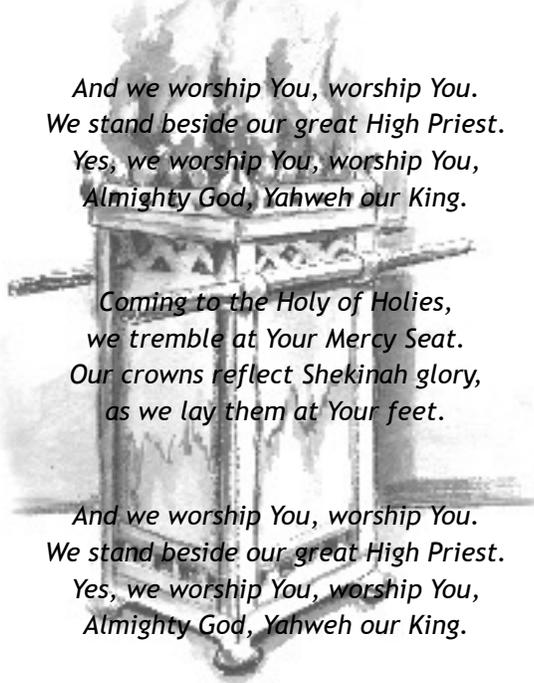
**AT THE THRONE OF GRACE**

*As we move into Your presence,  
we offer You a sacrifice of praise;  
knowing that our prayers like incense,  
will be received at the Throne of Grace.*

*And we worship You, worship You.  
We stand beside our great High Priest.  
Yes, we worship You, worship You,  
Almighty God, Yahweh our King.*

*Coming to the Holy of Holies,  
we tremble at Your Mercy Seat.  
Our crowns reflect Shekinah glory,  
as we lay them at Your feet.*

*And we worship You, worship You.  
We stand beside our great High Priest.  
Yes, we worship You, worship You,  
Almighty God, Yahweh our King.*



*How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O LORD Almighty!*

*My soul yearns, even faints,  
for the courts of the LORD;  
my heart and my flesh cry out  
for the living God.*

*Even the sparrow has found a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may have her young—  
a place near your altar,  
O LORD Almighty,  
my King and my God.*

*Blessed are those who dwell in your house;  
they are ever praising you.  
Selah*

*Better is one day in your courts  
than a thousand elsewhere;  
I would rather be a doorkeeper  
in the house of my God  
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.*

*Psalm 84:1-4,10, NIV*



## D. Summary of the Holy Place

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,  
and has made us to be a kingdom  
and priests to serve his God and Father—  
to him be glory and power for ever and ever!  
Amen.*

*Revelation 1:5b6, NIV*

We have experienced God's majesty in the Inner Courts, the glorious Golden Lampstand which illuminates the Light of Christ from the sculptured Vine; the crowned Table of Showbread which is an eternal memorial to the Living Bread of Life and the King of Kings; and the Father's fragrance which can only be known as one lingers in the Spirit and lifts up sweet prayers to God.

The Holy Place was a wonderful place to be. A priest could linger here, completely engaged with the mysteries surrounding him, and lose all track of time. This is where the priest served. This is where he performed his ministry. This is where he offered back everything that had been offered to him.

### Boldly Moving Ahead

The priests of old knew nothing beyond this point. At this time in the progression, it was commonplace for him to take a final glance at the Altar of Incense, turn away from the Table of Showbread, and revere the Golden Lampstand one last time before leaving the tranquil beauty of the Holy Place for the harsh, desert elements of the Outer Courts.

Yet there was another room, a deeper place of ministry, located just behind the Altar of Incense. It was called the Most Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies. Access to the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat was concealed by a magnificently decorated veil and reserved for the High Priest alone, and even then he could only

enter in once a year.

We know, of course, from Scripture, that is no longer true. The moment Christ was crucified, the veil of Herod's temple was torn in half: "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split" (Matthew 27:50-51, NIV). This supernatural tearing forever grants us (who are spiritual priests called by God to offer spiritual sacrifices) access to the Throne of God anytime of the day or night.

Hallelujah!

It's wonderful to know God doesn't take us this far just to turn us away. He likes us. He wants us, He beckons us to go deeper. The invitation to draw near to the Throne of Grace is ever extending, never ending. What a joy it is to know we are forever summoned to fellowship with Yahweh in the Courts of the King!

*Seeing then that we have a great High Priest  
who has passed through the heavens,  
Jesus the Son of God,  
let us hold fast our confession.  
For we do not have a High Priest  
who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,  
but was in all points tempted as we are,  
yet without sin.  
Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace,  
that we may obtain mercy and find grace  
to help in time of need.*

*Hebrews 4:14-16, NKJV*



*But you are a chosen people,  
a royal priesthood,  
a holy nation,  
a people belonging to God,  
that you may declare the praises of him  
who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

*1 Peter 2:9, NIV*



## The Holy of Holies

## V. The Holy of Holies

*“For the inside of the Tabernacle,  
make a special curtain of finely woven linen.  
Decorate it with blue, purple, and scarlet thread  
and with skillfully embroidered cherubim.  
Hang this curtain on gold hooks  
attached to four posts of acacia wood.  
Overlay the posts with gold, and set them in four silver bases.  
Hang the inner curtain from clasps,  
and put the Ark of the Covenant in the room behind it.  
This curtain will separate the Holy Place  
from the Most Holy Place.”*

*Exodus 26:31-33, NLT*

A second veil marked the division between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. It hung from 15 foot high gold-covered columns. The curtain was attached at the top with golden hooks. Slipping into this Most Holy Place was a sacred and hallowed event.

### Darkness

What’s striking about arriving at the Holy of Holies is that it was very *very dark*.

Remember, in this model, the closer one got to God the darker things became. The Holy Place was dark, yet it’s clay lamps bathed the room in a softly soothing light. Here, in the Most Holy Place, there was no natural light whatsoever. If not for the Presence of God, churning and burning on the Mercy Seat between the wings of the cherubim, this place would be pitch black.

This speaks to the unfathomable mystery of the Godhead. There is nothing earthly about Him. He is completely Other, enshrouded in darkness. (See Psalm 97:2.)

Earlier we noted that the Israelites were led by a pillar of cloud by day and a fiery pillar by night. It was here, in the Holy of Holies, where the base of the magnificent pillar of fire came to rest - ground zero for the *shekinah* cloud and God’s glory. From this point, between the golden wings on the seraphim, the pillar rose upwards through the tented ceiling and into the desert sky where it could be

seen for miles all around. That cloud, the lighted Presence of the Almighty, was “based” here, in the Most Holy Place and illuminated the atmosphere with a mysterious, other-worldly radiance.

The term “shekinah” isn’t a word you hear every day. The word itself is not even in Scripture. In its most basic definition, the “shekinah” is defined as the *living, lighted, fiery Presence of God*. It was his supernaturally illumined Presence, not unlike the phenomenon of Moses’ burning bush. “There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn’t burn up” (Exodus 3:2, NLT).

When God decided to move on, the cloud would leave this room and head out into the desert. Then, and only then, did the room become a hallow place, absent from the glory of God. This reminds us that we are a pilgrim people and yesterday’s glories...? Well, they are gone. I have often returned to places where God has met me in powerful ways, expecting him to knock me off my feet like the last time only to discover the only left there was a memory or a vague sentiment, just a hollow room. As God’s people we are a “people on the go.” We stay close to Great Shepherd’s feet as we travel from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:17-18), not looking back, nor trying to resurrect something that’s long been dead.

## Me, He, or We?

Entrance to the Holy of Holies signified an entirely new paradigm of ministry. Back in the Outer Courts, ministry was all about “me,” my sins covered with the Lamb’s blood, the cleansing he gives me through the water of the Word, my sanctification, healing, and so on. Here in the Holy Place, however, things have radically sifted. It is no longer me receiving his ministry, but him receiving mine through fellowship and intercession.

## To Be or Not to Be

The High Priest had access to the Holy of Holies once a year. While it was true that Moses was often found here, speaking with the Lord whenever he wanted, face to face, as a person speaks to a friend (Exodus 33:11), this place was for special occasions and it took significant liturgy to get here.

The holy liturgy from one end of the tabernacle to the other wasn't a walk in the park. It was a well-trodden path, a well-defined route of sacrificial time and commitment. In the truest sense of the phrase, *it was a sacrifice of praise*. In fact, from clothing himself in the morning, to performing the numerous duties throughout the temple (even to disrobing after returning home) everything was intentional about consecrating the whole of life to the ministry of Yahweh. This would have been especially true for the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. By the time he arrived at the Holy of Holies and, after a long day of blood, water, oil, bread, and fire, he would have been exhausted.

That's the beautiful thing about arriving in the Holy of Holies, everything is has been done and there's nothing else to do! Sin has been forgiven, cleansing has happened, wicks have been trimmed, lamps have been filled, bread has been replaced, fires have been maintained, prayers have risen. Here there is no more *work* to be done, no more ministry *to do*, no more responsibilities *to fulfill*, nothing else *to achieve*, no more *anything at all*. You might say, we have arrived at the Sabbath Rest of God. We are lingering in the Presence of the Great I AM. The only thing left to do is simply to "be still and know that he is God" (Psalm 46:10)



*Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven,  
and the same voice I had heard before  
spoke to me like a trumpet blast.  
The voice said,  
"Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this."  
And instantly I was in the Spirit,  
and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it.  
The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—  
like jasper and carnelian.  
And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow.  
Twenty-four thrones surrounded him,  
and twenty-four elders sat on them.  
They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads.  
From the throne came flashes of lightning  
and the rumble of thunder.  
And in front of the throne were seven torches with burning flames.  
This is the sevenfold Spirit of God.  
In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass,  
sparkling like crystal.*

*Revelation 4:16a, NLT*

## The Holy of Holies



*“Have the people make an Ark of acacia wood—  
a sacred chest 45 inches long, 27 inches wide, and 27 inches high.  
Overlay it inside and outside with pure gold,  
and run a molding of gold all around it.  
Cast four gold rings and attach them to its four feet,  
two rings on each side.  
Make poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with gold.  
Insert the poles into the rings at the sides of the Ark to carry it.  
These carrying poles must stay inside the rings;  
never remove them.  
When the Ark is finished,  
place inside it the stone tablets  
inscribed with the terms of the covenant,  
which I will give to you.*

*Exodus 25:1016, NLT*

# A. The Ark of the Covenant

*In the year that King Uzziah died,  
I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted,  
and the train of his robe filled the temple.*

*Isaiah 6:1, NIV*

Many of us are surprised to learn the golden box and angels with outstretched wings are actually two stations of ministry. The Ark of the Covenant is the box below with a lid with two angels atop called the Mercy Seat. Let's take a look at the Ark.

The Ark of the Covenant was a small box 4 feet long and 2½ feet across. Like the Table of Showbread and Altar of Incense, it was made of acacia wood, covered with hammered gold, and sported a royal "crown molding" around its rim, pointing again to Jesus being fully human and the King of Kings, fully God.

Inside the Ark were three objects: stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, (signifying the standards by which the *Father* judges His people), Aaron's rod which budded (signifying the miraculous ways God redeems His people through signs and wonders of the *Holy Spirit*), and a pot of manna, signifying *Jesus'* provision as the Bread of Life for His sojourners as they faithfully follow the cloud into the Promised Land.

These three objects speak strongly of the persons of the Holy Trinity: God as Lawgiver, Holy Spirit as Miracle Worker, and Jesus as the Living Manna and Bread of Life. All three have distinctly different roles and personalities; all three cloistered in One unified Embodiment and enthroned here, within the wood and gold walls of the Ark of the Covenant.

## Heavenly Echoes

I am continuously amazed at Moses' uncanny obedience to build the Tabernacle according "to the heavenly pattern."

I know he must have had questions about the blueprints. For example, "Why was it important to pierce the unleavened bread before baking?" Or, "Why was it

important to have two crown-like rims of gold around the perimeter of the Table of Showbread?” Or, “Why did You put the ugliest ministry station, the Altar of Sacrifice, right out there in the open for everyone to see as they came in through the Gate - and why did it have to be so gruesome?”

*See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.*

*Exodus 25:40, NIV*

In spite of the questions, Moses was obedient. Because of his obedience we, some 3,000 years later, can see Jesus in the details of the Tabernacle. I bless him for his obedience!

While there are prophetic and poignant illustrations of Jesus laced throughout the Tabernacle of Moses, perhaps the most interesting insight is that the blueprints of the Tabernacle reveal the scaled-down version of God’s Temple - the very Throne Room of heaven itself.

“Here is the main point: We have a High Priest who sat down in the place of honor beside the throne of the majestic God in heaven. There he ministers in the heavenly Tabernacle, the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands” (Hebrews 8:12, NLT).

Everything inside the Tabernacle of Moses is a scaled down duplicate of the “real deal” in heaven! For example, the Book of Revelation describes a *fiery crystal sea* before the Throne. The Tabernacle had a crystal-like sea called the “Brass Laver,” too. When the sun shone through its liquid and reflected off the mirrors, you can be sure that it resembled the crystal sea in heaven. The Book of Revelation details Jesus Christ, walking in the midst of the seven churches, encouraging and admonishing them as He passes from one flame to the next (Revelation 13). Likewise, the duties of the priest were to move from one lamp to the next, trimming and pruning wicks and “vine dressing” the burning lamps at the Golden Lampstand. In heaven, numerous angels and archangels proclaim “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come”

(Revelation 4:8b, NIV). Here, in the Holy of Holies we have two glorious angels, sculpted out of pure gold; wings stretched tip to tip and paying homage to the ever-burning, ever-churning Shekinah Presence of God, located on the Mercy Seat, between the wings of the cherubim.

*“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”*

*Revelation 4:11, NIV*

Everything about the Tabernacle of Moses, even down to the duties of the priests, revealed, "... a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven" (Hebrews 8:5a, NLT). That's why it was crucial for Moses to heed God's warning: "'Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain'" (Hebrews 8:5b, NLT).

Aren't you glad that Moses built the Temple according to the heavenly pattern? His deliberate obedience to God's will is still bearing fruit to us, hundreds of generations later.

## Our Promised Land

Like other ministry stations, the Ark of the Covenant had rings with long staves, or poles, to each side which remained intact so whenever God moved the Levites could shoulder the vessels and follow the cloud to the next place of rest.

Here we are reminded of God's prerogative to move the sheep (us) around as He pleases. Jesus is the Great Shepherd. Like the shepherd who goes ahead of his sheep seeking pastures filled with promise, God's plan is to get us there, safely and securely. He executes that plan with corresponding actions that cause us to move on when we see the cloud heading into the next desert plain. We are a people on the move.

God's mysterious ways can never be fully understood. We're just not wired to understand his Mind. He exists, if you will, in the realms of *faith*, without which it is impossible to please him (Hebrews 11:6). We just have to trust his leadership, knowing that all things work together for good for those who love him and are called according to his promises (Romans 8:28). At the end of the day, whether things are as they should be or we find ourselves in a desert place, we can be sure He is engineering everything to meet up with us at that glorious Day when we will all be gathered at the Promised Land for the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

## God in a Box

In the fictional film *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the Ark of the Covenant was coveted for its perceived power. The Nazi's sought to capture the ancient artifact because they thought having it would be like having a genie in a bottle or a magic wand that would grant them anything they wanted.

Biblical history notes the same regrettable error: the Ark of the Covenant was perceived by rival nations to be a supernatural “power-box” which could be used to conform to the power of its possessor. The nations didn’t realize the secret of the Israelite’s success had little to do with possessing the Ark and everything to do with continuing obedience to the God of the Ark.

All they knew was that the Hebrews were always victorious whenever they marched battle with the Ark, and they coveted that power. Under this misconception, we read about the sad story of the Philistines who stole the Ark from the Hebrews (1 Samuel 5). The Philistines had many pagan idols that were stored in a room. When they stole the Ark of the Covenant from the Hebrews they figured it was “just another god” and put it with their other gods, right next to an idol of Dagon (most likely a fertility god of harvest). Within a few days, Dagon had crashed to the floor with its head distanced from its body, not unlike Goliath’s head cut off by the sword of David.

Thing didn’t get any better for the Philistines. Possessing the Ark turned out to be holy chaos. They even got hemorrhoids and made golden statutes of their afflicted buttock’s in order to appease the Israelite deity! They wound up returning it for all the trouble it had caused. Nothing unholy can remain in the Presence of the Holy.

Our God is “His own God.” He has a personality, a will, and “a Life.” And He doesn’t like being misrepresented as “just another god.” or even as our “higher power.” When we try to put God in a box to fit our desires holy chaos erupts.

Likewise, when we seek to “use Him” to satisfy our own wills, desires, dreams, or prosperity we’ll get nothing but disappointment. While it is true that He gives us the desires of our hearts (but be careful here: see Romans 1:24) that is only a perk of our radical, sold-out obedience to His Lordship over our lives. Many have been guilty of using God as a magic wand, the one who will make me successful, the one who will bring me that perfect man or woman, or the one who will get me what I need. (It has been said, “God has made us in his own image and we have returned the favor.”) But this is all about Him: *His* will, *His* sovereignty, and the glorious destiny awaiting us, with *Him*.

## An Awesome Friend

The Holy of Holies was where the Judge and Maker of the Universe resided. It may

have even been a place of immense fear. A friend of mine used to say that being in the “fear of the Lord” was a “knee-knocking, trembling, hit-the-ground-with-your-face-in-the-sand-begging-for-mercy kind of experience.”

Here was the One who shook the heavens with His voice, stripped the bark off cedar trees in Lebanon *with His breath*; the One who laid bare the foundations of the earth simply with a blast of His nostrils (Psalm 18:15b). This is the One Who gave the earth a complete facelift in the days of Noah, opened a sea bed at the Exodus, and swallowed up thousands of his own redeemed children - men, women, and children - who worshipped the statue of a golden calf at the base of Mt. Sinai. His mere Presence shook the holy mountain and placed holy terror in the hearts of everyone who witnessed it.

If you saw Him, you’d die (Exodus 33:20).

This is where He resided, here, above the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. This is where he invited Moses to be His “friend” (Exodus 33:11).



*The LORD reigns;  
Let the peoples tremble!  
He dwells between the cherubim;  
Let the earth be moved!  
The LORD is great in Zion,  
And He is high above all the peoples.  
Let them praise Your great and awesome name—  
He is holy.*

*Psalm 99:13, NKJV*

**YOU ARE MY KING**

*In the beauty of Your holiness,  
and the splendor of Your majesty,  
in the glory of Your presence I bow.*

*In the beauty of Your holiness,  
and the splendor of Your majesty,  
in the glory of Your presence I bow  
and I sing:*

*You are my King;  
You are my King.  
And with everything I have  
I'll honor you.*

*You are my King;  
You are my King.  
And with everything I am  
I'll worship you.*

*You are my King.*





*“Then make the Ark’s cover  
—the place of atonement—  
from pure gold.*

*It must be 45 inches long and 27 inches wide.*

*Then make two cherubim from hammered gold,  
and place them on the two ends of the atonement cover.  
Mold the cherubim on each end of the atonement cover,  
making it all of one piece of gold.*

*The cherubim will face each other  
and look down on the atonement cover.*

*With their wings spread above it, they will protect it.*

*Place inside the Ark the stone tablets  
inscribed with the terms of the covenant,  
which I will give to you.*

*Then put the atonement cover on top of the Ark.*

*I will meet with you there  
and talk to you from above the atonement cover  
between the gold cherubim  
that hover over the Ark of the Covenant.*

*From there I will give you my commands for the people of Israel.”*

*Exodus 25:17-22, NLT*

## B. The Mercy Seat

*Keep me as the apple of your eye;  
hide me in the shadow of your wings*

*Psalm 17:8, NIV*

The Mercy Seat consisted of a lid, about an inch thick, which fit firmly within the crowned rim of the Ark of the Covenant. It had two sculptured angels on either side, their wingtips stretching across the center of the seat.

*"Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth."*

*Psalm 46:10, NIV*

While the Mercy Seat appeared to be three separate pieces (two angels atop a lid) it was built as "one piece" from one single piece of solid gold, a rich illustration of the Holy Trinity: one God, three Persons.

The Mercy Seat is, above all else, a *seat*. While I have found no Scriptures to indicate Moses actually used the Seat as a *seat*, the significance is no less diminished. The Mercy Seat was a seat, a place of mercy, a place of rest. It is a place for us to slow down and take a deep breath; a place to peacefully linger, get away from the hustle and bustle of the outside world and get some well-deserved peace and quiet. A place to be embraced by our Father. It is our Sabbath Rest, a place where all roles and expectations are safely discarded. It is a sacred space where we can be still and know that He is God.

*"Be still before the LORD,  
all mankind,  
because he has roused himself  
from his holy dwelling."*

*Zechariah 2:13, NIV*

The word mercy in Hebrew means to *stoop down*. When God is called upon to show mercy he is actually stooping down to where we are and coming along side us. This is a place where we can finally be safe and sound in the Father's mercy.

## The Power of Propitiation

Against the golden side of the Mercy Seat was a familiar site: a smudge mark of dried blood. There were similar smears of consecrated blood marking the sides of the Altar of Incense, Table of Showbread, and the other ministry stations, too. This smudging is not unlike the blood smeared across the arches and doorposts so the

angel of death would “pass over” the Hebrews’ home marked by the blood and is a poignant reminder that true worship can only happen through the Blood of the Lamb. Christ’s propitiatory actions at the Altar of Sacrifice (i.e., at the cross) makes way for us to worship his highness in the throne room.

The word “propitiation” is a theological term meaning to appease, to placate, and to make satisfaction before a holy God. God will one day judge both the living and dead. To arrive at judgement without the Lamb’s identification smudge on our foreheads would be spiritual suicide. Through Christ’s Blood, however, God’s wrath toward our sin has been rerouted to the One hanging on the cross and, thus, those who have received him by faith will know nothing but His amazing grace and mercy on that great and glorious Day.

The ancient story of the first Passover powerfully illustrates the power of blood, as the angel of death “passed over” (averted judgment) houses marked with the blood of lambs. “...when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on *you* to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:13b, NKJV). The blood acted as a *shield* of propitiation over God’s people.

When John Glenn, the first American to orbit Earth, began his descent in the *Mercury 6* capsule, everyone at mission control was glued to their headsets. There was much concern regarding the tremendous heat generated on the outside of the capsule at re-entry. Would the spacecraft make it through the hellish fire without disintegrating into fiery fragments?

As expected, communications “blacked out” between Canaveral and the falling fireball. During that eerie silence, the earth’s gravity pulled Glenn faster and faster through the atmosphere with tremendous velocity. It was, no doubt, a bumpy, heated ride for the space pioneer, but after a tension-filled period of radio silence, Glenn’s voice reemerged on the radio, bringing great sighs of relief to the folks at Canaveral.

“The propitiation shield is doing its work. I’m fine.”

This is an insightful example of propitiation. As we place our faith in Christ’s Blood, we are shielded from the fires of judgment. That’s where God’s mercy comes in. Through the power of the Passover Lamb, God’s mercy is both realized and appropriated. Thus, for Christians, an encounter with the Living God has more to do with His grace, love, and mercy and less to do with His Law, hatred of sin,

and its eternal judgment.

An encounter with God means to enter into the Sabbath Rest.

## The Art of Being

In my imagination I have seen Moses, frazzled and hassled by the tasks of the world, making a beeline past the Altar of Sacrifice and Laver, flipping up the curtain of the Tent of Meeting, buzzing by the Lampstand, Table and Altar of Incense, ducking through the veil and plopping down on the sandy ground, exhausted and strung-out, before the Ark and Mercy Seat - many, many times.

We can do that, too.

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16, NKJV). The Mercy Seat is the one place where we can get alone with God, rest in Him, and be fully known by the unconditional grace of the King.

This is so much easier said than done. We may struggle a bit, get antsy, feel the need to do something - *anything* - but we need to still ourselves and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10). He longs to embrace us with His compassion and mercy.

We would do well to incorporate this model into our personal spirituality. When we arrive at the Holy of Holies, we need to intentionally divest ourselves of our baggage (anything that breeds of fault, expectation, anxiety, or failure) and learn the age-old art: the art of *being*.

After all, we are human beings.

In this place, which is so saturated with the Spirit, let our words be few. Let our hearts overflow with gratefulness and awe-filled adoration. Let us receive the Love of our Father.



*Jeshua's clothing was filthy as he stood there before the angel.  
So the angel said to the others standing there,  
"Take off his filthy clothes."  
And turning to Jeshua he said,  
"See, I have taken away your sins,  
and now I am giving you these fine new clothes."*

*Then I said, "They should also place a clean turban on his head."  
So they put a clean priestly turban on his head  
and dressed him in new clothes  
while the angel of the LORD stood by.*

*Then the angel of the LORD spoke very solemnly to Jeshua and said,  
"This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies says:  
If you follow my ways and carefully serve me,  
then you will be given authority over my Temple and its courtyards.  
I will let you walk among these others standing here."*

*Zechariah 3:37, NLT*

**BE STILL**

*Be still, and know I am God.*

*Be still, and know I am God.*

*I will be exalted*

*in you;*

*in you.*

*Be still, and know I am God.*

*Be still, and know I am God.*

*I will be exalted*

*in you;*

*be still.*

*I will be exalted;*

*I will be exalted;*

*I will be exalted*

*in you;*

*in you.*

*Be still.*

*Be still.*

*Be still.*



## C. Summary of the Holy of Holies

*You have come to Mount Zion,  
to the city of the living God,  
the heavenly Jerusalem,  
and to countless thousands of angels in a joyful gathering.  
You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children,  
whose names are written in heaven.  
You have come to God himself,  
who is the judge over all things.  
You have come to the spirits of the righteous ones in heaven  
who have now been made perfect.*

*Hebrews 12:22-23, NLT*

The Holy of Holies was a place unequalled in royalty, mercy, and light. It was the physical dwelling, the tabernacle, of Yahweh - the place where Heaven and Earth swirled as one within the living Shekinah of God, a darkened place of mystery and revelation, righteousness and mercy, judgment and grace.

This is where He lived.

This is where He calls us to be.

## A Glorious Balance

Within the two places of ministry, the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat, the delicate balance of God's nature is revealed. The relationship with these two distinct areas of ministry are akin to the relationship between the Altar of Sacrifice and the Brass Laver. Though they are two distinct pieces of furniture, they work together as one.

The gold-plated wood of the Ark is balanced with the pure gold of the Seat, suggesting that Jesus and the Father are One, seamless and fitted within the other.

The Ark speaks to the Law; the Seat speaks to God's mercy. God's character includes both righteousness and mercy. Here is a glorious balance between the two covenants: the Old covenant of Law and the new covenant of mercy and grace.

The Ark of the Covenant speaks to God's standards of righteousness, holiness, Law, and judgment. The Mercy Seat, on the other hand, speaks to God's mercy, his accessibility, his amazing grace and compassion, his protection and shelter, his friendship and intimacy.

## "Holy, Holy" or "Pappa, Pappa"?

Knowing that you will "be" in the Holy of Holies is certain to cause a bit of anxiety. It comes with the knowledge that you will be standing before the massive, all-consuming, Living Fire of God who is both Almighty Lawgiver and Merciful Father; both your King and your papa, or "abba."

The word "abba" is more than just a Swedish band from the 70's. It is a barely definable term of endearment which combines the American "daddy," "father," "pappa," "needful sustainer," "protector," and "unconditional lover" all into one glorious word. Jesus prayed to the Father as such and told us to do the same (Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).

So, the question is, "When we pass through the veil and stand before God in the Holy of Holies do we say, 'Holy, holy, holy' or, 'Abba, abba, abba?'"

How does one posture him or herself within the Holy of Holies? Do we hit the dirt and join the glorious company of angels, casting our crowns before the glorious One seated between the wings of the cherubim and cry "Holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4)? Or do we bypass all the formalities, skip into the room, hop atop the Mercy Seat and into the arms of our Heavenly Father where we are safe and cry, "Abba, abba, abba?" Am I His loyal servant or His beloved child?

Short answer: **both**. He is both, and you are both. He is God *and* Abba; Almighty Father, Abba God, Father God, and Father Almighty - depending entirely on what the Holy Spirit is doing within your particular season of worship.

*"So he returned home to his father.  
And while he was still a long way off,  
his father saw him coming.  
Filled with love and compassion,  
he ran to his son,  
embraced him,  
and kissed him."*

*Luke 15:20, NLT*

That's why you'll sometimes see people reaching their hands up and others kneeling with tears of gratitude running down

their cheeks. It's all about what God is doing. In seasons of weariness you will cry, "Abba." In seasons of victory, strength, surrender and blessing you'll proclaim, "Holy."

We can't foreknow what will be revealed in the Most Holy Place until we have entered the Most Holy Place - it would be presumptuous to think we could. Like the song goes, "Come, now is the time to worship; come, now is the time to give your heart. Come, just as you are to worship; come, just as you are before your God, come." (*Come, Now is the Time to Worship*, Brian Doerkson.) The best we can do is to enter in without any expectations (other than the expectation to meet God) and see what happens.

## A Final Word

By now I hope that you have caught a glimpse of the progression through the Tabernacle of Moses. Beginning with the Altar of Sacrifice, each station builds upon another until the Holy of Holies - not unlike, beginning Sunday, each day of the week builds to the weekend.

I pray this material encourages you to flesh-out the progression in your walk with Christ. In my own experience, the Spirit has guided me all around the Tabernacle of Moses. Sometimes I am in one place for just a couple of hours. Other times, I am in the same place for months. Yet, I find comfort in my Shepherd King, who leads me around the Temple in His good timing. He knows what I need. He is Love. I have learned to trust the still, strong Voice.

Let's take a final look at where we have been:

- ❖ We have entered his courts with praise and thanksgiving at the Gate (Psalm 100).
- ❖ We have received forgiveness of sin at the Brass Altar of Sacrifice (Hebrews 10:19).
- ❖ We have been cleansed by His Word and Spirit of Truth at the Brass Laver (Hebrews 10:22).
- ❖ We have ministered unto the Father of Lights at the Golden Lampstand (James 1:17).

- ❖ We have ministered unto the Lord in sacred community at the Golden Table of Showbread (John 6:35).
- ❖ We have ministered unto the Spirit through prayer and intercession at the second altar, the Golden Altar of Incense (Revelation 5:8).
- ❖ We have worshiped His all-consuming majesty at the Golden Ark of the Covenant (John 1:14).
- ❖ And we have communed with our Heavenly Father at the Golden Mercy Seat (Luke 15:20).



*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,  
baptizing them  
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;  
and lo, I am with you always,  
even to the end of the age.”  
Amen.*

*Matthew 28:19-20, NKJV*



# VI. Living Paradigms: Doing Life Based on the Tabernacle

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,  
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

*Romans 12:2a, NIV*

Now that we have gotten familiar with the essential make-up and symbolism of the Tabernacle of Moses, we can begin to flesh this out by integrating its truths into our lives. When we overlay the truths and template found in the Tabernacle it opens up a whole new way of life. It can teach us how to pray, illustrate our place in the Body of Christ, and give us a deeper appreciation of Church.

There are two big ideas associated with the idea of Living Paradigms that we will explore further: “progression” and “filters,” or spectacles. Let’s take a look at the idea of progression.

Progression is *everywhere* in the Tabernacle of Moses: progression from the Outer Courts into the Inner Courts, progression from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place, progression from one ministry station to the next, and progression out from the Holy of Holies, back out through the temple, past the Gate, and back out into the world.

Our progressions can be described using words such as “Christian journey,” “earthly pilgrimage,” or “spiritual formation.” All are equally synonymous with this idea of *progression*.

While it’s tempting to think otherwise, I am not using the word “progression” in terms of upward spiritual mobility, though there is a place for that (Hebrews 5:12-14), but in the general sense of *movement*. In this model, arriving at the Holy of Holies is not the all in all, the end of the line, or the last rung on the theological ladder before hitting heaven. Each place of ministry of the temple has its own level of maturity built *within* it. Each station is an end in itself.

The idea of movement is essential to a healthy, growing Christian. It is natural to move from glory to glory with regard to our walks with God. It would be unnatural for a Christian to remain in the same place with the Lord for his or her entire life. One of the jobs of the Holy Spirit is to keep us naturally progressing into spiritual maturity.

So that is the first overarching idea to understand as we get into the devotions' side of this teaching. **Movement through the temple of life** is what we do. We are a pilgrim people, pausing here and there at the leading of the cloud, as we grow from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The other big idea has to do with integrating the temple, its symbols and truths, into life. If properly integrated the Tabernacle of Moses is a filter through which life can be fully enriched and more properly understood.

Recently I was at the beach with my wife. It was a pretty nice day. Sea gull were flapping, waves were rolling, and kids were building castles in the sand.

“Nice day,” I said.

She handed me her sunglasses. “You should see it through these.”

At once everything turned beautiful. Colors and hues I had never seen were now as clear as a bell. They were there all the time but I didn't have the “temple Ray Ban's” to see them. Overlapping life with the tabernacle is a lot like that. Once you get it in you, it's hard not to see anything else. That being said, using the Tabernacle as a filter is extremely beneficial in labeling and defining spiritual things as we “do life.”

I began doing this back in the 1980's and remain amazed by its deepening effect in my life today. I can honestly say that everything I do for the Lord - from prayer days, spiritual growth, the way I counsel and pray for others, the ordering of my work week, right down to how I create a song list for a worship event - the Tabernacle grid has by far been the most influential “lens” through which I have learned to define my relationship to the Lord and articulate my faith to others.

For example, the other night a young Chinese couple told me they had just received Christ. They were so happy and were glowing with the excitement of receiving God's forgiveness and grace. That sort of personal ministry happens in the Outer Courts at the Altar of Sacrifice and Brass Laver. As I listened I was able to fully empathize with them, responding with language and empathy that met them

“where they were.” As they shared how they came to Christ I could actually envision them dancing in the Outer Courts, filled with the joy of forgiveness and the refreshing waters of the Holy Spirit. We rejoiced in the Lord as if I was there right with them! It wasn’t difficult to see my two friends were very much enjoying the gift of Christ’s ministry found in the Outer Courts!

This morning our Pastor was preaching on the need to discover one’s ministry and get into service with the gifts of the Spirit. What was he doing? Using the template of the tabernacle he was inviting us to step out of the “me-centered” climate of the Outer Courts and into the darker, selfless areas of the Tent of Meeting where we can serve others and give glory to God.

That is the second overarching idea to understand as we get into the devotions’ side of this teaching: **The integration of the ancient temple as we do life.**

Now that we have our two bookends - **movement** and **integration** - let’s look at ways you can incorporate the tabernacle template into your walk with Christ.

# A. Spiritual Stuff

*So all of us who have had that veil removed  
can see and reflect the glory of the Lord.  
And the Lord—who is the Spirit—  
makes us more and more like him  
as we are changed into his glorious image.*

*2 Corinthians 3:18, NLT*

As a pastor, part of my job is to seek to pinpoint where people are in their faith and encourage them to press in, deeper in Christ. My Temple *Ray Ban*'s help me in identify where people are and where they are not.

A ballpark location of where people can be ascertained simply by listening to how a person prays. If the language by and large “me-centered,” I know I am speaking with someone who is in the Outer Courts. Thus, as our relationship grows, the Lord may provide an opportunity for me to encourage them to move into a deeper, integrated walk with Christ.

A person's words, especially how they pray, reveals where their heart is and where they are with God. Of course one can't decisively discern where a person is, you can get pretty close. Many American Christians tend to spend a lot of time in the Outer Courts. Much contemporary Christian music is also geared for Outer Court ministry as well. Listen to it sometime. Most of it sings about “my forgiveness,” “my Jesus,” or “what he has done for me.” This isn't necessarily a bad thing. The Outer Courts are necessary. It only becomes a bad thing when we choose to stay there.

Conversely, when a person uses language (or exhibits behavior) that is by and large “God-focused” and selfless, I know I am speaking with someone who has passed through the veil and is ministering somewhere in the Tent of Meeting. Most times people like this are healthy but there are some out there that are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. Some have been worshipping God, caught up in his holiness that they are actually avoiding confronting deeper issues which are only addressed and cleansed in the Outer Courts.

This is where striking a balance is essential. If I've ascertained a person is overly consumed in praising their Heavenly Father, to the neglect of obvious

personal issues, they can be shepherded back to the Laver.

(Weirdly enough, a lot of broken people are experts at avoiding their issues under a cloak of spirituality and “busy” worship.)

I find myself speaking to a person “years old in the Lord,” yet still consumed with the forgiveness of their sins, I’ll encourage them to get into some sort of ministry, something where they are out there serving others. I mean, it’s not as if they can never return to the Outer Courts!

We have all been called to progress from infant-hood to adulthood. Even after we are born again it is natural to move from milk to meat in Christ (Hebrews 5:11-6:3). As newborn babes in Christ we are much like infants, rightfully dependent upon others to meet our nourishment and needs. This is a very “me-centered,” Outer Court, season of life - and well it should be, as it is foundational for our adulthood. But if we refuse to grow up, we will become immature, perhaps even anemic. God desires that we grow into the fullness and knowledge of His Son.

Jesus told Peter, “When you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go” (John 21:18, NIV). As we follow Christ, we will naturally move in a progression from serving self to serving others as a way to glorify our King.

The Tabernacle can be a remarkable tool for identifying where people are in the faith and fostering balance with their walks with Christ.

## One’s “Office” of Ministry

Another pastoral insight falls in the category of helping articulate ones spiritual gifts and ones lifetime *office* of ministry.

The Church is composed of many members, each of whom has been endowed with a particular spiritual giftedness. In 1 Corinthians Paul says each of us has been given spiritual gifts. Each of us has been called into a particular ministry and is a vital part of the Body of Christ.

**You have all the gifts of the Spirit residing within you.** The most important gift is that of the Holy Spirit. He is THE gift from God. I would venture to say that every Christian has access to all the gifts of the Spirit. This this can be a real mind-

blower to a non-charismatic person to realize that he or she may bubble up the gift of tongues at some point! Yet, if the gifts of the Spirit are grounded within the Person of the Holy Spirit and his Spirit lives in us beginning with salvation then we can conclude that we carry the potential of having all the gifts of the Spirit (prophecy, administration, tongues, interpretation of tongues, mercy, discernment of spirits, teaching, compassion, miracles, and right on down the line) in us. God has the prerogative to pull any gift of the Spirit in any given situation as He deems fit, even if our theology states otherwise, or we have “never done that before.”

Once I was at the Baptist Center in Jerusalem for Saturday Shabbat services. Everyone was waiting on the Lord in hushed, reverential silence. The pastor had said he thought there was a prophetic word God wanted to share with us and invited us to wait in silence until it surfaced. In that holy hush my heart began to beat, quicker and quicker. I had the beginnings of a phrase but couldn't see the ending and I wasn't about to stand up and make a fool of myself. (Big man of faith there!) All the same, my heart pounded and poured and I knew that God wanted me to stand up and take a stab at it.

I was petrified. I had never done anything like that in my life and I for sure wasn't going to start then!

“You know that's not my gift, Lord.”

The silence got longer, more intense. It was like everyone was waiting for me, or so I thought. I resisted. It was way too amorphous for me step out in faith with it.

“Forget it.” I made the snap decision to remain seated.

Just then the man sitting next to me began to squirm around and wrestle in his chair.

“I've never done anything like this,” he said.

He then began to share and, while his words were different, the gist of what he was prophesying was precisely what was spinning around in my heart. I slumped in my chair. God still God his way, but I missed out on the blessing of being used by him.

I learned a life-long lesson that day. *God gives us the privilege of doing ministry.* If we take it, it's all the more edifying for us, if not, no big shakes. He

simply moves on and looks for someone who will be obedient to His gentle nudging. Either way, God's work advances, with or without us.

If the Holy Spirit lives with us (which he does) we can assume that we have accessibility to all the gifts (because all the gifts are in him) and, since he is our Lord (no argument there) he has the prerogative to use us in any way he'd like. He may dip into our hearts and pull out things that may surprise us, ways of presenting his kingdom or sharing words to others that we may have never imagined, be it for a single event, a season, or for our in life. It's all about what he needs done at any given time and the availability of his children.

**We are constantly in motion around the Temple.** God is always moving us around his Temple as for us, or for others, as he desires.

We all have our sweet spots, those places of ministry around the church. We know what we do, we've been doing it forever, that's the way we like it, and that's the way we've always done it.

But what would happen if the cloud was to ask you to go somewhere else, to do something different, or simply to stop for a season of rest?

There is only one you. And you have been fearfully and wonderfully made. You are the only "you" in the world and are uniquely blessed with your particular personality, sense of humor, conversion, and anointing. You are totally unique. And God has created other people who are sort of like you who, when they see you serving or hear you sharing the love of Jesus, resonate with that. You won't reach all people but there will be a few who, without you even trying, will follow you.

Before we look at this idea of movement around the temple I'd like to spend a paragraph or two reflecting on where you are today and your responsibility to really be there in body, mind, spirit, soul, geography, finances, and being.

We have the responsibility to be good stewards of the gifts God has given. If God has called us out as a teacher, a worship leader, a priest, or a person with a heart of missions we need to be there, all in, intentionally arranging our life's around that space. If your gift is hospitality, for example, why not kick it up a notch and enroll in a cooking class offered at a local community college. If your gift is teaching, why not read a book on how to creatively present information in the classroom? If your gift is healing, invest the \$500 and fly across the country to sit at the feet of an anointed man or woman of God for a week. Attend their conference, buy a couple of books, hang out with others who heal - that sort of thing. You get

the idea. In so doing, you will be cooperating with God matching what he is doing from above with how you are meeting him from within.

This is called fanning the flame. Paul writes to young Timothy, “This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:67, NLT).

As you invest in what he doing in your life God will take notice. He will give you more and more opportunities to use your gifts. If you are fruitful, really fruitful, you may find your self operating in the office of hospitality, the office of teaching, or the office of healing. In other words, when others see you they won't see you, but be drawn to your gifted-ship. You will become known as the gift you have been given.

For example, my friend Betty Tapscott has years and years of fruitful service in the area of healing. She is known by her office, as a healer. Billy Graham is an “evangelist.” His name has become synonymous with the spiritual gift God has given him. Another example of Francis Macnutt, Dennis Bennet, and so on down the line. It doesn't come easy. When you see a person in the sweet spot of their ministry, it didn't come easy for them. But they invested, worked, learned, and cooperated with the gifts that God gave them and but his grace they have arrived at their “office of ministry.”

What does this have to do with the Tabernacle of Moses? The stations of ministry in the temple provide identification and description with one's particular office of ministry. We each have a passion for a particular ministry station, a place where we love to linger. When you have found that, you can invest yourself into the symbols of that particular ministry station.

## Get Back to Where You Once Belonged

*How do I know the location of my spiritual office? Where is my station of ministry?*

One way to pinpoint the location of a person's spiritual office lies within the trajectory of their first significant encounter with Jesus. Think about that. Where were you when you first encountered the resurrected Christ? Inside? Outside? On a mission field? At a conference? Flash back to the smells, the music, those around you, the room. That's where you were born. And you were born there for good

reason.

Most people can pretty much pinpoint a time when God got real for them. There is something within that spot, something in that moment of conception that will forever carry your spiritual DNA and mark the trajectory of your life.

Sometimes we're wandering around in circles for our entire life and forget where and why we were even called into Christ. This is when we need to realign ourselves with his original purposes, to "re-member" who we are, and to get back to where it all began.

My friend, Doug, is a priest who is an *off-the-charts fanatic* with regard to the institution of the church (Episcopal). His library is filled with books on Sacramental theology and church history. When he's in church he is aglow with wonder as he moves around the altar, candles, incense, the bread and wine, and every inch of liturgy. One day I asked him about his first encounter with the Christ.

"How did it happen? Where did it happen?"

Without hesitation, he told me, his face once again recapturing the glow. He was in his twenties, floating around Germany doing nothing. By some random chain of events he found himself in a monstrous stone cathedral, in the midst of a "high church" service. He gazed at the stained glass windows, smelt the smoke of incense rising, and heard the chanting of the Eucharistic prayers. Although he didn't understand a thing that was being said it was his first experience with the glorious Presence of God. Jesus entered his heart that day as he received Communion.

Today, some thirty years later, Doug has stayed true to his heavenly calling. He is as a parish priest and Dean of a Seminary. He has chosen his life to rotate around his original call. One could say he is operating in his spiritual office. And, even though he is in Texas, thousands of miles from Germany and that old stone cathedral, he has never left it. Wherever he is and wherever God calls him he will always have one foot in that place, a wide-eyes wonder overcome with the presence of God in that far away country.

A more well-known "officer," Billy Graham. His first encounter with Christ happened at an evangelistic tent revival. It was all about getting saved, the power of the cross, and the need to repent and turn to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Sound familiar? Our brother has passed into heaven but everyone knows him as "evangelist." Throughout his entire life, nothing has changed. He is was always

there, rooted in that first encounter, ministering faithfully from the place he was called.

My first experience with the power of the Spirit happened while a praise band was on the stage and everyone around me were singing in tongues and praying for one another to be filled with the Spirit, healed, delivered, and blessed with the love of God. Nothing has changed. I may be here. I may be there. But I am still in the Quality Quartz Hotel and Convention Center with all the saints. You bet I'm still there? (And I've had to intentionally work to stay there.) Where else would I go?

How does this fit in with the temple? The spiritual office of my priest friend deals with the Sacramental nourishment of His people. From our reading earlier on, we've can see this is a direct link to the activities surrounding the Table of Showbread. This is his spot in the temple. Billy Graham's office was all about calling people out of their sin and repent of their sins by salvation through the Blood of Christ. What station of ministry would you think he spends most of his public life at? The Altar of Sacrifice. Sure, he may spend hours of personal time at other places in the temple, but his office is right there in the Outer Courts, inviting anyone and everyone to enter through the gates of heaven.

My particular office seems to be centered on sharing the Bible and praying for others to experience the power of the Holy Spirit. I love to see the Spirit healing, restoring, delivering, and setting people free - especially through praise and worship. That is where it all began for me. It's in my DNA. Why be someone I'm not? While I spend enormous amounts of time at the Altar of Incense, helping other glow brilliantly at the Golden Lampstand, or worshipping God alone with my guitar in before the Mercy Seat when it comes down to who God has called me to be, I am a real Laver Man.

I could go on and on, but you've gotten the picture. We all have life callings which correspond to a place of ministry as outlined in the Tabernacle of Moses and we have a responsibility to stay in those places (but see below) in the Grace of God.

**What about you?** At this time I invite you to take a moment to reflect on your own spiritual journey. Where did you begin? Where are you today? Are the activities you're doing related with your conception point? Do they look like the "place" of your first encounter with Christ?

If your ministry is within the trajectory of your conception point ask God to

God to show you a few ways you can continue the good work he began in you by “fanning into flame” activities, music, prayers, travel, and other forms of investment aligning yourself with your original call. On the other hand, perhaps you’ve realized that you’re publicly “kicking against the goads,” trying to make stuff happen that you were never anointed to do. If that’s the case ask God to move you back into a place where the realized passion of your first love can be used for His ministry. Be brave to discover the “good deposit” lying within you and then faithfully invest in the good work He has called you to do.

Every office is associated with a station of ministry in the Tabernacle of Moses but, just because we minister there publicly it doesn’t mean God want’s us there privately, as we’ll see later. We are a pilgrim people, remember. Nomads led by the Spirit Cloud until we reach the Promised Land.

## B. Being the Church

*“As you come to him, the living Stone  
– rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him –  
you also, like living stones,  
are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood,  
offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God  
through Jesus Christ.”*

*1 Peter 2:45, NIV*

As members of the Body of Christ, we are a living temple, the dwelling place of Christ on earth. When we gather there is a certain “templeness” about us which becomes evident as we do church.

Indeed, breaking it down to its smallest component, each one of us *individual* is also tabernacle, or temple, too. We are the sweet fragrance of Christ to the world (from spending time at the Altar of Incense). We have real awareness of the Lord’s judgement on earth as things get darker and darker. From where do we have this perspective? From our exposure to the fear of God found in the Holy of Holies. We are filled with the joy of salvation and stand in awe of the power of the blood, our freedom from sin, found at the Altar of Sacrifice. As I’ve alluded to previously throughout our lives the Lord leads us to visit and revisit various ministry stations in order to engineer His total work of redemption and holiness deeper into our hearts.

I am still in a place where God has cautioned me to watch my tongue. (I guess I didn’t get it right the first time!) In all I say I am intentional that my words are encouraging and edifying. Where so I place myself at the beginning of each day? At the Golden Lampstand, where I am trimmed back and, by God’s grace, my words will reflect the purity of the Vinedresser.

These are seasons of life. Times when God has you parked at a single place in the temple. This is like an office, but is more personal, designed for your intimate life with the Lord. For example, you may be in a season where you find yourself on intercession teams. All you did is eat, drink, and sleep prayer. Recognize that and receive it as what God is doing in you. Read books, invest, pray all the more, get around others who do the same. One day you may wake up only to find God wants to brought you into a place of deep refreshment in the Holy

Spirit for a new season of your life by leading you from the Altar of Incense to the Brass Laver. Who knows how long you'll be there! This movement of God's people moving around the stations of the living temple is natural and to be expected.

This phenomenon also occurs in the Body of Christ worldwide in church history. Through the ages the Holy Spirit highlights particular truths, particular aspects of God's character. For example, when the soldiers returned from WWII they were emotionally distant from their children. Their children (known as baby boomers) grew up without a knowledge of intimacy with their fathers. As the boomers grew into their adolescence and adulthood, there was an essential piece of Life missing in their hearts: that God is their *Father*.

In the years that followed it was no accident God showered the Body of Christ with assurance of his *Fatherhood*, the unconditional love and nonjudgemental transparency of the Gospel. I remember those days. It seemed everywhere books, conferences, songs, workshops - you name it - all had something to do with the Father's unconditional heart for His children and the spirit of adoption. Looking back on that era through temple *Ray Ban's* I'd say the cloud of the Spirit had the Body of Christ parked in the Presence of the Father, located at the Mercy Seat.

And so it goes.

## To Everything, "Turn, Turn, Turn"

In Ecclesiastes 3, we are reminded that seasons turn and weave their way through our lives. We are also reminded that there are *purposes* for the seasons of our life.

This idea of seasons is additionally highlighted in the denominational life of the Church. Within the Orthodox, Catholic, and most Protestant churches the annual calendar year is divided up into six sections, what we call church seasons: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Each liturgical season comes complete with its own colors, prayers, readings, music, and ecclesiastical protocol which symbolize the meaning behind the season.

Advent has a "preparation" theme and forces us to prepare for the Second Coming of the Lord. For a full four weeks, its royal colors of blue or purple, illustrate the priests who prepared to minister to God in the Holy Tent. Christmas is the arrival of Christ birth. (Contrary to culture, this season is twelve days long!) Its

color, white, speaks to the revelation of God's Shekinah Presence and Cloud, nestled between the wings of the cherubim at the Ark of the Covenant and Mercy Seat. Epiphany follows. Epiphany is all about "light" and is a time we consider the Light of Christ revealed to non-Jewish people. We're called to shine His light and this season challenges us to do that. Its color is green, like a "vine," to symbolize growth. Here we see most vividly in the glory of the Golden Lampstand. Lent is a forty day stretch of time which takes us through the Passion and Death of Christ. Here we are reminded of the tremendous cost it took to free us from our sin so we pick up our crosses to follow him. Lent's color is purple, for penitence. It's easy to see the Altar of Sacrifice is where we stay for 40 days, reflecting the horrific events leading up to the death God's Passover Lamb.

Easter follows with a fifty day celebration where we feast on the benefits of Christ's resurrection and enjoy fellowship with the risen King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Its color is white and can be affiliated with the feasting and fellowship at the Table of Showbread. Fifty days later, Pentecost celebrates the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 as the worldwide mission of Christ blasts off from the launchpad. The color for Pentecost Sunday is red, signifying fire and power, with the rest of the season turning to green, symbolizing our growth in the Spirit. The filling and experience of the Holy Spirit is evident in the waters filling the Brass Laver. It is also hinted within the pure-virgin olive oil in the clay lamps resting atop the vines of the Golden Lampstand. The call to go into the world and witness to others is to fill it with the sweet fragrance of Christ, which is a wonderful by-product of the prayers offered at the Altar of Incense.

So, you see, even in the church calendar we are ever moving, ever traveling around the next bend of our desert-journey with a steadiness and concentration that forces us to keep moving on in our faith and deeper in our spirituality. All this happens in the tabernacle of Christ.

## Personal Liturgical Calendar

Let's return to the elements of the Liturgical Year and look at them now from the perspective of our personal spiritual journey. How do our lives parallel the liturgical calendar?

Our journey begins with Advent, and the preparation of the heart to have Christ birthed within. We hear about Him, yet know Him not. At Christmas, we experience His birth and are born again in the nativity of our hearts. Epiphany

marks the point where the rays of the Christ child shine. God is revealed and grows in our hearts' home, the stable of our heart.

Lent gets us in touch with the sacrificial side of things. We align our spiritual deserts and wilderness experiences with Christ's determination who, "for the joy set before him endured the cross." Our eyes are set towards Jerusalem. In our baptism we have died and are raised as new creations in Christ at Easter and are filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, where we are empowered to live victorious lives in Christ.

When speaking about the personal implications of the Liturgical Year, my friend and discipler, the Mike Flynn says, "Don't get hung up on the right sequence. I was in Advent for thirty-one years and then had Christmas and Pentecost at the same time. A month later I had Good Friday, big time!"

Thus, the Liturgical Year safeguards us from becoming stagnant and produces a stable and well-balanced community of faith, something for which our culture desperately longs. It reminds us that we are a pilgrim people, a Bedouin tribe, moving its way across the desert, from one station of ministry to another, until safely arriving at our Promised Land.

## Sunday Morning Church

As an Anglican priest, I can say that we pride ourselves as being a liturgical church. That means that our order of worship is fairly predictable, covers the ministry of the Word (Scripture, teaching, and prayers) and the Eucharist (the ancient rite of Holy Communion). These liturgies were the structure of worship in the early church and have their roots in synagogue worship.

The word "liturgy" means "work of the people." As in the days when the priests had to sacrifice, trim, and fill, it takes a liturgical person real work to come before the Lord in service and worship.

Let's look at a normal Sunday.

On a normal day people enter into the Outer Courts in a vast array of dispositions. Some have been worshipping the Lord for hours with music and a good devotional book, some have had to change three diapers in a row, and some have walked into the place fuming at their spouse.

Wherever we are, we gather at the gate and we are reminded who God is, where he is, usually through an opening hymn or song. When we hear of God's love and his **sacrifice** for us it puts everything back into perspective, builds faith, and reminds us why we are there. We then hear the reading and preaching of the **water** of the Word. We affirm our belief in the Creed, confess our sins, receive absolution, and offer **prayers** to God. After the *Peace*, we turn a corner into the deeper mysteries of the tent. We light **candles** on the Altar and share **bread** and fellowship around Communion.

Sometimes, just after receiving the Eucharist I look out on the congregation and see some are captured in **awe** and **adoration** and caught up in God's **mercy**. I know they are worshipping in the Holy of Holies.

The components of our service are easily linked to the various ministry stations of the Tabernacle of Moses. We have the Outer Court ministries entering into His Gates with songs of praise and thanksgiving, and hearing the Word read and preached. In the liturgy of the Word, we are reminded of our redemption in Christ, we receive cleansing through the Word, and we are built up as the Body of Christ.

(In the 1928 Book of Common Prayer the service actually began with the Confession of Sin and Absolution, which is closer to the model of the Tabernacle than the current order of worship of the Episcopal Church. No matter. At least, by the end of the service, we would have been at all the stations of ministry.)

After the *Peace*, church changes. We pass through a veil, light candles, and head directly to the Table of Showbread (Holy Communion) and find ourselves on our knees before the Ark and Seat at the throne of grace.

The next time you go to church, I invite you to superimpose this template over your worship experience. Even if you worship in a free, non-liturgical format, you'll be able to overlay the blueprints of the Tabernacle of Moses with where you are in the service!

# C. Teach Us to Pray

*Once Jesus was in a certain place praying.  
As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said,  
“Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”*

*Luke 11:1, NLT*

We were made to have fellowship with God through conversation and pouring forth the cries of our hearts.

There are numerous models of prayer. The ACTS model (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication) is a wonderful way to pray on track, with a purpose.

Jesus Himself was a man of prayer. He woke early and got away from the campsite to have conversations with His Heavenly Father. When He'd return, He'd have new vision, renewed power, and a deeper sense of who He was and what He had been called to do. Once His disciples came to Him and asked Him how He prayed. The answer to that question is what we know today as “The Lord’s Prayer.”

## Prayer Daze

True confessions: I don't particularly like to pray. But I love being in relationship and walking in the Spirit with Jesus. Up until a few years ago I focused so intently on the “right words” and “prayer protocol” that the *living* part of it simply vanished. I just didn't get it. It was a real waste of time.

Since then I've discovered that prayer is simply the continuation of a lifelong conversation with God. It was a real game changer. Just like in any other relationship, it grows and takes its own ebb and flow, sometimes intense, other times just hanging out and sputtering spontaneous phrases. If I make a mistake or even express a human emotion (heaven forbid!), I can be sure he still hears me and relates to my every feeling.

Prayer is not communication with Go, but the means wherein we have foster relationship with him. In the past I had envied people who could pray all the right ways and say all the right things to the point that I was left so discouraged I didn't

even want to try. Now I have come to realize that, in their prayers, they are not concentrating so much on the prayers in and of themselves, but on the Person to whom the conversation is directed.

That being said, many of us need some sort of guide when we pray. Like a toddler learning to walk, we need a guiding hand to lead us around this big world called “the Kingdom of God.” Aside from the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:5-15), I know of no better blueprint for praying to God than the Tabernacle of Moses.

## Models

By now you are fairly well-versed in the progression and the meanings behind the seven ministry stations of the Tabernacle. Let’s have some fun and experiment with a couple of ways you can use it in your conversations with Jesus.

Each of us has been somewhere when you’ve been asked to pray. You stand speechless, like deer in the headlights. Yet if you have this template in your heart, the Spirit can pray through you with ease. See if you can identify each station of ministry in the following prayer:

*And forgive us our sins,  
as we have forgiven  
those who sin against us.*

*Matthew 6:12, NLT*

*We praise you, Lord, and enter your gates with thanksgiving this evening.  
We ask you would your glory. Amen*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise;  
give thanks to him  
and praise his name.*

*Psalm 100:4, NIV*

*nurture us through this food for*

Did you see what in my heart and gates, into the Showbread. Read it again and see how it went.

I did? I went through the temple the Spirit led me through the Holy Place, to the Table of

Or, perhaps you’ve been asked to open a Bible study with a prayer. See if you can spot the places of ministry as I pray:

*This evening, Lord, as we come to you to be cleansed by studying your holy Word,  
we ask that you’d forgive us our sins and wash away anything that would get in  
the way of us and you. We pray, Father, that your mercy would be poured out this  
evening as we sit at your feet. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.*

Again, let's take a closer look at that prayer. You brought us into the Outer Courts and made a bee line for the Laver, cleansing "by your holy Word," then you asked that God would forgive our sins. Where does that happen? At the Altar of Sacrifice. Finally you bypassed the Golden Lampstand and Table of Showbread and took us through the veil to the mercy seat, where we will sit at his feet. As a friend of mine is fond of saying, "Easy Peasy!"

I'll end this section with a prayer that includes a line from the symbolism found in each ministry station in the temple.

*Jesus we bless you for your forgiveness that washes white as snow. (Altar of Sacrifice and Brass Laver)*

*Would you invite us deeper into your presence? (through the first veil) that we may be nourished (Table of Showbread) by the light of your countenance (Golden Lampstand).*

*Hear our prayer (Altar of Incense), we ask you father. For you are the Almighty One (Ark of the Covenant) and we thank you for your mercy poured out to us this evening (Mercy Seat).*

*Amen.*

How did you do? Did you notice how the prayer model led us piece by piece into the Holy of Holies: from the Altar of Sacrifice right on to the Mercy Seat? If so, we're ready to move on. If not, go back and read through each line again, or better yet stop here and pull out a clean piece of paper and write your own prayer to the Lord. Don't get hung up on the order, or progression. For now try to make your language reflect the symbolism found in the seven stations of ministry.

## Jesus Take the Wheel

If we were praying the way we were made to pray, we wouldn't be praying at all. It The Spirit of God would be praying through us.

Paul says it best, "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit,

because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:26-27, NIV).

Once we set our feet in the Outer Courts the Holy Spirit will lead us into the areas that HE thinks we need to pray. We may have our lists, our models, or our liturgies but it is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to override our agenda and replace it with God's agenda. Amen? Thus, don't be surprised if you were headed to the Altar in Incense but the Spirit has you parked at the Laver. He knows what he's doing. Just go with it.

I take a monthly prayer day and, with this in mind, I have learned to free myself from any agenda I might bring into the temple. Of course, I always have a general idea of what I know I need to talk to God about. (I pray through the names of the people in my church, hot spots in the congregation, or for vision for a teaching series.) But the *timing*, order, wording, and how long I stay at any one place I resign to the Spirit. Knowing the rich symbolism and revelation of the Person of Christ within each ministry station has been extremely helpful in my spiritual conversations with him.

# VII. Through the Week

You may have noticed here are seven pieces of furniture in the Tabernacle of Moses and seven days in a week. This makes for a wonderful, enriching devotion.

Each day, the idea is to meditate on the significance of Christ found in that day's particular ministry station. On any particular day you simply decide to make everything you do, every conversation, every phone call, e-mail, text, or "down time" be wholly centered on the Messianic significance of the station of the day. Do this for a few years and it will revitalize your walk with God.

Here's what I mean:

You begin the week in the week in the Outer Courts: Mondays and Tuesdays are "me" days. Stay put at the Altar of Sacrifice all day Monday. People like to rush through this station because it's the hardest to look at: the crucified Christ. Get in touch with your sin and the tremendous price God paid for you to be free and forgiven. Appropriately apply the Blood of Christ to every depth of your heart: past, present, and future.

Tuesday is "Laver Day," a day solely devoted to the Word of God, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and the empowerment he gives to get into the rest of the temple (or the rest of the week). Rise early to spend time in the Word. Plan to attend a Bible study where the Living Word can work in you the mind of Christ. Seek prayer for yourself for those spiritual smudge marks revealed in the "looking glasses" of water. Ask the Holy Spirit to wash and cleanse, to fill and restore, and empower you to do anything He wants, to prepare you for ministry during the rest of the week.

You've just spend two days in the Outer Courts. Good for you! As the week progresses it's time to kick it up a notch.

Wednesdays through Fridays are "Holy Place" days. You may recall that the Holy Place is where we gather with others and minister unto the Lord. The progression doesn't matter here. The priests of old probably binged around the place in no particular order as well. For me, however, I gravitate to the Golden Lampstand on Wednesdays, then to the Table of Showbread on Thursdays, and wind up Friday on my knees praying at the Altar of Incense.

This works into even the most minute decisions of my day. If someone asks me to have lunch with them I'll see if they are free Thursday. Why? Because I know we'll have fellowship around food, and that's what happens in my weekly devotion. During that time, I will "be there, in the moment" with all the symbolism and nuance thereof, enjoying our time knowing God is there in the midst of us. food and significant conversation over bread. I don't get legalistic about it. Heck, the Spirit may lead me all around the temple a few times a day. It does present a nice trajectory of devotion. By the time Friday comes along I am intentionally asking others how I can be praying for them.

By Saturday and Sunday I have worked through the stations and can kick back and simply "be" in the Holy of Holies with God. I have passed through the veil into the Sabbath Rest, a place to enjoy the Presence of God and find comfort in His all-loving companionship. I play. I enjoy who he has made me to be. It's a great space just to "be" with my Heavenly Father. Sunday comes along and it's more of the same - Mercy! As it is impossible to separate the Ark from the Seat I tend to see Saturday as more of a "Daddy Day" and Sunday as more of a "Holy Day" where I find God "tabernacling" within the white linen robes of the saints at church, where He is worshipped in the splendor of His majesty.

Monday comes around and thee I am at the beginning of the progression again, expectant to meet Jesus every day of the coming week with joy and deep symbolism. Try it for a week. You will be blessed. Take them one day at a time and allow the Lord to speak to you through the devotional template of the Tabernacle of Moses.

In the following pages of this book I give you an outline how you can work through your week. May God use it to bring you ever deeper into this glory.

## Opening Prayer for Your Weekly Devotion

Start each day with a prayer.

*I enter into Your Gates this day  
in praise that You will meet me in my desert.*

*Forgive,*

*cleanse,*

*fill,*

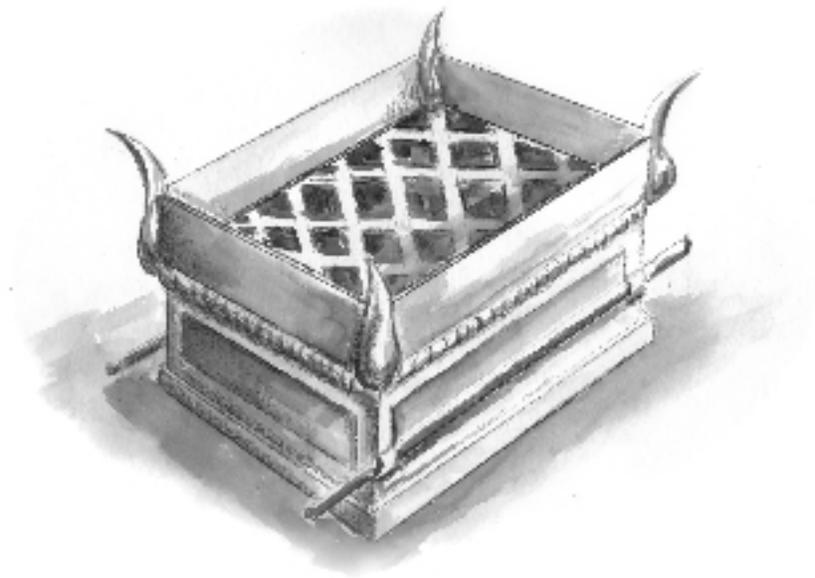
*illumine,*

*nourish,*

*and hear my prayer;*

*I adore You, my Merciful God,  
and worship You for ever and ever. Amen.*

A. Monday  
| Outer Courts |  
The Altar of Sacrifice



My Prayer for You This Day

*As you awaken,  
I pray the Holy Spirit  
would bring you into His Gate with thanksgiving  
and into His courts with praise!  
Rise and rejoice -  
for He has been waiting for you!*

*As you approach the place of the Cross -*

*a place where you will be  
both confronted and comforted  
by the Lamb who was slain  
from the foundation of the world -  
I pray you would understand  
both God's judgment upon the horrific nature of your sin  
and - in that same instant -  
the unending reservoir  
of grace and forgiveness,  
flowing forth from the generous heart of Calvary,  
into the hearts of all who call upon the Name of the Lord.*

*I ask God also to free you  
from all manner of bondage, behavior, and resentments -  
through which,  
if either entertained or encouraged,  
would further enslave you from perfect freedom.  
By the power of the Cross,  
and the Blood which was shed at Calvary,  
be severed from all cords of sin and death,  
in Jesus' Name.*

*Finally, I pray that,  
as you receive God's forgiveness and deliverance  
into the barren places of your heart,  
you would also arise  
with the grace to extend forgiveness  
to those who have caused you pain,  
to those who have pierced your side with their actions  
and have hammered your wrists and feet  
with all manner of false accusations  
and judgment.*

*In the Name and power  
of the Blood of the Lamb.  
Amen.*

## Themes

Today's themes speak firstly to the entrance rites of praise and thanksgiving, then to the themes of Christ's sacrifice and personal forgiveness.

## Readings

Psalm 100:4	Isaiah 53:46	Mark 15:33-39	Colossians 1:13
Psalm 84	Psalm 51:15, 14-17	Galatians 3:13,14	Colossians 2:13-15
John 10:9	Hebrews 9:19-28	1 Peter 2:24	
1 Peter 2:15	Philippians 2:68	Romans 6:23	

## Guidance

Awaken with the excitement of meeting God. You know the end of the story: unconditional love and fellowship waiting for you in the Holy of Holies. But you are not there yet. Sure, there are some steps to take, some ministry to do before you arrive; all in due time. For now, be content to enter through the Gate with a season of simple, heartfelt, thanksgiving, thanksgiving for His attributes and for the marvelous things He has done.

As you move deeper into the Outer Courts, approach the Altar of Sacrifice with reverence and intent. Imagine yourself offering an animal to the High Priest for your sin and the sin of your family. Hear - really *hear* - its bleating cries as its throat is slit and it is slaughtered and thrown on the fiery flaming grid. Jump ahead thousands of years and see yourself at the foot of the Cross, the blazing heat of the noonday crucifixion. Hear the hammering of nails and the cries of the Son of God in your stead. Receive your forgiveness.

Are there any current issues of sin you're struggling with? If so, ask Him to forgive you with the all-sufficient Blood of Christ. Rediscover your need for a savior, reclaim the promise of propitiation, and praise God for the sweet forgiveness that covers all your sin.

If you are like me, you will have a couple of areas that you know will need to be brought to the Cross. Yet, I invite you to still your heart and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the items about which He wishes to speak. You may be surprised. We tend to confess behavior to God, but He looks deeper than that. By giving Him free rein

over our heart's terrain, He will bypass the behavior and reveal the underlying issues of our hearts.

As you kneel beneath the Cross and gaze upon the Passover Lamb of God consider, "What sins are currently between the Lord and me? What areas in my life (from my thoughts to my relationships) might I need to invoke the Blood of Christ?" Confess your sins and be assured of God's forgiveness.

Throughout the entire day, intentionally recall the tremendous cost of your sure redemption. Walk in humility and gratitude. It has been said, this forgiveness is free to us, but it cost him everything. Be humbly mindful of that. In all you do today, choose to carry the attitude of gratitude. Revel in his amazing grace. You may want to fast, showing God that you are sincerely grieved over your sin with a humble and contrite spirit.

The Spirit may surface opportunities today for you to forgive, or be forgiven by, others. Walk intentionally into these opportunities, knowing they have been orchestrated by the High Priest, Jesus Christ, here, at the Altar of Sacrifice.

B. Tuesday  
| Outer Courts |  
The Brass Laver



My Prayer for You This Day

*I pray this day,  
that your heart would be filled with rejoicing and delight  
because of the wonderful work*

*the Father has bestowed upon you  
through the Holy Spirit!  
I pray today  
He would nurture and mature you in Christ,  
through His Living Word;  
and that,  
as you set yourself down  
to read, study, and inwardly digest the pages of Scripture,  
you would be refreshed, cleansed,  
and sanctified in your heart, mind, and soul  
by Jesus, who is the Living Water.*

*I also pray that God would wash you anew  
through the power of the Holy Spirit;  
that you would be filled  
with all might and spiritual authority  
to do the work He has given you to do.*

*I pray that  
He would fall upon you - even now -  
and bless you with the gifts  
you have so longed for and desired.*

*Finally, I pray He would empower you  
to walk in the fullness of the Spirit,  
and you, at the end of this day,  
would be enthused, encouraged, and empowered  
for the work of your ministry.*

*In the power of His Name.*

*Amen*

## Themes

Today's theme centers on sanctification and empowerment. Cleansing, anointing, purification, the mind of Christ, and spiritual refreshment are given through the Holy Spirit and Scripture.

## Readings

Acts 2:37-38

Psalm 24:36

Isaiah 1:16-18

Psalm 51:6-13

Revelation 22:15

Psalm 51:2

1 Corinthians 2:10

Titus 3:47

1 Peter 3:18-22

John 4:10-14

Ephesians 5:25b-27

1 John 5:68

John 7:37-39

Ephesians 5:18

James 1:21-25

Malachi 3:14

John 15:3

Romans 5:5

## Guidance

Today can take many directions. You've been forgiven (yesterday) and today is about the wonderful things that happen as you get before the Word of God. Make the Word be the focus of this day. Read Scripture in a richer manner, allowing the Lord to take every word to the depths of your soul. As you pray through the day, pay particular attention to the Word in songs, verses on your day-timer or calendar; make a point to listen to a pod cast of an esteemed Bible teacher or preacher - all with the understanding that the Holy Spirit will cleanse, wash, and anoint you as your medium of choice reflects your soul through the Living Water.

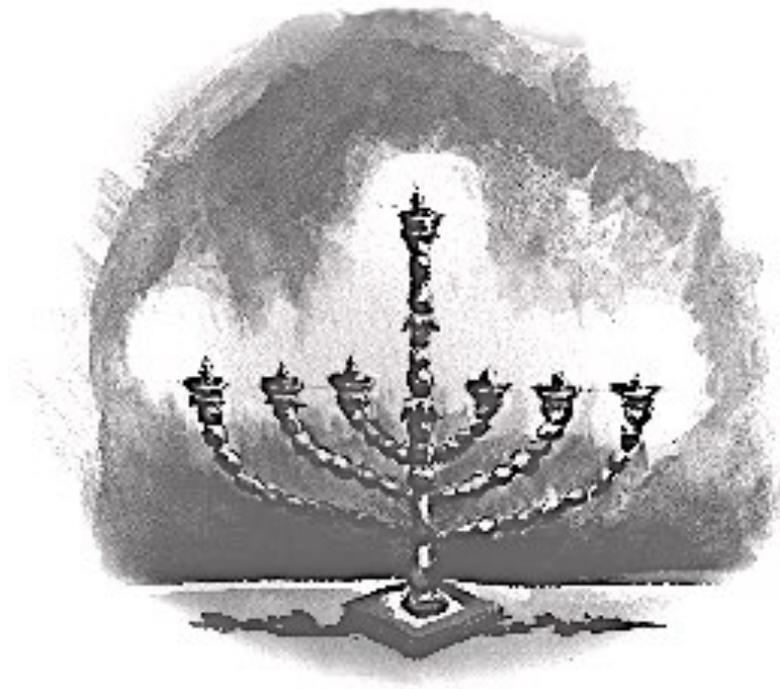
Take some time in the afternoon to get alone with God. Ask Him to pour out the love of the Father through the Holy Spirit throughout your heart (Romans 5:5). As He does this, it won't be long before you will see the reflection of your heart's impurity in the reflection of His Word. Go with it. It may be ugly at first, but as these hurtful memories, experiences, or other events surface, He will at once heal you with the Living Water! (Those things aren't worth holding onto anyway, as they have the potential to breed judgment, bitterness, and even physical infirmities in the future.)

What happens in the Outer Courts on Monday and Tuesday will give you everything you need to move deeper into the "tents of the righteous" for the rest of the week.

Seek to avoid the temptation to wallow in past failures or sin. You received God's wonderful forgiveness yesterday for that. Today, however, you are a new creation in Christ. Old things have passed and everything has become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Rush to the streams of life and be cleansed from the residue of the old life. Those same shortcomings may surface here at the Laver, yet with an entirely different purpose. Yesterday they were forgiven; today they will be healed.

Bring to Him your very being (i.e., thoughts, motives, patterns of behavior, addictions, etc.) which, up to now has remained a stench in your tomb, before the stone was gloriously rolled away.

C. Wednesday  
| Inner Courts |  
The Gold Lampstand



My Prayer for You This Day

*Father, You have called us  
to burn as one body with You  
that the world would be filled  
with the light of Your glorious majesty.*

*As we arise this day,  
we pray You would enable us to shine like stars  
in the midst of this crooked and corrupt generation.  
Trim us to Your purity,  
polish us to Your righteousness,  
and fill us with a unified witness of the Living Vine,  
for the entire world to see.*

*We also ask that You would fill our hearts  
to burn with Your holy prerogative,  
Your missionary desire  
to advance Your ministry into the darkest corners of the earth.  
Give us prophetic clarity in how we can best  
serve the efforts of others in their ministry;  
how we can best assist those You have called  
into public service.*

*You are the Light of the World.  
Amen.*

## Themes

The themes for the rest of the week switch from *receiving* ministry to ministry *flowing forth from you*. You will experience fulfillment, of course, in the doing of ministry, but the central motivation of it all will be for Someone else.

Today's themes are centered on the things that need to happen so ministry can happen. This is "behind the scenes" ministry at its best.

## Readings

Isaiah 4:26

Revelation 1:12-20

John 15:15, 8, 12, 16

John 8:12

1 Peter 2:9

Matthew 5:14-16

Psalm 18:28

Acts 2:14

Ephesians 4:16, 11-16

Acts 6:17

John 17:20-26

## Guidance

Welcome to the Inner Courts! Today you'll be standing before a beautifully sculpted piece of gold that shines forth with the very radiance of Heaven. In all you do, revel in His majesty and radiate the Light of Christ.

Be looking for the Light of Christ in people everywhere you go. Observe carefully; it may not be so evident at first! And be aware that, in turn, you too may become a light to those you meet today. Live into that role. In every "darkened tent" seek and reveal Truth, allowing nothing deceitful or shadowy to happen in or around your presence.

As you awaken enter through the Gate with grateful thanksgiving. You'll pass the Altar of Sacrifice and Brass Laver and thank the Lord for what He did there on yesterday and the day before. Slip through the veil into mystery before His ever-searching, ever-revealing, ever-illuminating light. Allow His Spirit to penetrate your darkness. Let the lamp of His eye search you and know you, completely and deeply. Gaze in holy wonder at His splendor and holiness. Become transformed from glory to glory as you dare to stare into His eyes of fire.

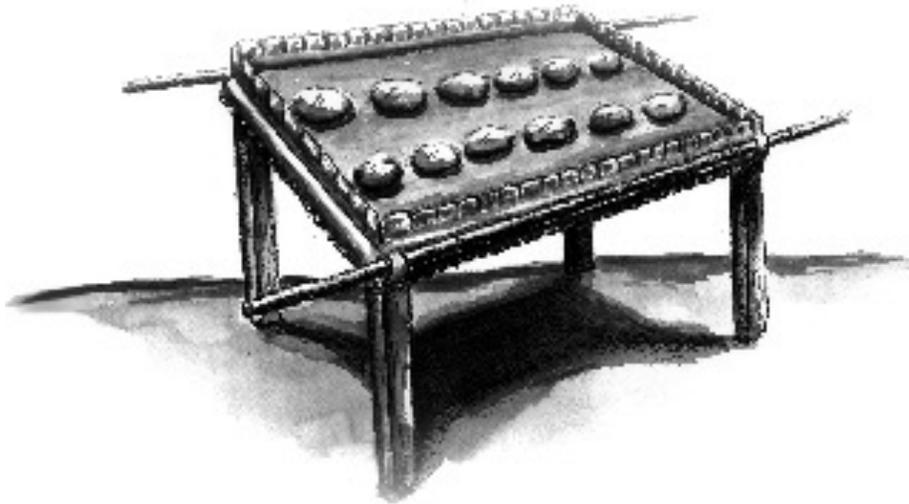
As you get into the day seek to participate in activities that will further Christ's ministry. This is a great day to stay behind the scenes, setting things up for God's kingdom to shine forth. For example, if you are engaged in administrative tasks for a Bible study, the scheduling of a worship band, programming a youth retreat, or the crunching of numbers for the church, be diligent about the work to the "nth" degree, knowing your work will bring about events wherein others will bring glory to His Name. Shine light into every corner; leave no stone unturned. God has anointed you to create light under which His ministry can happen.

God may give you uncanny insight as to whom you could ask to participate in a current project you're working on. He will show you their potential and equip you with whatever it takes to make them a team player. Likewise, there may be a person on the team who is not on the same page as the rest of the crew. Today may be your day to speak the truth in love, and redefine the parameters of the original call.

As you get into the afternoon or evening, a curious thing may happen: you may find the master Vinedresser trimming your wick. In that vein, regard any hardships or frustrations of the day simply as the "discipline of the Lord," knowing that His pulling and clipping is all about your loving Father affirming your gifts. He

loves to see His passion burn through you and does all He can to make you shine as you were created to do.

D. Thursday  
| Inner Courts |  
The Gold Table of Showbread



My Prayer for You This Day

*Lord God,  
as we arrive at the Table of Showbread,  
we are, this day,  
again reminded of the mystery,  
“Christ in us.”  
As we gaze upon the pita,  
we remember  
the One who was baked and pierced for our transgressions;  
and we are reminded  
that we are actual members of that same Body.*

*Holy Spirit,  
we ask that You would  
create “divine appointments” with others,  
that our conversations  
would reach deep into hearts  
and be nurtured by the Living Manna,  
Jesus Christ.  
In the mystery of the Word made flesh,  
change our water into wine,  
and speak to the Body of Christ  
through the Body of Christ.  
  
In the Name of the Bread of Life.  
Amen.*

## Themes

Today’s themes are all about ministering to God through the provision of nourishment to others: Holy Communion and the joy of fellowship with the Beloved.

## Readings

Psalm 23:56

John 4:31-38

Zechariah 12:10,11

John 6:30-35

Hebrews 10:23-25

John 19:32-37

Matthew 26:26-30

Psalm 133

1 Corinthians 11:23-33

Zechariah 13:6

## Guidance

Are you ready for some “soul food”? If so, today is your day!

Today is the day in the week where you will want to keep your antennae up attending anything “social,” especially with other Christians. In conversations, you’ll want to give yourself permission to share on a deeper level, and listen more deeply, too. Choose your words carefully. Be intent to reveal a bit more than is seen on the surface, assured that God will take your words and use them to nurture

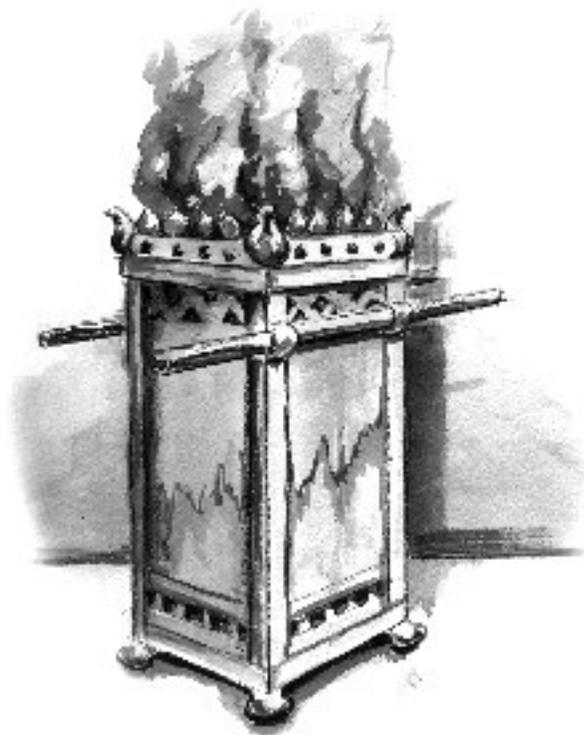
others as their words are nurturing you. The Body of Christ is a mystical conglomeration of individual souls. God uses the Body to nourish the Body; He speaks to us through us, through the Body. Expect that to happen.

When I have the opportunity to have coffee, lunch, or schedule a meeting on a Thursday I immediately go for it, even if it involves considerable sacrifice. I simply choose to know God will be there. During our time, God always changes the water of our conversation into wine. Even a breakfast at IHOP can be transformed into a God-ordained nurturing station for body, mind, and soul (Can anyone say, “manna hotcakes?”) and I always enjoy the bread of fellowship, even with children. All believers in Jesus are mysteriously united in the Bread of Life (who was pierced for our transgressions, baked through crucifixion, and raised as the Light of the World). It is through his gift that true fellowship happens.

Throughout today be on the lookout for other themes that may run common through different people. As mentioned, God often speaks *through* us, *to* us; just another wonderful thing that happens as we minister to the Living Manna.

Finally, why not cap off the day by celebrating Holy Communion? Or invite some folks over for dinner? At the end of the night, you’ll drop into bed nourished, and having nourished others, with the Living Manna.

E. Friday  
| Inner Courts |  
The Golden  
Altar of Incense



My Prayer for You This Day

*Heavenly Father,  
we consecrate ourselves to You this day  
as a sacrifice of prayer and intercession  
unto the almighty throne of grace.  
We ask You the same question that Your disciples asked You:  
“Teach us to pray.”  
Fill us with Your Spirit that we may know how to pray;*

*that we would lift up prayers and petitions unto You;  
not according to our will, but in accordance to Your holy will.*

*We ask specifically,  
that You would create for us a special, intimate time with You,  
sometime during this day  
- a time of Your own choosing -  
where we would hear You say,  
“come away from the hustle and bustle of the day  
and spend a few precious moments with Me,  
lifting up holy hands in the temple of the Lord.”*

*Speak with us,  
share Your desires,  
lay Your dreams upon our hearts.  
As we receive them,  
we will bless them  
and offer them back  
as a sweet fragrance unto You.*

*Fashion us, O Lord, this day,  
to be a house of prayer.  
Amen.*

## Themes

The themes of this most humble, second Altar deal with prayers, intercessions, and meditation within intimate conversation with God.

## Readings

Isaiah 56:67

Luke 19:46a

Revelation 8:35

Romans 8:26,27

Psalm 141:2

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Luke 11:24

Hebrews 4:14-16

Ephesians 1:15-19a

Ephesians 3:14-19

## Guidance

You have arrived at the third and final ministry station of the Tent of Meeting, or the Holt Place. It's a tremendous privilege and responsibility to spend a full day in prayer.

As you dress for this day be reminded that, while this is the smallest station in the Tabernacle, it is perhaps the most significant. The Altar of Incense is as close as one can get to the Ark of the Covenant without passing through the veil. It is dearest to the heart of the Father.

You may want to consider fasting for a meal or two today. (Devout Catholics routinely fast from eating meat on Fridays.) Take the time you'd ordinarily spend eating and use it instead to talk with God. If you are like me, you will NOT find these times particularly rewarding but afterward it will bear fruit, and in the days to come you will learn to live for these precious times of prayer.

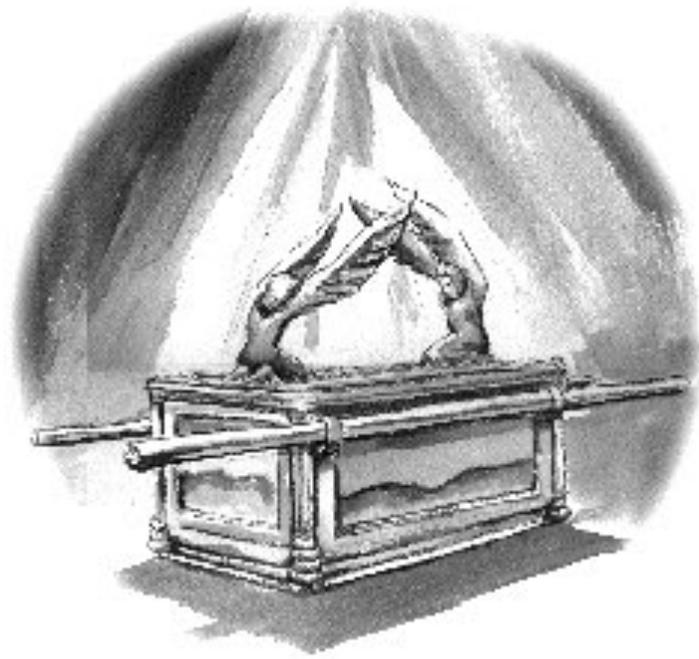
Before leaving the house ask the Lord for a couple of things to "carry about" with you through the day. The High Priests wore a breastplate of twelve precious stones on their chests, one stone for each tribe of Israel, symbolizing their constant intercession for those tribes before their Lord in everything they did (Exodus 28:15-21 and 29-30). It hung from their shoulders across their hearts. Perhaps your stones may be your family, your neighbors, or even a country in the world. Through out the day, be alert as the impressions come and be faithful to lift your "precious stones" to the Lord. Understand that the Spirit is praying through you, moving you through the stones at his speed, intensity, and at his good pleasure. At the end of the day, you might consider calling the people of your prayers and asking them how their day went!

To some, the idea of taking a prayer day is idyllic. It's perceived as a "day off" where you simply linger in the sweetness of God and the two of you enjoy fellowship and sit with each other admiring each other's beauty. But that is rarely true. I have taken many "prayer days" and have found them to be emotionally dry, hard to do, and not a lot of fun. While there *are* times of sweetness and admiration true intercession happens when God takes his heart for a person, place, or situation, even down to the emotions of his heart with regard to those, and superimposes it upon the heart of the intercessor which can be a difficult, even painful experience. Your compassion will rise. You may cry for no "known" reason (Romans 8:26), become filled with a righteous anger, or be physically pained in your body. Prayer on this level is a gift from God. I have found using my prayer

language to be helpful in these times of deep intercession.

Through it all remain humble, attuned, continually yielding to what He has given you and His specific ways of praying. Remember: His ways are not your ways. You may question how He is calling you to pray for a situation but pray on anyway, lifting up your hands sacrificially unto the Lord. When you do this your prayers will be powerful and effective (James 5:16b). They will rise like incense before the throne of grace and He will be pleased!

F. Saturday  
| Holy of Holies |  
The Ark of the Covenant



My Prayer for You This Day

*You are wholly glorious,  
O King of the Ages,  
and worthy of all praise and adoration.  
Indeed, eternity itself humbles itself  
before Your all-consuming throne.*

*Your temple is filled  
with the festive company of mortals,  
angels, and archangels,  
day and night, crying unto You:  
“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.*

*Heaven and earth are full of Your glory!”  
Your majesty reflects from the crowns at Your feet.  
Flashes of lightening and deafening thunder  
are shadowed by the One shrouded in blinding light.  
Living rainbows surround You  
and embrace You with the favor of Creation.  
As creation breathes, “Holy is He!”  
As creation plays, “Holy is He!”  
As creation whispers, “Holy is He!”  
As creation is silent, “Holy is He!”  
As creation waits, “Holy is He!”  
As creation loves, “Holy is He!”  
As creation lives this day, “Holy is He!”*

## Themes

Today’s theme speaks to righteousness, justice, majesty, and omnipresence found in God Almighty. He is robed with the universe and enthroned in eternity as the Judge and Creator of all that is seen and unseen and yet He has opened the curtain and wishes to enjoy you, and the pleasure of *your* presence, all day long.

## Readings

Isaiah 6:18

Revelation 5:6-14

Hebrews 12:12,18-24

Revelation 4:1-11

Hebrews 10:12-13

Isaiah 37:16

## Guidance

It’s Saturday; welcome home! Although you’ve entered the darkest, most celestial part of the tabernacle, it is also the brightest. You have arrived before the Shekinah-lit Presence of Almighty God.

If it were not for the smear of atonement blood on the Ark of your heart, this could be a place of horror, fear, and judgment. But remember where you’ve been through the week. You have already been marked and sealed with the redemptive Blood of Christ (in the Outer Courts). Perfect love casts out all fear. By virtue of the blood and water you now have access to the Eternal Throne of God.

He sees you as a son or daughter and has longed for this day all week. To Him, it's a "Happy Father's Day!" - a marvelous day when you can kick back and enjoy the unique friendship with the Omnipotent God of Time and Space *and* your Heavenly Daddy, both within the same Person at the same time.

This can be an unnerving place to be, caught within the fearsome knee-knocking awesomeness of the Almighty and loving arms of your heavenly father. Here you are sharing your dreams of the future and he gently taps you on the shoulder, reminding you that He is the One who placed those dreams in your heart in the first place.

Or... just after you've shared with him something you've never shared with anyone else in the whole wide world you suddenly realize that, as God, he already knows your every thought and the number of hairs on your head. Yet, although He already knew about it all he reacts to you with genuine love and a hint of surprise, almost as if He had never heard it before!

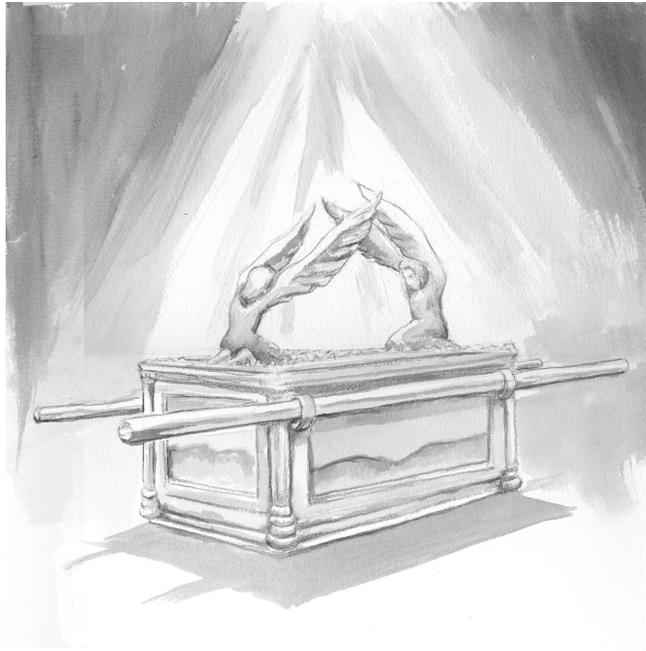
Or... just when you are worshipping Him in the glory of His majesty, face down in the carpet and caught up with the angels and archangels chanting, "Holy, holy, holy, the whole earth is filled with Your glory!", he lifts you off the floor, swings you around on His shoulder, and takes you for a run on the beach as any fun daddy would do.

How utterly and completely unnerving!

Regardless of the perceived incongruities, today you have been invited to walk with him, to talk with him, to foster eternal relationship with him. So this day choose to celebrate your friendship in whatever you do. Especially go out and play and have fun, or explore a book, or a cave together. Attend a show, walk through a museum, go to the zoo, take a bike ride, or fly a kite. Through it all allow Him to "Father" you on this Saturday afternoon.

You'll want to give yourself special permission to be treated as a King's kid, like that beautiful princess or that handsome prince - for it is who you are. At His invitation, enthrone yourself within the lush robes of His ever-living, ever-loving holiness. Be wide-eyed and amazed as you fall in love again and again with the One who walks with you in the cool of the day.

G. Sunday  
| Holy of Holies |  
The Mercy Seat



My Prayer for You This Day

*The Lord would say to you this day:*

*“Come to Me, and I will give you rest.*

*You are My child of mercy.*

*Sit with Me this day; enter into My rest.*

*Choose to know My love within My all-knowing gaze;  
experience My friendship between the shadow of My wings.*

*Allow Me to nestle you in My robes.*

*You will be stilled and filled with My unearthly Presence.*

*Don't be afraid. You are safe here.  
Draw near to Me and gaze deeply.  
I am, here and now, forever yours,  
as you are forever Mine.  
Nothing more matters than now.*

*You are My beloved.  
I have no agenda here -  
none other than the desire to lavish you with My love.  
Here there are no thoughts of sin, shame, or disappointment;  
no regrets, should-have-been's, or could-have-been's.*

*The only thing here is Me.  
And I love you for who you are -  
who I have created you to be.  
I have never loved you less than this moment  
and I will never love you more than this moment.  
I am delighted with you, My child -  
delighted!*

*Would you receive My love today?  
I promise not to hurt you.  
Would you listen to My song for you today?  
I promise, you will love the melody!  
Would you bring this -  
this moment of full pleasure and freedom in Christ -  
everywhere you go today?  
I so long to play with you, swing with you,  
skip with you, silently sit with you  
- to simply be with you -  
anything, anything at all.*

*Rise up, My child.  
Let us go - the day is ours!"*

## Themes

Today's theme speaks to everlasting peace, the saturation of God's mercy upon the heart, and the opportunity for unguarded "being" in the midst of God's mercy and grace.

## Readings

Psalms 46:10

Numbers 7:8,9

Exodus 33:7-11

Hebrews 4:9,10

Deuteronomy 4:27-31

Isaiah 66:12, 13

Isaiah 54:48

Luke 15:17-24

Ephesians 2:4-6

Titus 3:3-7

Psalms 139:1-18

Psalms 32:7

James 2:13

## Direction

Congratulations, you've made it!

What a tremendous week it's been. You've been forgiven and cleansed, you've ministered to God and His Saints, and now you are in this second day - Sunday - in the Most Holy Place, basking in his beauty and being in his mercy.

As you awaken choose to lie silently for a moment and meditate on these words, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10a, NIV). Know that God is Love. His Presence is as thick as a cloud. He is all over you. Arise from your bed, posturing yourself within the beautiful reality of having entered into God's "Sabbath Rest."

God's rest is like no other. It blows away all expectations, melts all the "undone's" and "should-have-done's" like fire on ice, and gently caresses the us for who we are, not for who we should or shouldn't be. We have entered into God's indescribable *mercy*. Look for this mercy to be the holy backdrop for wherever you find yourself today.

Guard yourself against the tendencies to revisit Egypt, the land of your past (along with its accompanying emotions). It's been said, "You can take a man out of

Egypt, but not the Egypt our of the man.” But that’s all been covered earlier in the week. Rather, be internally captivated and embraced in God’s present mercy, which overshadows each step of your desert pilgrimage with the golden radiance of His wings.

You have arrived at a safe place. Sit, sigh, drop your guard, and rest in pure love. You will be bathed and cherished by God’s unconditional love and mercy. He expects nothing of you, other than just being you.

It has been suggested that those who linger in these sacred spaces have heard the very songs of heaven, songs of the Bridegroom singing over His bride, hauntingly sweet, otherworldly melodies of God’s favor, cascading down upon the pilgrims’ weary and downtrodden heart.

Most believers have church in mind on this day. As you embark be on the “listen” for prophetic assurances of His love for you. You may hear them in a song, experience them through nature, or simply know them to be true in your heart of hearts. When you gather for worship make it more than a social time. Make it a sacred time.

Today marks the capstone of a week. You have traversed from one end of the Tabernacle to the other and it’s all accumulating here in the Sanctuary of God’s holy temple. Rejoice in the Lord; seek Him in the saints, from the praise to the preaching, from the prayers to Communion. Be listening. He may speak to you. What father wouldn’t want to speak with his child? After all, you are his beloved, and He has waited all week to commune with you here between the wings of the cherubim.

Likewise, you too have waited all week to meet with him, too. Now you can worship him, rule worship him, with a pure and holy abandon. Let his Shekinah Cloud overshadow you. Revel in the sweet fragrance that comes as you rest in the unconditional favor of the Lord.

# VIII. End Prayer

*“The future glory of this Temple will be greater than its past glory,  
says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.  
And in this place I will bring peace.  
I, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, have spoken!”*

*Haggai 2:9*

God does nothing by happenstance. Each measurement, each event, is patterned and planned to be used by him to bring glory to His Name and life to his people. Things which seem senseless to us are highly significant to him, if not now, perhaps thousands of years in the future. The blueprints and pattern of the Tabernacle still speak to us today. And within each station of ministry a magnificent mystery is found: Our Lord Jesus Christ is living, alive and speaking within the fabric of each piece, each structure and measurement of this archaic temple which has come to be known as the Tabernacle of Moses.

As I finish “Meet Me in the Desert,” I will use the template of the Tabernacle of Moses and give thanks to God for His servant Moses, and for you my brother and sister.



*Thank you, Father, for Your servant Moses.  
You called him out of the land of bondage and into the Promised Land.  
You spoke to him,  
and equipped him with everything he needed  
to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt  
and into Israel.  
Then, having arrived back  
at the place where You first appeared to him,  
You gave him the precise blueprints  
for Your dwelling,  
Your roving earthly sanctuary.*

*Thank you for his obedience, Lord,  
his sacrificial determination  
to follow the Cloud wherever it led him.  
Thank you, that as we gaze through the ages  
into this one man's obedience,  
we are able to know more about You,  
the God we serve,  
Your mercy and Your standards of holiness;  
wondrous revelations that can only be seen from this side of the Cross.*

*And I thank you for this study, too.  
I pray that You would use it to be a powerful tool  
in the lives of Your people.  
Use it to forge a glorious reflection  
of Your Son in their hearts.  
Nourish Your saints in its reading.  
As they grow deeper into the mystery of 'Christ in them,'  
I pray Your Spirit would continuously reveal the joy that only comes  
from serving others in the Tent of Meeting.*

*I also pray that Your Spirit would move them around,  
one station to the next, from glory to glory,  
until they arrive at the place they need to be.  
Teach them to linger where You linger,  
and reveal wisdom in each station.  
Also call forth the office of ministry embedded in each of them.  
Help them to discover and nurture the gifts of the Spirit  
that were given to them back at the Laver.*

*May we rise from this place encouraged in Your love for us  
and sustained in the power of Your Holy Spirit  
through the Blood of the Lamb.  
We know that one day we will be eternally with You in Heaven.  
In the meantime, may Your reflection in us be a compelling witness  
to those who have yet to see Your glorious majesty.*

*By Your grace,  
may we bring many, many people  
through Your Gates  
where we can dance with them*

Meet Me in the Desert

*at the foot of the Cross.*

*In the Name of Jesus Christ.*

*Amen.*

## IX. Further Devotion

### A. The Fiery Cloud

The science of how God appeared in the desert and led the Hebrews through their forty-year pilgrimage through the Sinai still remains a mystery. Some have speculated that the origin of the lighted pillar was organic, a form of biological phosphorescence, not unlike that of fire flies, deep sea creatures, or even the northern lights.

What we do know is that God's presence was manifested in fire. In this devotion we are going to look at this fire, what it may have been and what it may represent to us in our day.

The phenomena fire, or luminescence, falling from heaven is recorded numerous times in Scripture. In some instances the phenomenon was akin to a glorious revelation of light which is superimposed within/upon a bush, fabric, or a person (Exodus 3:2 and Mark 9:24). When God reveals Himself in this way it is said to be a "theophany"; the visible, lighted presence of God.

Other times the term "fire fell from heaven" is about actual *fire falling from heaven*. Fire fell and consumed Abel's sacrifice (Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:16). Fire fell on David's altar at the dedication of his temple (1 Chronicles 21:26), and on Solomon's altar at the dedication of his temple (2 Chronicles 7:13). Fire literally fell and *consumed* the already water-saturated lumber at the confrontation of Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:38-39). Tongues of fire rested on the heads of the disciples when the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost (Acts 2:3), and the fire of God's judgment upon sin is seen symbolically at the Cross. All of this adds up to one glorious truth: our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29)!

The "pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night" (Exodus 13:21) was different. This wasn't the overlapping of heaven and earth across a material object such as a bush or a cloud, nor a sign of God's favor. This was God, his Shekinah Presence, interacting with the Israelites and leading them as a shepherd would lead a flock into fields of promise.

Here are a few things we know about the Fiery Shekinah, the tangible presence of God, which manifests light, power, and presence:

- ❖ God escorted the Israelites into the desert and over to Mount Sinai in a cloud.

*“The Lord went ahead of them.  
He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud,  
and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire.  
This allowed them to travel by day or by night.  
And the Lord did not remove  
the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire  
from its place in front of the people.”*

*Exodus 13:21-22, NLT*



*“[The Lord God], who goes before you  
looking for the best places to camp,  
guiding you with a pillar of fire by night  
and a pillar of cloud by day.”*

*Deuteronomy 1:33, NLT*

- ❖ Moses entered into the cloud and received the Ten Commandments and the blueprints of the Tabernacle in it.

*“Then the LORD said to Moses,  
‘Come up to me on the mountain.  
Stay there and I will give you the tablets of stone  
on which I have inscribed the instructions and commands  
so you can teach the people.’  
So Moses and his assistant Joshua set out,  
and Moses climbed up the mountain of God.  
Moses told the elders  
‘Stay here and wait for us until we come back.  
Aaron and Hur are here with you.  
If anyone has a dispute while I am gone,  
consult with them.’  
Then Moses climbed up the mountain,  
and the cloud covered it.  
And the glory of the LORD settled down on Mount Sinai,  
and the cloud covered it for six days.  
On the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from inside the cloud.  
To the Israelites at the foot of the mountain,  
the glory of the LORD appeared at the summit like a consuming fire.*

*Then Moses disappeared into the cloud  
as he climbed higher up the mountain.  
He remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights.”*

*Exodus 24:1218, NLT*

- ❖ The day the Tabernacle was dedicated the cloud moved from its place on the mountain top and eventually settled over the Holy of Holies, just above the Ark of the Covenant.

*So at last Moses finished the work.  
Then the cloud covered the Tabernacle,  
and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle.  
Moses could no longer enter the Tabernacle  
because the cloud had settled down over it,  
and the glory of the LORD filled the Tabernacle.*

*Exodus 40:33b35, NLT*



*“On the day the Tabernacle was set up,  
the cloud covered it.  
But from evening until morning  
the cloud over the Tabernacle looked like a pillar of fire.”*

*Numbers 9:15, NLT*

- ❖ God moved the people along at his own pace, at his own discretion, through their desert pilgrimage, not theirs.

*“Whenever the cloud lifted from over the sacred tent,  
the people of Israel would break camp and follow it.  
And wherever the cloud settled,  
the people of Israel would set up camp.  
In this way, they traveled and camped at the Lord’s command  
wherever he told them to go.  
Then they remained in their camp  
as long as the cloud stayed over the Tabernacle.  
If the cloud remained over the Tabernacle for a long time,  
the Israelites stayed and performed their duty to the LORD.  
Sometimes the cloud would stay over the Tabernacle  
for only a few days, so the people would stay for only a few days,  
as the LORD commanded.  
Then at the LORD’s command they would break camp and move on.  
Sometimes the cloud stayed only overnight*

*and lifted the next morning.  
But day or night, when the cloud lifted,  
the people broke camp and moved on.  
Whether the cloud stayed above the Tabernacle for two days,  
a month, or a year,  
the people of Israel stayed in camp and did not move on.  
But as soon as it lifted, they broke camp and moved on.  
So they camped or traveled at the LORD's command,  
and they did whatever the LORD told them through Moses."*

*Numbers 9:17-23, NLT*



*"Now whenever the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle,  
the people of Israel would set out on their journey, following it.  
But if the cloud did not rise,  
they remained where they were until it lifted.  
The cloud of the LORD hovered over the Tabernacle during the day,  
and at night fire glowed inside the cloud  
so the whole family of Israel could see it.  
This continued throughout all their journeys."*

*Exodus 40:36-38 (NLT)*

- ❖ I additionally recommend the following scriptures to you for a fascinating study. As you read them, note what is being done "through the cloud."
  - ❖ Exodus 13:21,22; Exodus 40:34-38
  - ❖ 1 Kings 8:10,11; 2 Chronicles 5:13,14
  - ❖ Mark 9:7; Acts 1:9
  - ❖ 1 Corinthians 10:12 with 1 Corinthians 12:13
  - ❖ Ezekiel 43:15; Revelation 15:5,8

## B. For Further Study and Reading

There is so much more: studies on numerology, the priestly garments, precious gems, in addition to other temples! Too much for this humble book. However, here are some suggestions for further study:

- ❖ **Bibles and Bible Commentaries** provide wonderful insights into the Temple. Do a self-study through Exodus with a good study Bible like the following:
  - ❖ Life Application Study Bible
  - ❖ NIV Study Bible, Zondervan
  - ❖ Spirit-Filled Bible, The Spirit-Filled Life Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers
- ❖ **Bible Dictionary:** A Bible dictionary will give you context and customs, both of which bring passages to life.
- ❖ **Google:** The internet is a haven for deeper study, as well as for interesting images from artists of the components of the Tabernacle.
- ❖ **Hands-on:** Make a model of the Tabernacle of Moses. (I have made three of them.) The process is amazingly insightful and a wonderful creative project for you and/or your children, not unlike creating a manger to place in your front yard during Advent. Models of the Tabernacle of Moses come in assorted sizes and shapes. Find one that you can paint bronze, silver and gold, one that has curtains and columns. Make clay figurines and walk them all around the Outer and Inner Courts! To find a model, look on the internet and/or through Sunday school curriculums.
- ❖ **Temple Fever:** The Tabernacle of Moses is the first and smallest of Biblical Temples. These buildings, while different in size and scope, carry the same DNA of the Tabernacle of Moses. For you real enthusiasts, launch out on your own self-study on the temples of David, Solomon, and Herod. Don't forget about the best temple of all - the Heavenly Temple which is yet to be seen by us and is described in Isaiah 4 and Revelation.

Meet Me in the Desert

## C. Music and Ministry

You may have noticed that the end of each chapter I included lyrics to original songs that speak to the significance and symbols found in that particular place of ministry

When I am asked to lead worship at a conference or similar gathering I often use the temple template as a place to begin with a song list. (No surprise there!) I've done weekend retreats highlighting how songs can be chosen and where to place them in the set. I firmly believe the stations of ministry and their symbols reflect a glorious progression into intimacy with the Lord and song choices that move in sync with what the Spirit is doing at the various stations flow hand in glove with what's going on in heaven.

The big idea looks like this:

Outer Court songs praise God for what He has done "for me." You'll recall that the Altar of Sacrifice and the Brass Laver were God's provisions for preparing the people to move deeper into the temple. These stations were not optional but mandatory if the worshipper was to get into the Tent of Meeting.

*God I thank you for my forgiveness, my cleansing, for baptizing me in your Spirit, for delivering me from my demons...*

Inner Court songs move our lyrical emphasis away from what the Lord has done for us and into the arena our adoration of who he is in his own right, the light of the world, bread of life, the one who holds everything together in prayer. You'll recall that the Holy Place provided a place of glory, adoration, and mystery, all captured just this side of the veil of royalty. Deeper into the Tent of meeting we find ourselves completely caught up in the majesty, might, power, and holiness of God.

*We worship you, King of Glory, we adore you, you are the light of the world, heaven and earth are full of your glory, worthy is the Lamb who was slain, we enthrone you Almighty Father...*

There is much talk these days about Christian contemporary music, its purpose and what's appropriate. Many people don't know that the melodies of many hymns we sing with such devotion came right from the bars of the day. Someone came

along and changed the lyrics. The younger kids of today have no idea of the way some of the early Christian rockers were treated by the established church, telling them they were of the devil because they were bringing guitars into the building. Some like instruments, some forbid them. All that to say is that the subject of “music” in church will forever be a thorn and object of much ridicule. I believe this is partially true because our enemy, Lucifer, loves music and uses it as a tool of revenge against the Lord for stuff that has happened in the past.

Too much to go into here.

I invite you to observe the Christian music around your family and church. If you are a worship leader I additionally invite you to look at the songs you’re selecting with an eye towards balance.

Balance. What do I mean by this? How can balanced music assist me in my walk with the Lord?

There are many places in the temple. Themes of sacrifice, Holy Spirit, glory, the Church, prayers, Fatherhood, and mercy flow freely throughout. Yet if our expression of praise and worship rests solely at one place, and stays there, we will become anemic. That’s what I mean by “balance.”

The next time you listen to Christian music, either online or in church, ask yourself, “What part of the temple is being portrayed in the words of this song?” The answer to that question will both enhance your appreciation for the piece and, in the case where a particular song is really “speaking” to you, will help you label what the Spirit is doing in your heart so you can press into it and bless Him as He speaks to your heart and soul. Place yourself at the ministry station which is portrayed in the song lyrics. Recall its symbolism and either receive ministry through the song, or use the song as a vehicle of worship to the Lord, depending upon where its lyric has positioned you. This can be a very enriching experience!

Much of our music in the States is very “Outer Court-ish.” If not balanced by Tent of the Meeting songs we will become very lopsided! Yet I believe caution is necessary here. As we mentioned a few chapters back the Lord is leading his Body to do different things in different places all over the world. At the end of the day he has a unified Body expressing the full plate of praise and living up glorious worship to him who sits on the throne. It just could be that America is the Outer Court expression for the church on the other side of the planet who is complimenting us with their Inner Court worship!

That is a great mystery. However, we are the temple of God and wishing that temple there are seven ministry stations, all vying for a characteristic and expression of the kingdom. Let us be cognitive of that and be made holy as we embrace our expressions of praise wholly.



For more information on these songs or other praise and worship songs by Bill Blomquist, please write to:

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Visit his website to hear more music, read more stuff, peruse his BLOG, and find out about a trip to the Holy Land!

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*I have not stopped giving thanks for you,  
remembering you in my prayers.*

*Ephesians 1:16, NIV*

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- ❖ Judson Cornwall, Let Us Draw Near, Logos International

# About the Author

The Reverend Bill Blomquist is an Anglican priest and has served in numerous ways throughout his life in lay and ordained ministries. Bill's passion for the Lord and his desire to spread the gospel are exemplified through his exuberant (and contagious) fervor to the Lord and what has done for him, and what he can do for others. He is an avid Christian songwriter and an uncompromising promoter of lay ministry and discipleship.

Bill's testimony runs something like this:

*Although I always knew there was a God, I did not know the saving grace of a personal savior until my early twenties. As a native Floridian and former surfer dude, it is only fitting that I would my life to Christ on a beach while sitting in the sand - sand - just as the Lord had met and delivered the Israelites from the sand in the Sinai Desert. God met me and delivered me from my "desert" on the beach at 35th Street in Cocoa Beach, Florida. It's an ongoing fascinating pilgrimage laced with the unfailing love of Christ. By God's grace, I set his heart on Jesus and surrendered myself to walk in His ways. My testimony in the words of "The Watermelon Gospel, A Young Hippie's Ride to the Shores of Surrender" is a free download on my website: [www.blomquistian.com](http://www.blomquistian.com).*

Bill received his Bachelor of Science degree from Florida Atlantic University, Masters of Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary, and a degree in Anglican Studies from Trinity School for Ministry. He has been studying the Tabernacle of Moses for more than thirty-five years and is married to Cinnamon. They spend most all their time sharing the love of Christ in creative ways in the Lakes Region of New Hampshire, USA.

