

Tabernacle – 4

Introduction

We looked at the outer court which contained the brazen altar and the brazen laver. The main metal in the outer court was bronze and the emphasis was on judgement and sacrifice.

We now turn to the Holy Place. Here we no longer see bronze, but now gold and Achaia wood. The three objects in this room will give us a greater insight into different aspects of the Lord Jesus Christ. They shall also show us what is required to make the next step from salvation to fellowship with Christ.

The Table of Showbread

Exodus 25:23-30

“Make a table of acacia wood—two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. ²⁴ Overlay it with pure gold and make a gold molding around it. ²⁵ Also make around it a rim a handbreadth wide and put a gold molding on the rim. ²⁶ Make four gold rings for the table and fasten them to the four corners, where the four legs are. ²⁷ The rings are to be close to the rim to hold the poles used in carrying the table. ²⁸ Make the poles of acacia wood, overlay them with gold and carry the table with them. ²⁹ And make its plates and dishes of pure gold, as well as its pitchers and bowls for the pouring out of offerings. ³⁰ Put the bread of the Presence on this table to be before me at all times.

As you move into the Holy Place the first article that you see is the Table of Showbread. This table had twelve loaves of bread on it, each representing one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Table of Showbread

Lev 24:5-9

“Take the finest flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf. ⁶ Arrange them in two stacks, six in each stack, on the table of pure gold before the Lord. ⁷ By each stack put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be a food offering presented to the Lord. ⁸ This bread is to be set out before the Lord regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. ⁹ It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in the sanctuary area, because it is a most holy part of their perpetual share of the food offerings presented to the Lord.”

The showbread was made of fine flower. The fine flour was made through a grinding and crushing process and speaks to us of the suffering that Jesus endured for us. This bread was also unleavened. As leaven speaks of sin, this was a reminder to us that ‘In Him is no sin’

1 John 3:5

And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

The Table of Showbread

The showbread was set on the table, sprinkled lightly with frankincense. The bread could be eaten by the priests only and were replaced weekly.

It is only those that are 'priests' today that can feed upon Christ. This is the privileged position of all true today.

1 Peter 2:9

But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

And just as the Priests of old would continually minister in the tabernacle and feed upon the showbread, so we do the same in this age. But our bread is Christ!

The Table of Showbread

The Table of Showbread was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, this table represents the person of Christ – again emphasizing His humanity and deity. Remember when Jesus said

John 6:32-35

Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." ³⁴ Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." ³⁵ And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

We are to feed on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why the Bible was written! That is one of the key roles of the Holy Spirit! Think about how important bread is, it is the staple food of the world. And yet, God has designed us so that we need far more than just normal food. God says it like this:

'Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. (Deut 8:3)

We partake of Jesus when learn more of who He is, when we listen to His commands, and when we put them into action.

The Altar of Incense

Exodus 30:1-8

You shall make an altar to burn incense on; you shall make it of acacia wood. ² A cubit *shall be* its length and a cubit its width—it shall be square—and two cubits *shall be* its height. Its horns *shall be* of one piece with it. ³ And you shall overlay its top, its sides all around, and its horns with pure gold; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. ⁴ Two gold rings you shall make for it, under the molding on both its sides. You shall place *them* on its two sides, and they will be holders for the poles with which to bear it. ⁵ You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. ⁶ And you shall put it before the veil that *is* before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that *is* over the Testimony, where I will meet with you. ⁷ Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. ⁸ And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.

The Altar of Incense was made again from acacia wood with a gold overlay, this altar was used by Aaron, the High Priest, for the burning of incense every morning and evening of every day!

The Altar of Incense

Incense is a primarily a picture of prayer.

Psalm 141:1-2

Lord, I cry out to You; Make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. ² **Let my prayer be set before You as incense**, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Revelation 8:3-4

Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ **And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints**, ascended before God from the angel's hand.

Aaron had to offer incense morning and evening each day, in what way does this picture Jesus? You will remember that Aaron was the High Priest and he was a picture of Jesus, our High Priest today. As Aaron offered up the incense (a type of prayer and intercession) each day, so this pictures the present day work of Jesus on our behalf. This is emphasized in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 7:24-25

But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since **He always lives to make intercession for them**.

The Altar of Incense

So the brazen altar that stood in the outer court speaks of the sacrifice of Jesus made 2000 years ago to provide salvation for all who would believe. The golden altar in the Holy Place however speaks of the present work of the living resurrected Christ who intercedes and prays on behalf of His people! Did you know that Jesus intercedes for you? It is for this reason that the writer of Hebrews wrote that He is able to save to the uttermost. This High Priest will not let you down!

The Incense

Exodus 30:34-38

And the Lord said to Moses: "Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with *these* sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each. ³⁵ You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, *and* holy. ³⁶ And you shall beat *some* of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. ³⁷ But *as for* the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the Lord. ³⁸ Whoever makes *any* like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people."

Now, there was a special formula that went into making the incense that was offered up to God on the golden altar. It includes several spices. But notice that God said that this formula was not to be replicated and used by the people personally. He even went so far as to say that if anyone does make it for themselves, they must be cut off from the people! Why is He getting precious about this particular fragrance?

The Incense

This particular fragrance, this incense, again is a picture of Christ.

Ephesians 5:2

And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

That is the incense that God accepts. He accepts His Son and all those who through faith are "in Christ". Hence God didn't want anyone else trying to duplicate this fragrance because no one can replace or duplicate Christ! He is unique! For someone to take and use this particular fragrance upon himself would be to say that they are acceptable to God in and of themselves. We should always consider what we are offering up to God. We should always consider in what ways we try to take credit for that which God does in and through our life. Don't take the glory for that which you have been given! He is the fragrant aroma to God and our boasting should only be in the Lord.

The Incense

Just as we are to feed on Christ (the table of showbread), so, as priests before the Lord, we also offer up prayers, intercession and praise. And just as the fire burnt continually on the altar of incense, the New Testament tells us to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

This doesn't mean that we are continually in one long monotonous prayer throughout the day. But we should maintain an attitude where we are ready to offer up prayer and praise to God at frequent intervals throughout the day, as people, needs and reasons for praise are laid on our hearts. Intercession for others is a big part of this altar of incense. It is the role of Jesus in this age for the saints as we have discussed. But it is also the role and privilege of all believers to intercede on behalf of others in this age. Samuel considered it a sin if he didn't pray for his fellow Israelites. (**1 Sam 12:23**) In fact intercession was found in all of the great saints of old. Moses interceded on behalf of the nation before God (**Ex 32:10-14**). To be fair he had to intercede for them lots of times!

The Lampstand

Exodus 25:31-40

“You shall also make a lampstand of pure gold; the lampstand shall be of hammered work. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its *ornamental* knobs, and flowers shall be of *one piece*. ³² And six branches shall come out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side. ³³ Three bowls *shall be made like almond blossoms* on one branch, *with an ornamental knob and a flower*, and three bowls made like almond *blossoms* on the other branch, *with an ornamental knob and a flower*—and so for the six branches that come out of the lampstand. ³⁴ On the lampstand itself four bowls *shall be made like almond blossoms, each with its ornamental knob and flower*. ³⁵ And *there shall be* a knob under the *first* two branches of the same, a knob under the *second* two branches of the same, and a knob under the *third* two branches of the same, according to the six branches that extend from the lampstand. ³⁶ Their knobs and their branches *shall be of one piece*; all of it *shall be* one hammered piece of pure gold. ³⁷ You shall make seven lamps for it, and they shall arrange its lamps so that they give light in front of it. ³⁸ And its wick-trimmers and their trays *shall be* of pure gold. ³⁹ It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils. ⁴⁰ And see to it that you make *them* according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.

The Lampstand

The last article in the Holy Place was the golden lamp stand. It was to be made out of pure gold. There was to be no acacia wood or any other material used here – just pure gold. We can see that we are dealing with something that is purely divine. The primary purpose of a lamp stand is to give light. It is worth pointing out that this was the only light source in the Holy Place. Jesus said ‘I am the light of the world’. He also said that that Christians are the light of the world (**Matthew 5:16**). Our light depends upon our dependence upon Him who is life as Jesus said in **John 1:4**. John the Baptist was also said to be a lamp that burned for a while (**John 5:35**). The church as a whole is also pictured as a lamp stand in **Rev 1:20**.

The Lampstand

While Jesus is pictured in the lamp stand, I believe the primary fulfillment of this type is the Word of God. You will remember that famous scripture from the psalms no doubt:

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” (**Psalm 119:105**)

“And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.” (**Psalm 12:6**)

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart... The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold.” (**Psalms 19:7-10**)

There were no windows or other light sources in the Holy Place. If you wanted to see the table of showbread or minister at the altar of incense, then it was the lamp stand that gave you the ability to do so. And so it is the word of God that sheds light upon our walk with the Lord today. It is God’s word that brings us revelation and clarity concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Lampstand

Now here is some very cool confirmation that this lamp stand speaks of the word of God. God instructed Moses to make a lamp stand that had seven branches – three branches on each side of a center branch. On each of the branches there were to be 3 cups (in the form of flowers) and each cup had buds and blossoms. The center branch had 4 cups with each cup again having buds and blossoms. The total number of decorations on each of the outer branches is therefore 9 (3 cups/flowers, 3 buds and 3 blossoms). The total number of decorations in the center branch is 12 (4 cups/flowers, 4 buds and 4 blossoms). So the overall total number of decorations (taking into account all seven branches) is: $9 + 9 + 9 + 12 + 9 + 9 + 9 = 66$. Why 66? Because the lamp stand is a picture of the word of God and there are 66 books in God’s word the Bible that gives light to all that would read and study its words! But look also at the splits - If we take the first 4 branches we get 39 ($9 + 9 + 9 + 12$). There are 39 books in the Old Testament. The remaining 3 branches give us 27 ($9 + 9 + 9$) which speaks of the 27 books in the New Testament. Pretty amazing really. And remember that the lamp stand was made of pure gold. So too is the word of God. The Bible is a divinely inspired book!

The Lampstand

Leviticus 24:1-4

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ²“Command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually. ³Outside the veil of the Testimony, in the tabernacle of meeting, Aaron shall be in charge of it from evening until morning before the Lord continually; *it shall be* a statute forever in your generations. ⁴He shall be in charge of the lamps on the pure *gold* lampstand before the Lord continually.

The lamp stand would give light but oil was required to keep it burning. It was the task of Aaron to tend to the lamp to ensure that its wick was trimmed and that there was a fresh supply of oil. If there was no oil, there was no light. It is the same for the word of God. Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit who has been given by our High Priest (Jesus Christ) to illuminate the word of God for us. The revelation and light that the word of God gives depends upon the oil. To some the word of God is stale and dead.

Ephesians 1:17-19

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.

So What ...

Just as the outer court spoke of salvation, so we have seen that each of the items in the Holy Place speak to us concerning our fellowship and life in Christ. In one aspect, each of the items speak of Christ. Jesus is the showbread that we feed upon. He is our High Priest who intercedes for us (the altar of incense) and He is the light that gives us life! The Holy Place also speaks to us of our need to feed upon Christ, to pray and intercede, and to receive revelation of God's ways through the light of His word. But there was still a holier place... the Holy of Holies. And that will be the focus of next weeks sermon.