

Tabernacle

Introduction

So far in this tabernacle series we have looked at the Outer court and the Holy place. The outer court, with the brazen altar and laver, spoke of the means of salvation that is available in Christ.

The Holy Place, on the other hand, spoke not of salvation but of fellowship and the means of growth in the Christian life. Today we turn to the final remaining area in the tabernacle – Holy of Holies. The Outer court showed us that Jesus is the **Way**. The Holy place showed us that Jesus is the **Truth**. But the Holy of Holies will give us a glimpse of Jesus as our **Life**. It is the very presence and power of God that was present within the Holy of Holies and it is that same presence that is essential to living the Christian life today.

The Veil

Exodus 26:31-34

You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim. ³² You shall hang it upon the four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Their hooks shall be gold, upon four sockets of silver. ³³ And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy. ³⁴ You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy.

Now put yourself in the position of the High Priest. While in the Holy place, you look around to view the Holy of Holies. What so you see? There is the veil made from fine twisted linen in blue, purple and scarlet. This veil separates the Holy place from the Holy of Holies. Knowing the use of these colors, you recognize that they represent the entrance into a heavenly (**blue**), royal (**purple**) and redemptive (**scarlet**) area, for beyond this veil is the very presence of the King!

The Veil

But this veil is no ordinary curtain and entrance into the Holy of holies is through no ordinary means. Josephus reported that the veil was four inches thick, was renewed every year, and that horses tied to each side could not pull it apart. The veil bared all but the High Priest from the presence of God. Entrance beyond the veil and into the Holy of Holies was only allowed to the High Priest once a year, but it had to be through a blood sacrifice. This day was the Holiest day in Israel's year – the day of Atonement.

Leviticus 16:2, 29-30

And the Lord said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at *just* any time into the Holy *Place* inside the veil, before the mercy seat which *is* on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat. ... ²⁹ *This* shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth *day* of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, *whether* a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. ³⁰ For on that day *the priest* shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, *that* you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord."

The Veil

Now that you are aware of the significance of the veil, let's look at what happened when Jesus died on the cross!

Matthew 27:50-51

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹ Then, behold, **the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom**; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split.

In the book of Hebrews we learn that the veil **represented the body of Jesus**. Its tearing pictured the giving of His body in death. Jesus as the Ultimate High Priest offered Himself for our final atonement.

And it was torn from the top down! Being completely outside the realm of possibility for any man to have done this, you can only imagine the impact on the priesthood at the time they saw this. They could only have recognized this as from the hand of God (for it was torn from the top down) and I am quite sure that this event had a huge bearing in the later salvation of many priests that we read about in the book of Acts 6:7.

The Veil

Through Jesus' death, we have "boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh"

Hebrews 10:19-20

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh.

Now the humblest believer can enter God's presence in prayer and praise at any time. But let us never forget that the privilege was purchased for us at tremendous cost—the blood of Jesus.

There are several New Testament scriptures that now encourage believers to move beyond the veil (see **Eph 2:13-18**; **Heb 4:14-16**, **Heb 6:19**, **Heb 10:19-22**). Many believers stop at the brazen altar in the outer court. They are happy to be saved but have no desire to go further. Others learn to feed on Christ and grow as they move into the Holy Place. This is good but God does want us to come into the Holies of Holies.

Mercy Seat

The High Priest in the Old Testament would enter the Holy of Holies. This could only happen on one day of the year on The Day of Atonement. Now as the High Priest moved beyond the veil what did he see? Looking around he saw the ark of the covenant and upon that the mercy seat.

Exodus 25:21-22

You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. ²² And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

The Ark of the Covenant represented the presence of God. As the verse above mentions it is there that the Lord met with the High Priest. In fact, the whole Tabernacle was constructed just to house the Ark of the Covenant so that God could dwell among man. But how could a holy God dwell among sinful men? Well, the High Priest had to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice upon the mercy seat so that the sins of the nation could be atoned for. This had to occur each and every year. Now the amazing thing is that this earthly tabernacle was only a copy of the very real heavenly tabernacle which Jesus entered following His death.

Mercy Seat

Hebrews 9:11-12

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, **with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands**, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but **with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**

Hebrews 9:22-24

And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. ²³ Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, **but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.** ²⁴ **For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.**

Jesus entered the heavenly tabernacle by His own blood and in contrast to the earthly High Priest, Jesus sprinkled His own blood upon the heavenly mercy seat to make eternal redemption and atonement! The impact of this act is given to us in the book of Romans and Hebrews (amongst others!).

Mercy Seat

Speaking of Jesus, Romans tells us that He was “whom God set forth as a **propitiation** by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be **just and the justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:25-26)

The word ‘propitiation’ in the passage above is the same word translated as ‘mercy seat’ in **Hebrews 9:5**. Jesus fulfilled that to which the earthly mercy seat in the Holy of Holies pointed! His blood brought peace and forgiveness for those that have placed their faith in Him.

Notice the part of the verse that says that God is both just and the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus. After the fall of mankind, God’s love and God’s justice were in conflict! God’s love would have forgiven the sinner but God’s justice demanded judgement. God’s justice would have judged the sinner but God’s love constrained that judgement! So what is the answer? The only way that could satisfy both love and justice was for God to come as a man and take the penalty Himself that mankind deserved. Through that act He could be just (because the penalty of sin has been met) and also the justifier (because His love could now set the sinner free). In the death of Jesus on the cross the following verse was fulfilled:

Psalm 85:10

Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed.

Contents of the Ark of the Covenant

Scripture tells us that there were three objects placed within the ark. Each object speaks of a different aspect of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:3-4

And behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, ⁴ which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, **in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.**

The Manna

The Manna had been a perfect food, containing all that the Israelites required to sustain them on their entire journey through the wilderness, was placed in the Ark. The manna was God's provision until they reached the Promised Land. Jesus Christ is God's provision today. He is the one that sustains and strengthens us on our journey.

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.

Aaron's Budding Rod

The second object placed in the Ark was Aaron's rod. This was just an ordinary rod since it would still bud, flower and bring forth almonds! That a dead rod could produce fruit is a miracle. It speaks of resurrection life! It speaks of the one who though dead, came back to life after three days. And it is this resurrection life that God now grants believers today. Death can no longer have a hold on them just as it couldn't contain their Savior for the one who has defeated death is the one who now dwells within the believer by His Spirit!

Numbers 16 and 17 gives us the story behind this rod. Korah lead a rebellion against Moses' authority because he (and others) thought that they should be allowed to be Priests. Now the Priesthood was restricted to those from the tribe of Levi and Korah was not from this tribe! In chapter 17 God brings forth a test to show who was the one (and line) that He had chosen. It was a simple test. Each of the tribes had to place their rod before Him and the rod that brought forth life (almonds) was the one that He had chosen. This test confirmed that Aaron was the true High Priest.

Aaron's Budding Rod

The test is no different today. You want to know who God's chosen one is? Well, it's simple... That which was dead must bring forth life. And if that is the test then Jesus Christ is the true High Priest today, for He is the one who was dead but came back to life!

Why Almonds?

Just as an extra note, you may ask why almonds? Sure, they're tasty, but why would God bring forth almonds on Aaron's rod and what has that got to do with Jesus Christ? Well, thanks for asking... a good question indeed! William MacDonald in the Believers Bible Commentary writes: "Just as the almond tree is the first to blossom in the spring, so Christ is the first fruits of resurrection (**1Corinthians 15:20**, **1Corinthians 15:23**).

The golden lampstand in the holy place was "made like almond blossoms, each with its ornamental knob and flower" (**Exo 25:33-34**). It was a priestly function to take care of the lampstand daily. Aaron's rod corresponded in design and fruit to the lampstand, thus signifying that the household of Aaron had been divinely chosen to minister as priests."

The Law

The third and final object within the Ark was the stone tablets upon which God had written the 10 commandments with His own finger. In contrast to the first stone tablets that Moses broke, these tablets within the Ark of the Covenant speak to us of the only one who has ever kept the law of God in its entirety. They speak to us of the one who said "Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God." (**Hebrews 10:7**) The Word of God states that despite all the difficulties that the devil could throw at Him, Jesus was yet without sin! "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, **yet without sin.** (**Hebrews 4:15**)

Moses received the first set of tablets of stone upon which the Ten Commandments were written. As he came down the mountain, he saw the sin and idolatry of the Israelites and he threw the tablets to the ground and broke them! (**Ex 32:19**) God had to write a second set of tablets and this set were stored in the Ark. Symbolically, the first set of tablets represent you and me. It represents mankind. No sooner has the law gone forth from God's own hand than we have broken it and disobeyed the commandment. But the second set represents Jesus. Through trial, temptation, weariness and pain, He conquered all and lived a sinless life. He had to so that He could be our substitute as a sin offering.

So What ...

Numbers 10:33

So they departed from the mountain of the Lord on a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them for the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them.

The Ark of the Covenant, God's presence, went before them to find for them a place of rest. Through the wilderness, across the Jordan, and into the Promised Land. It was the Ark of the Covenant that led the way through the many difficulties that Israel faced in the wilderness to the warfare and conquest in the Promised Land. It was God's presence with His people through the Ark of the Covenant that gained the victory and gave His people rest. So it is today. It is the person and presence of God that leads His people today, and it is the presence of God that will lead them tomorrow.

Let us follow Him together!