

The Tabernacle: God's Doorway to Heaven for Sinners

Exodus 25-40

Thirty-five hundred years ago, our God Who is a Consuming Fire, came down and spoke to Moses on a mountain in the Wilderness outside of Egypt. As we open to Exodus 19:9-20, watch with me what happens.

As God arrived, the moments that followed made it ominously clear that humans would have trouble getting anywhere close to the Almighty God.

As God came down from Heaven to the Earth, the mountain began quaking, a cloud of fire surrounding God was burning the top of the mountain, and a pillar of smoke rose like from a blast furnace. *Our God is a Consuming Fire.*

Welcome to the visual illustrating the doctrine of the holiness of our God Who is a consuming fire given as an introduction to why a Tabernacle Doorway to Heaven was needed.

OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE

Please join me as we stand and read Exodus 19:16-20 (NKJV):

¹⁶ Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai *was* completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. ¹⁹ And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. ²⁰ Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Pray

Our God is Holy and All Powerful. Our God came down to Earth and it was like the Earth was being consumed by the Holiness of God. Lesson number one:

POINT 1: GOD IS ABSOLUTELY HOLY SURROUNDED BY FLAMING FIRES, QUAKES, AND SMOKE

Each time the Scriptures portray the Holy Atmosphere of Heaven, surrounding our Holy God on the Throne, the same elements are clearly seen. Each of the elements surrounding God's Holy Throne speak of a scene so awesome, and so massively powerful that frail creatures like we are as humans would have trouble surviving. Move onward to Ex. 24:17 (NKJV):

The sight of the glory of the Lord *was* like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel.

Remember how Daniel saw God's Throne? That description is almost beyond our comprehension both in scope and in appearance, but is captured for us in Daniel 7:9 (NKJV):

"I watched till thrones were put in place,
And the Ancient of Days was seated;
His garment *was* white as snow,
And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool.
His throne *was* a fiery flame,
Its wheels a burning fire;
¹⁰ A fiery stream issued
And came forth from before Him.
A thousand thousands ministered to Him;
Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.
The court was seated,
And the books were opened.

Coming up to God's Throne is a bit like visiting the surface of our Sun: it would be amazing but we would get consumed by the visit.

Each description of God's Throne reinforces this distance needed for reverence: smoke, quaking, and fire.

First, notice the smoke. Our God is a consuming fire, so, each time the Holy Throne of God comes down to be revealed to us as humans, there is this sight of the smoke from that consuming fire. Listen to how Moses and the writer of Hebrews explain this quality of God's Holiness.

This is like the smoke from a furnace, that Abraham saw when God made a covenant with him in Genesis 15:7-18. This is what the three million Israelites saw in Exodus 19, as Mt. Sinai was "completely in smoke" and the smoke rose like from a "burning furnace" shooting skyward.

Second, notice the quaking. The whole temple shook as Isaiah saw the Lord in His glory in Isaiah 6:4 and heard the holiness of the Lord declared. At Mt. Sinai when the Lord came down to the top of the mountain to meet with Moses, the mountain quaked exceedingly (Ex. 19:18) as the Lord descended in fire. The Earth responds with trembling before its Maker.

Third, notice the fire. When God descended to Mount Sinai, note what Exodus 19:18

says: "the Lord Lord descended upon it in fire". In Isaiah 6:2 we meet some of God's creations we only see here. They are called Seraphim, which means, the "burning ones." They seem to be part of the Throne Team that are always associated with carrying out God's plans.

Deut. 4:23-24 (NKJV) Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. ²⁴ For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Heb. 12:29 (NKJV) For our God is a consuming fire.

When Isaiah sees how Holy God truly is, the very first response is an awareness of how unholy he is. Like Abraham in Genesis 15, and the Israelites in Exodus 19, Isaiah is smitten at his personal un-holiness, and falls before the Lord asking for cleansing. In similar manner in the New Testament, when Peter saw the Deity of Christ displayed, he fell on his face and confessed his need of cleansing (Luke 5:8). So first we see:

The Big Picture: God is Absolutely Holy. From that flows for us:

The Personal Application: regular confession and cleansing is needed. Look at Isaiah 6:6-7, just as Isaiah needed to be purged, so we must be. God has explained to us what He desires from us. We need to bow daily in reverence to God and seek to be kept cleansed by Christ's work for us on the Cross.

Part of each of our constant responsibility is to be confessing our sins (I John 1:9) so that Christ can cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We are already forgiven once for all (Hebrews 10:12), but we are each in need of constant cleansing.

Just as Peter expressed in Luke 5, we each need to see how awesome, holy, and powerful our great God and Savior really is. Then we fall at His feet like Peter did.

Luke 5:4-11 (NKJV) ⁴ When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

⁵ But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." ⁶ And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. ⁷ So they signaled to *their* partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also *were* James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men."¹¹ So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

So our God who is like a consuming fire, and dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16), whose face shines like the Sun in its brightness (Mt. 17:2; Rev. 1:16) came down to Mt. Sinai to show Moses how to construct a Doorway to Heaven. God was offering an access point for humans to come before Him.

POINT-2: ALMIGHTY GOD INVITES US TO ENTER HIS PRESENCE

This morning we are going on a journey into the presence of God. We enter God's presence by way of His Tabernacle, God's tent of Meeting. As we examine this incredible structure, we will see how God's Tabernacle points to Jesus.

Of what possible importance could an old, dusty animal skin tent in the midst of a Nomadic, wandering migration of people camping across the Sinai's trackless desert have in this ultra modern 21st century life in which we live? Can a tent constructed 3500 centuries ago give any light to the dark, sin stained path we often must tread? Join me as we look at the tent and its meaning and find strength in Christ for our lives today.

Camp of Israel was at least 81 square miles just for 603,000 fighting men and their families! The Exodus march at 5 people wide would have stretched 225 miles long. If they traveled 50 wide they would have been 22.5 miles.

For a missions note, our world of 7 billion plus would be a line that stretched @ 100 wide would be over 40,000 miles long!

If we were to top a hill in the Wilderness of the Sinai peninsula 3,500 years ago we would first see one of the largest encampments of people ever on the planet. There were 603,000 families who came out of Egypt. With 5 per family that is 3 million folks. With just a normal camp site it would take 81 square miles of territory for this many people. That would equal from Lewis on the West to Elm on the East, from 31st on the North to 121st on the South. So on a lookout spot we would see an huge encampment.

Then we would see it, the Tabernacle. In the center of the Camp, with smoke slowly rising from the altar, and with the 12 Tribes in an ordered arrangement around it around. Looking intently we would note a long, black, unattractive tent of porpoise skins. But when we traveled through the loud, smelling and busy camp and made it to the Tabernacle we would find a much different sight.

- ✓ When we came inside, we would find ourselves surrounded by shining gold:
- ✓ looking up to the curtained roof, we see the wings of the cherubim woven in; blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen.
- ✓ The light of the golden candlestick would softly shine and reveal all the beauty within.

So it is with Christ Himself. The natural man, beholding Him, sees no beauty that he should desire Him. But to those who know the Lord Jesus Christ, His beauty satisfieth their souls.

Going back outside, if we were to draw a straight line from the center of the Tabernacle's

Gate of Entrance to the Mercy Seat in the center of the Holy of Holies, we would see a picture of salvation and God's wonderful plan for us. You go through the Altar, through the Laver, through the Door; you pass the Table of Showbread on your right hand and the Golden Lampstand on your left; through the Altar of Incense, through the Veil, to the Ark, covered by the Mercy Seat, in the Holy of Holies. This is the true Pilgrim's Progress from the camp outside to the immediate presence of God.

Old Testament Worship centered on the Tabernacle and then the Temple. Divinely designed liturgy was carried on for 1,500 nearly unbroken years in the way Moses was told by God to do it on Mt. Sinai.

The epicenter of that worship was the Holy Place. In the front half of it stood the Altar of Incense, Golden Lampstand and Table of Showbread. A curtain divided the room. This curtain was actually a finely woven rug 4 inches thick, 60 feet high and 40 feet wide. Massive and towering and declaring one clear message STAY OUT. No natural light ever penetrated its dark depths. Even the light of the ever-burning Lampstand never reached behind the veil.

In better times the Shekinah Glory of the Presence of God made the Holiest of Holies behind the veil brighter than noonday. In all of Israel's history probably no more than 50 men had ever gone into the holy of Holies. David never went in, Daniel and Jeremiah never went in. Only the High Priest and then only once a year.

Inside that room was a box covered with gold, containing the stone tablets of the Law, a pot of manna and Aaron's Rod that budded. Above that Ark of the Covenant stood two golden cherubim with wings shielding the mercy seat. Their faces gazing downward forever focusing upon the blood.

When that day came for the High Priest to pass behind that veil. He was wearing bells on the hem of his garment to let the other priests know he was still alive as he was inside; garbed carefully in the God directed robes and priestly garments. With trembling hands cradling a basin of blood, veiled by a cloud of smoking incense burning in a pot he carried - the High Priest would enter.

Sprinkling the blood on that mercy seat on behalf of all the people of God and hastening out. Why? The only purpose of the Veil was to keep people out of the Holy Presence of God. God was saying I AM HOLY. YOU ARE NOT. STAY OUT!

On the day Christ died can you imagine the scene those officiating priests must have beheld? They came in to trim the lamps, pour a handful of incense over the fire on the altar and change the bread on the Table. Then perhaps at that very moment Christ touched the Veil.

With an unearthly sound that massive curtain was violently torn from top to bottom. Aghast, as for the first time in nearly 1,500 years common people looked upon the ark and the mercy seat and God's throne of grace and mercy. As God said ANYONE WHO WISHES MAY COME IN NOW. YOU ARE WELCOME ANYTIME. Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (KJV) Aren't you glad we live on this side of Calvary?

THE DOORWAY TO HEAVEN

Now turn with me to Exodus 24:16, the revelation of the Tabernacle was so sacred, so powerful, so vital to God that He made Moses stand for 6 days and didn't speak until the 7th day to him.

Exodus 24:14-16 (NKJV) And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur *are* with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them." ¹⁵ Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

The Doorway to Heaven, called the Tabernacle, was so important to God He went through the amazing, fiery entrance, the quaking mountain, and blast furnace pillar of smoke, then had Moses wait in the waiting room for six days. Finally God begins to speak.

Now look at Exodus 25:1 where God showed Moses a pattern in the Heavenly Tabernacle, and then starts with the furniture. Most people fit furniture into the house; God built the tent around the furniture! Note from Ark outward is how God thinks of the Tabernacle.

Exodus 25:1-2, 8-9 (NKJV) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering." ⁸ And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. ⁹ According to all that I show you, *that is*, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make *it*.

What does God reveal?

1. GOD DESIRES TO MEET WITH US.

As we open to the exchange between God, who came down in burning fire to the top of Mt. Sinai, and Moses who came up and waited

Exodus 25:22 "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.

Exodus 29:42-43 "This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, **where I will meet you to speak with you.** ⁴³ "And **there I will meet with the children of Israel**, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory.

Now He Meets Us In Jesus

2 Corinthians 5:19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

2. GOD DESIRES TO REVEAL HIMSELF TO US.

Exodus 29:46 “And **they shall know that I am the Lord their God**, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, **that I may dwell among them**. I am the Lord their God.

Now HE REVEALS Himself in Jesus

John 14:7-9 “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”⁸ Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

3. GOD DESIRES TO DWELL WITH US.

Exodus 25:8 “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

Exodus 29:45-46 “I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.⁴⁶ “And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.

Now He Dwells In Us Through Jesus

Matthew 1:23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

4. GOD DESIRES TO SPEAK WITH US.

Exodus 29:42 “This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you.

Leviticus 1:1 Now the Lord called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying,

Now He Speaks To Us Through The Word of Jesus

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 8:43 “Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. ⁴⁷ “He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.”

Hebrews 1:2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

5. GOD DESIRES TO ACCEPT US.

Leviticus 1:4 “Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

Now He Accepts Us In Jesus.

Ephesians 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

6. GOD DESIRES TO FORGIVE US.

Leviticus 4:20 'And he shall do with the bull as he did with the bull as a sin offering; thus he shall do with it. So the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them. 26 'And he shall burn all its fat on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of the peace offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him. 31 'He shall remove all its fat, as fat is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offering; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a sweet aroma to the Lord. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him. 35 'He shall remove all its fat, as the fat of the lamb is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offering. Then the priest shall burn it on the altar, according to the offerings made by fire to the Lord. So the priest shall make atonement for his sin that he has committed, and it shall be forgiven him.

Now He Forgives Us Through The Sacrifice Of Jesus.

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

7. GOD DESIRES TO RECEIVE WORSHIP FROM US.

Exodus 23:15 "You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty);

Exodus 28:38 "So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.

Now He Receives Our Worship In Jesus.

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

THE TABERNACLE ILLUSTRATES GOD'S SALVATION OFFERED IN CHRIST

1. **The Gate is Christ Inviting us** John 10:9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.
2. **The Altar of Brass is Christ Saving us.** John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.
3. **The Laver is Christ Sanctifying us.** Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,
4. **The Holy Place is Christ Serving us.** Hebrews 4:15-16 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. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
5. **The Holy of Holies is Christ Securing us.** Hebrews 10:19-22 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, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 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.

This may be gathered from the significance of:

1. **The Way to Redemption is the Altar of Brass.** "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. ...For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:19, 21).
2. **The Way to Consecration is the Laver of Brass.** Speaking to His disciples Jesus said: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John 13:10). Later He said: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).
3. **The Way of Illumination is the Golden Lamp Stand.** Jesus said: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).
4. **The Way of Satisfaction is the Golden Table of Bread.** Jesus said: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).
5. **The Way of Intercession is the Golden Altar of incense.** "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

6. **The Way of Communion is the Golden Ark of the Covenant.** "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

Now, for our lesson on entering the Presence of God, I call these –

THE TABERNACLE IS GOD'S PORTRAIT OF CHRIST.

In the first place, the tabernacle is a type, a visible illustration, of that heavenly place in which God has His dwelling.

In the second place, the tabernacle is a type of Jesus Christ, who is the meeting-place between God and man.

And, in the third place, the tabernacle is a type of Christ in the Church—of the communion of Jesus with all believers" (Adolph Saphir).

The Tabernacle was designed by God to declare that He wants us **LIVING IN His Presence.**

The Brazen Altar was designed by God to declare that He wants us **APPROACHING HIS HOLINESS**

The Laver of Brass was designed by God to declare that He wants us **CLEANSING OUR SINS.**

The Golden Lampstand was designed by God to declare that He wants us **WALKING IN HIS LIGHT**

The Table of Showbread was designed by God to declare that He wants us **NOURISHED** in His presence.

The Altar of Incense was designed by God to declare that He wants us **PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT**

The Ark of the Covenant was designed by God to declare that He wants us **TRUSTING HIS PROMISES**

The Mercy Seat was designed by God to declare that He wants us **RESTING IN HIS SACRIFICE**

1. **THE COURTYARD OF THE TABERNACLE** was one hundred fifty feet long and

seventy-five feet wide. Its single gate, on the east side, was thirty feet wide and seven and a half feet high, allowing a large number of people to enter at the same time. It is a graphic picture of Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the way" and "I am the door." Just as there was only one entrance to the Tabernacle, there is only one way to God-the only Way and the only Door, Jesus Christ. Christianity is exclusive, not because Christians make it so but because God has made it so. Throughout the centuries, of course, Christians have made the earthly church exclusive in many wrong ways. But God has intentionally made His spiritual, eternal church exclusive. It can be entered only through Jesus Christ.

2. The first article of furniture in the outer court was **THE BRONZE ALTAR**. It was made of acacia wood sheathed with bronze. It was seven and a half feet square, stood four and a half feet off the ground, and was topped with a bronze grate. The coals were placed underneath the grate and the sacrifice was placed on top. On the four corners of the altar were horns, to which the animal was bound when it was being sacrificed. The bronze altar is again a perfect picture of Jesus Christ, who Himself was a sacrifice for sin.
3. The next piece of furniture in the court was **THE LAVER** or basin, also made of bronze. In it the priests would wash their hands, and even sometimes their feet, as they went about the bloody services of sacrifice. Here is a picture of Jesus Christ as the cleanser of His people. Once we have received forgiveness for our sins through Christ's sacrifice of Himself, we still need His daily cleansing that restores fellowship and joy.
4. Still moving west across the courtyard, we come to **THE TABERNACLE** proper-forty-five feet long, fifteen feet wide, and fifteen feet high. The holy place took up two-thirds of this area, which means that the holy of holies was a perfect fifteen-foot cube. Only priests could go into the Holy Place, in which were three pieces of furniture. The writer of Hebrews mentions only two, because, as he says, he cannot speak in detail (9:5).
5. *The Holy Place*. On the left, as the priest entered, was a solid **GOLD LAMPSTAND** having seven branches, each filled with the purest olive oil. "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world," Jesus said (John 9:5). When He left the world, the world was left in darkness, and only for believers is He the light of life. He is the light that directs our paths, the One who, through the Spirit, illumines our minds to understand spiritual truth. He is the One who, by the indwelling Spirit, guides us through the world of darkness. He is our light.
6. On the right was **THE TABLE** on which was **THE SACRED BREAD**, or show-bread. This table, like the base of the altar, was of acacia wood overlaid with gold. It was three feet long, one and a half feet wide, and two and a quarter feet high. Every Sabbath twelve

loaves of fresh bread were set on it, one for each of the twelve tribes. At the end of the week, the priests, and only the priests, were allowed to eat the loaves. Jesus is our sustenance. He is our table of sacred bread. He is the One who feeds us every day, who sustains us with the Word. The Word is not only our food but our light. And the oil is the Spirit of God, who lights the Word for us. The altar of incense pictures Jesus interceding for us, the perfect Sacrifice becoming the perfect Intercessor.

7. Farther in and to the center of the Holy Place was **THE ALTAR OF INCENSE**. It, too, was of gold-overlaid acacia wood, one and one-half feet square and about three feet high. On this altar were placed the burning coals from the bronze altar in the courtyard, where sacrifice was made. These three pieces of furniture also picture Christ. Everything in the outer courtyard was connected with salvation and the cleansing of sins.
 - Jesus accomplished His sacrificial work on earth, outside God's heavenly presence.
 - The outer court was accessible to all the people, just as Christ is accessible to all who will come to Him.
 - But in His heavenly sanctuary He is shut off from the world, temporarily even from His own people.
 - From His heavenly place now, Jesus lights our path (pictured by the golden lampstand), He feeds us (pictured by the table of sacred bread), and He intercedes for us (pictured by the altar of incense).

8. Behind the second veil, there was a tabernacle which is called **The Holy Of Holies**, into which only the high priest could enter, and that but once a year, on the Day of Atonement. In this holiest of earthly places was only one piece of furniture, the ark of the covenant. In it were three very precious articles: a golden jar holding manna, Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant. Made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, it was about three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches wide and two feet high. On the lid was the mercy seat, on which were the cherubim of glory, angelic figures made of solid gold. It was between the wings of those angels, on the mercy seat, that God met men. "And there I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel" (Ex. 25:22). If God and man were to meet it could only have been there. The central, in fact the only, thing in the Holy of Holies was **THE ARK**, which represents Jesus Christ, the true mercy seat. When we meet Jesus Christ as Savior, we are ushered into the presence of God, into the true Holy of Holies. God no longer communes with men between the wings of cherubim on a gold mercy seat. He communes with men in His Son, by whom the veil was torn in two. Jesus Christ is the mercy seat. Only on the basis of the blood of a goat would God have fellowship with Israel, and only on the basis of the blood of Christ will God have fellowship with men. John, in using the term "propitiation," in 1 John 2:2, relates Jesus to

the mercy seat, since that very is used for mercy seat in the Septuagint translation of Exodus 25:171.

THE TABERNACLE ILLUSTRATES GOD'S GRACE AND OUR FAITH

From the Brazen Altar to the Ark and Mercy Seat is the pathway of faith.

From the Mercy Seat to the Altar of Brass is the pathway of grace.

THE TABERNACLE ILLUSTRATES GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES

The Altar is the Cross for sinners, the Laver is the Cleansing for sin, the Holy Place is the Consecration for Service.

This evening I would like to invite you to walk with me on holy ground. That Holy Ground is the verses in which we find our Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory. Our goal is to have a strategic grasp of the Bible. That strategic grasp comes as we find that ALL THE Scriptures speak of Him. In John 5:39 that is exactly what Jesus said, and that is what we aim to see.

God left a visible plan of salvation for the world. For 500 years it was a tent that Moses built. Then it was in a Temple that Solomon

First join me in a quick overview of how God laid out the plan of salvation so clearly in the detailed plans for the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle portrays a seven-step plan of salvation:

1. A sinner is outside the Tabernacle, kept away by a 7 ½ foot high white fence, set of posts held up by 60 solid brass sockets. There is only one way or gate into the enclosure, which opened directly in front of the Brazen Altar. That altar is the Cross of Jesus, which is where our spiritual life begins at salvation.
2. The next step after salvation is the regular cleansing at the Brazen Laver.
3. After being cleansed the next door leads to the Holy Place [about the size of a large living room (30 x 15)] where we find the Golden Table of Bread as we fellowship with Jesus through His Word.
4. Then guided by the light of the Golden Lamp stand we are able to walk confidently as I John 1:7 says.
5. Then and only then can we understand the power of prayer as portrayed by the Golden Altar of incense.
6. Through prayer we enter the Holy of Holies of God's very presence.
7. In that Holiest Place we find the peace and security of the Ark of the Covenant, the blood sprinkled mercy seat and the glow of the Shekinah of God's presence.

A 450-foot long fence made of white linen surrounded the Tabernacle. This wall that was higher than anyone could see over had a strong message “stay out”. The posts that held the fence were set in solid brass post holders called sockets. The brass always speaks of judgment. This pure white fence set in sockets of brass says be perfect or God will judge you, and spoke of our inability to qualify on our own to come to God, and represented the law which says:

Romans 3:9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

James 2:10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

The Gate into the Tabernacle was very wide, 30 feet to be exact speaking of God’s Grace and loudly saying “come in”.

Exodus 38:18 The screen for the gate of the court was woven of **blue** (Eagle/Son of God/ John), **purple** (Lion/King of Jews/Matthew), and **scarlet** (Ox/Servant of the Lord/Mark) thread, and of fine woven white linen (Man/Son of Man/Luke). The length was twenty cubits, and the height along its width was five cubits, corresponding to the hangings of the court.

Through Isaiah He made the appeals “Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth” (45:22) and “Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near” (55:6). Through Ezekiel He warned, “Turn back, turn back from your evil ways!” (Ezek. 33:11). During His earthly ministry, Jesus said to the sinful multitudes, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28) and, “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink” (John 7:37). From heaven, through the apostle John, Jesus said, “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost” (Rev. 22:17).

So there was not only one way into the Tabernacle, but also one attitude. The only way a sinner might enter was with a sacrificial substitute to die in that sinners place. Hebrews 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. By coming to that gate a sinner admitted his sinfulness, and accepted the only hope, a substitute to die in his place. There was no other way in. All else inside that tent was based on that contrite admission.

The Brazen Laver is the next once we get inside the fence, and finish at the Brazen Altar or in the picture of the Tabernacle are saved. As we are confronted by the next piece of furniture called the Brazen Laver we are reminded of one of the most striking things about the Tabernacle was that it had no floor. The priests walked every day of their ministry on the dirt of the earth. Becoming a priest or getting saved for that matter, doesn’t immediately isolate us

from the dirt of the world. There was no raised floor to keep them up and off the dirt, rather they were to be ever washing their hands and their feet. No baths were necessary because they didn't dive into the dirt only worked around it. What a picture for us as believers to ponder.

Living on the earth they often had to go to the laver and be cleansed again and again. That is why the laver had no measurements, it was as big as needed to cleanse away all the defilements that ever would come. What a picture of Christ's love, cleansing and forgiveness.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

2 Corinthians 12:20-21 For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; 21 lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

Hebrews 9:14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Hebrews 10:22 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.

1 John 1:7-9 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Revelation 1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

WHEN GOD DESCRIBES THE TABERNACLE

Now turn with me to Exodus 24:16, the revelation of the Tabernacle was so sacred, so

powerful, so vital to God that He made Moses stand for 6 days and didn't speak until the 7th day to him.

Exodus 24:14-16 (NKJV) And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur *are* with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them." ¹⁵ Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶ Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

Now look at Exodus 25:9, 40 where God showed Moses a pattern in the Heavenly Tabernacle, and then starts with the furniture. Most people fit furniture into the house; God built the tent around the furniture! Note from Ark outward is how God thinks of the Tabernacle.

Exodus 25:9 (NKJV) According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it. ⁴⁰ And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.

Could this ancient cycle² of Jewish holidays hold forgotten secrets? As a student of the Scriptures for all my life, the more I think about the festivals of Israel, the more intrigued I become. There's something here many of us haven't seen before... something of God.

something of ourselves.

something of our dependence upon God.

something of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

something of a Messiah who fulfills the spirit of a national calendar and tradition.

The book of Leviticus mentions nine sabbath-based festivals, which included:

1. the weekly Sabbath (v. 23:3);
2. the Passover (vv. 4-8);
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7. the Feast of Tabernacles (vv. 33-44);
8. the Sabbatical year (25:2-7); and
9. the year of Jubilee (vv. 8-55), when, every fiftieth year, all slaves were freed and all land restored to its original owners.

SEVEN SABBATH FEASTS

The seven³ feasts are an elegant demonstration of God's prophetic timetable. Briefly, our Lord was crucified on Passover, buried on Unleavened Bread, raised on First Fruits, and sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Those are the feasts we have seen fulfilled. Evidently in up-coming days He will hold the Rapture on the Feast of Trumpets and return in His Second Coming on the Day of Atonement. Finally, the triumphant Feast of Tabernacles will characterize the Kingdom itself.

God's redemptive New Testament timetable is pictured in the feasts of Leviticus 23.

The first great feast mentioned in that chapter is Passover. The killing of the Passover lamb pictured the death of Jesus Christ, the ultimate Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7).

A second feast was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, celebrated on the day after Passover. During that feast, an offering of the first fruits of the grain harvest was made. Leviticus 23:15

² Mari DeHan, RBC newsletter, 2/97.

³ Zola Levitt Newsletter, 1999.

commands that offering to be made on the day after the Sabbath. The Sadducees and Pharisees differed on what that Sabbath was. The Sadducees interpreted it as the weekly Sabbath, and hence the grain offering would always be on a Sunday. The Pharisees interpreted the Sabbath as the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. According to that interpretation, the grain offering would always fall on the same day of the month but not the same day of the week. Until the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, the Sadducees' interpretation was normative for Judaism (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 53 n. 3). Hence, the day the first fruits were offered would have been on Sunday. That provides an apt picture of the Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection as the "first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20).

Fifty days after the first Sunday following Passover, the Feast of Pentecost was celebrated (Lev. 23:15ff.). At Pentecost another offering of first fruits was made (Lev. 23:20). Completing the cycle of the typical fulfillment of the feasts, the Spirit came on Pentecost as the first fruits of the believers' inheritance (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13–14). Further, those gathered into the church on that day were the first fruits of the full harvest of believers to come. God sent the Spirit on Pentecost, then, following the pattern of Leviticus 23, not in response to any activity of men.⁴

SABBATH PICTURES

What are the illustrations that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God?

Those plans God left are God's Holidays, the Sabbath Feasts.

Each Old Testament holiday is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus.

The feasts of God may well be the most comprehensive roadmap ever made to point at Jesus Christ. For example, every year around the world every Jew observes Passover. At that Biblical feast each person holds in his hand a piece of bread. Here is a description of what he holds:

A matzah is a thin unleavened bread, pierced through with holes, marked with stripes, broken carefully from one piece into three, the middle piece or 2nd of the unity is hidden or buried throughout the meal and then found or raised from the hiding place.

⁴ MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

What does that sound like? The sinless life of Christ (or unleavened bread). "Look upon Him whom they pieced" (bread with holes pierced through it), "with whose stripes we are healed" (bread with brown stripes baked into it), God the Son (second of three pieces), crucified and buried (the middle piece of bread hidden in a cloth), and risen (the middle piece pulled out of its hiding place at the end of the Passover meal).

This morning I invite you to reflect upon the fact that, according⁵ to the New Testament, a rabbi of unparalleled character used the festivals of Israel to declare Himself the spiritual Deliverer and Messiah of His people.

- ✓ On PASSOVER, He became our Passover Lamb (paying for our life with His own).
- ✓ During UNLEAVENED BREAD He remained in the grave (putting away sin for us).
- ✓ On FIRSTFRUITS, He rose bodily from the dead to become the evidence of God's ultimate provision and the promise of a last-days resurrection harvest.
- ✓ At the fourth festival, called PENTECOST by Christians, on the 50th day, the book of Acts says that the resurrected Son of David sent His Spirit to unite 3,000 Jewish believers in the body of Messiah. While these Jewish believers became the first members of an international body called the Church, they were themselves firstfruits of a future regathering pictured in the remaining three holidays.

Probably the best known and loved Gospel is the Gospel by John. If you were treading with an awareness of the Feast of God you would find that the overwhelming majority of the content is given to Jesus' ministry at the great feasts of Israel. As a matter of fact, of the 879 verses found in John's gospel, more than 660 are directly related to events occurring at these feasts.

Jesus Christ came to earth as a Jew—one who lived and ministered in the historical and cultural setting of the Jewish nation. And the Old Testament is a backdrop painted with symbols, customs, types, and prophecies that cause the Life of Christ to glow with amazing details. It was as Jesus lived the perfect life on earth as a Jew, that God chose to reveal the rich detail of His promised Son. In no other book do we get such a distinct picture as in the Gospel by John. In John we see that Jesus was the message and fulfillment of each of the seven feasts. When we listen to what He said and what He did at each feast, we find that each takes on a new depth of meaning. "While⁶ the minds of the people were occupied with the sounds and ceremonies of Israel's great national festivals, Jesus Christ stepped forward to make astonishing statements about Himself, His Father, His relationship to the eternal Word, what they must do about Him, and the consequences of their decision." Also each of Christ's sign miracles confirmed His credentials as God's promised Messiah foreshadowed in the symbolism of the feasts.

⁵ All of this section quoted and adapted from Mart DeHan, RBC newsletter, 2/97.

⁶ Elwood MacQuaid, The Outpouring, Chapter One, Every Man As He Is Able John 1:1-2:12, p. 1-20.

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8. the Sabbatical year (25:2-7); and
9. the year of Jubilee (vv. 8-55), when, every fiftieth year, all slaves were freed and all land restored to its original owners.

This annual cycle begins again every year in the Hebrew month of Nisan. According to Leviticus 23 (see also Exodus 12:1-14), God made the lunar period which corresponds to our March-April to be the first month of every Jewish new year. This was the month God delivered His people from the slave fields and brickyards of Egypt. Ever since, Jewish people throughout the world have remembered this "season of our freedom" on the 14th of Nisan.

The Jewish calendar is built on a series of sevens. The seventh day of the week is the Sabbath, and the seventh week after Passover brings Pentecost. The seventh month brings the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Booths. The seventh year is a Sabbatical year, and after seven Sabbatical years comes the Year of Jubilee. Thus the seven feasts are an elegant demonstration of God's prophetic time table. Briefly, our Lord was crucified on Passover, buried on Unleavened Bread, raised on First Fruits, and sent the Holy Spirit on

⁷ Mart DeHan, RBC newsletter, 2/97.

Pentecost. Those are the feasts we have seen fulfilled. Evidently in up-coming days He will hold the Rapture on the Feast of Trumpets and return in His Second Coming on the Day of Atonement. Finally, the Kingdom itself will be characterized by the triumphant Feast of Tabernacles.

PASSOVER. The religious year opened with Passover, which pictures the death of Christ. Israel sacrificed the Passover lamb on the 14th and then, under the light of a full moon, left Egypt on the 15th of Nisan. Ever since, observant Jewish people have remembered this deliverance by removing all traces of leaven from their homes. Their actions are more than tradition.

FIRSTFRUITS . On the day following the Passover Sabbath (a Sunday), the Israelites celebrated Firstfruits, picturing our Lord's resurrection from the dead. According to Leviticus 23, God linked an anticipation of a future day of harvest, Moses called for a Festival of Firstfruits to be kept "on the day after the Sabbath." Once Israel was in their land, they were to celebrate in the same Passover week three festivals: the first one for their freedom; the last one for their separation from sin. In the middle was this one to remember God's ability to provide for His people. With the offering of the firstfruits of the barley harvest, the Lord reminded His people of His ability to provide, as well as of their dependence upon Him for the harvest to come.

UNLEAVENED BREAD. The week following Passover was devoted to the Feast of Unleavened Bread when all the leaven was put out of the houses. This illustrates the sanctification of believers as they put sin out of their lives. All of this took place in the first month of the year. As Moses called for the Passover lamb to be sacrificed on the 14th, he required all Israel to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread starting on the 15th. For the seven days of unleavened bread following Passover, the children of Israel were to remember that God had not only given them freedom but called them to a new way of life.

WEEKS. Fifty days after Firstfruits is the New Testament Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Church. Then God tied a fourth holiday to the first three. The Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot* in Hebrew and *Pentecost* in Greek) was to be kept seven weeks (on the 50th day) after the Passover-week offering of the firstfruits. At this festival, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were to be offered to the Lord. It marked the end of a critical period of the annual agricultural cycle during which many unpredictable natural factors could have ruined the crops. Over the centuries observant Jewish people have seen in these four holidays a rich picture of God's provision. And ever since the first century, Jewish Christians have seen not only evidence of God's provision but of the coming of His long awaited Messiah.

TRUMPETS. In the seventh month, three feasts were celebrated. The Feast of Trumpets opened the month, reminding us of the gathering of God's people when the Lord returns. Not until the beginning of the seventh month does God call for another festival. Throughout the

Jewish world, this first day of the seventh month is known as the Feast of Trumpets, or *Rosh Hashanah*. It is a day of spiritual awakening. The ram's horn (*shofar*) is blown, followed by ten days of repentance and reflection.

The Scottish⁸ preacher Alexander Whyte once said that “the victorious Christian life is a series of new beginnings.” God gives His people opportunities for new beginnings, and we’re foolish if we waste them.

Unlike our modern New Year’s Day celebrations, the Jews used Rosh Hashanah, the first day of their new year, for prayer, meditation, and confession. They sought to make a new beginning with the Lord.

The Hebrew word for *seven* comes from a root word that means *to be full, to be satisfied*. Whenever the Lord “sevens” something, He’s reminding His people that what He says and does is complete and dependable. Nothing can be added to it. The basic interpretation of this feast relates to Israel, but we can make an application to the church.

DAY OF ATONEMENT. On the tenth day was the Day of Atonement, illustrating the cleansing of God’s people. On the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) is observed. In Israel it is the highest holy day of the year, and the whole nation comes to a standstill. It is the only festival which is not a feast. It is a fast. On this day Moses instructed the people of God to afflict themselves (in awareness of sin) while waiting on God for personal and national forgiveness.

TABERNACLES. Five days later, the last of the seven feasts begins, and from the fifteenth to the twenty-first days, the Jews joyfully celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, picturing the blessings of the future kingdom. God’s people are a scattered people who must be gathered, a sinful people who must be cleansed, and a suffering people who must be given joy. The long period (about three months) between Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets speaks of this present age of the church, when Israel is set aside because she rejected her Messiah. Known as the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot* in Hebrew), this is Thanksgiving Day in Israel. The Feast of Tabernacles signals the most happy holiday season of the year. The harvest is in; the barns are full; and spiritually sensitive people know that the hard work would not have paid off if God had not given conditions necessary for the harvest. Moses instructed the children of Israel to live in “booths” for seven days during the Feast of Tabernacles to remember their days in the wilderness. For generations to come this annual national “camp-out” would be a rich opportunity not only to remember what God had done for them in the past but to anticipate what He would yet do in the future.

The feasts of Trumpets, Yom Kippur, and Tabernacles form a group picture of what is still ahead.

⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1994.

- ✓ According to the prophets, God will call for the blowing of the *shofar*. FEAST OF TRUMPETS. He Himself will awaken Israel and regather her.
- ✓ He will judge His people, give the nation a spirit of repentance, and then cover them with the blood of Messiah's atonement (which the temple sacrifices anticipated). YOM KIPPUR
- ✓ Then, and only then, the feasting will begin. Messiah will enter His temple and, according to Zechariah 14:16-19, all nations will come annually to Jerusalem to celebrate the FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

What a picture of provision, of history, of the work of the Messiah. Seven holidays. Seven reasons to stop, to think, and to remember that everything we have comes from God. Everything good comes from the One who is our Passover, our Unleavened Bread, our Firstfruit evidence of a resurrection to come. He is the one who has given His Spirit, and who now works in us in anticipation of a future sounding of the *shofar* that will begin the last-phase work of Messiah and fulfill all that the prophets have foreseen.

So this morning I invite you to make some kind of plans to reflect upon the truth that, according⁹ to the New Testament, Jesus a rabbi of unparalleled character, used the festivals of Israel to declare Himself the spiritual Deliverer and Messiah of His people.

- ✓ On PASSOVER, He became our Passover Lamb (paying for our life with His own).
- ✓ During UNLEAVENED BREAD He remained in the grave (putting away sin for us).
- ✓ On FIRSTFRUITS, He rose bodily from the dead to become the evidence of God's ultimate provision and the promise of a last-days resurrection harvest.
- ✓ And at PENTECOST, on the 50th day, the Holy Spirit united 3,000 Jewish believers into the body of Messiah. While these Jewish believers became the first members of an international body called the Church, they were themselves firstfruits of a future regathering pictured in the remaining three holidays.

Seven holidays. Seven reasons to deepen our confidence in a Provider God. These offer a way to take us back to our spiritual roots and to prepare us for days which will soon come to pass.

Sabbath Pictures

What are the illustrations that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God? God's Holidays, the Feasts. And each is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus.

⁹ All of this section quoted and adapted from Mart DeHan, RBC newsletter, 2/97.

SABBATH WORSHIP

Now, before we go to Mark 2:23-28 this evening, look with me please at Mark 3:1. What a blessing it must have been for Christ and the apostles as they stopped in for synagogue or temple worship services. The following¹⁰ was the order of the Psalms in the daily service of the temple.

1. Sunday: On the first day of the week they sang Psalm 24, “The earth is the Lords,” etc., in commemoration of the first day of creation, when “God possessed the world, and ruled in it.”
2. Monday: On the second day they sang Psalm 48, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,” etc., because on the second day of creation “the Lord divided His works, and reigned over them.”
3. Tuesday: On the third day they sang Psalm 82, “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty,” etc., “because on that day the earth appeared, on which are the Judge and the judged.”
4. Wednesday: On the fourth day Psalm 94 was sung, “O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth,” etc., “because on the fourth day God made the sun, moon, and stars, and will be avenged on those that worship them.”
5. Thursday: On the fifth day they sang Psalm 81, “Sing aloud unto God our strength,” etc., “because of the variety of creatures made that day to praise His name.”
6. Friday: On the sixth day Psalm 93 was sung, “The Lord reigneth,” etc., “because on that day God finished His works and made man, and the Lord ruled over all His works.”
7. Saturday: Lastly, on the Sabbath they sang Psalm 92, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,” etc., “because the Sabbath was symbolical of the millennial kingdom at the end of the six thousand years dispensation, when the Lord would reign over all, and His glory and service fill the earth with thanksgiving.”

SEVEN SABBATH FEASTS

The seven¹¹ feasts are an elegant demonstration of God's prophetic timetable. Briefly, our Lord was crucified on Passover, buried on Unleavened Bread, raised on First Fruits, and sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Those are the feasts we have seen fulfilled. Evidently in up-coming days He will hold the Rapture on the Feast of Trumpets and return in His Second Coming on the Day of Atonement. Finally, the triumphant Feast of Tabernacles will characterize the Kingdom itself.

God's redemptive New Testament timetable is pictured in the feasts of Leviticus 23.

The first great feast mentioned in that chapter is Passover. The killing of the Passover lamb pictured the death of Jesus Christ, the ultimate Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7).

¹⁰ Edersheim, p. 116.

¹¹ Zola Levitt Newsletter, 1999.

A second feast was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, celebrated on the day after Passover. During that feast, an offering of the first fruits of the grain harvest was made. Leviticus 23:15 commands that offering to be made on the day after the Sabbath. The Sadducees and Pharisees differed on what that Sabbath was. The Sadducees interpreted it as the weekly Sabbath, and hence the grain offering would always be on a Sunday. The Pharisees interpreted the Sabbath as the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. According to that interpretation, the grain offering would always fall on the same day of the month but not the same day of the week. Until the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, the Sadducees' interpretation was normative for Judaism (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 53 n. 3). Hence, the day the first fruits were offered would have been on Sunday. That provides an apt picture of the Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection as the "first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20).

Fifty days after the first Sunday following Passover, the Feast of Pentecost was celebrated (Lev. 23:15ff.). At Pentecost another offering of first fruits was made (Lev. 23:20). Completing the cycle of the typical fulfillment of the feasts, the Spirit came on Pentecost as the first fruits of the believers' inheritance (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13–14). Further, those gathered into the church on that day were the first fruits of the full harvest of believers to come. God sent the Spirit on Pentecost, then, following the pattern of Leviticus 23, not in response to any activity of men.¹²

The weekly Sabbath¹³: God orders our times (Lev. 23:1–3). The weekly Sabbath wasn't one of the annual feasts (Ex. 20:8–11), but it was an important day for the Jewish people, and they were expected to honor it. To dishonor it meant death (Num. 15:32–36). God gave the Sabbath to Israel for several reasons.

1. For one thing, it provided needed rest and refreshment for the people, the farm animals, and the land. ("Sabbath" comes from a Hebrew word that means "to rest, to cease from labor.") Based on Genesis 2:1–3, the weekly Sabbath reminded the Jews that Jehovah God was the Creator and they were but stewards of His generous gifts.
2. The Lord also ordained Sabbath years and the Year of Jubilee to keep the Jews from exploiting the land and impoverishing it (Lev. 25). God's tender concern for His creation is seen in the Sabbath laws.
3. The Sabbath was also a special sign between God and His covenant people (Ex. 31:12–17). Other peoples might work on the seventh day and treat it like any other day, but the Israelites rested on the seventh day and thereby gave witness that they belonged to the Lord (Neh. 13:15–22; Isa. 58:13–14). Nehemiah made it clear that the Sabbath law wasn't given to Israel until they arrived at Sinai (Neh. 9:13–14), while Psalm 147:19–20 indicates that the law was never given to the Gentile nations. Although believers today aren't commanded to "remember the Sabbath Day" (Rom. 14:1ff; Col. 2:16–17), the principle of resting one day in seven is a good one.

¹² MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

¹³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1994.

Listen to Romans 8:4. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." You too can fulfill God's moral law. That's the only part that is left.

The judicial law was set aside with Israel, and the ceremonial law came to a crashing halt when Christ came. The Lord even said to Peter, "Don't worry about unclean animals or rituals anymore. That whole deal is all finished." But the moral law is left. You say, "Could I ever fulfill the moral law?" The Bible says that if we walk in the Spirit, we will fulfill the righteousness of the law, because Christ in us fulfills it.

What a climax! He fulfilled the law, and He fulfills it in us. It is tremendous to think about how He fulfilled everything the law and prophets ever spoke of. Tonight we didn't even talk about the prophecies that He fulfilled. He fulfilled hundreds of them.

JESUS FULFILLS ALL THE SCRIPTURES

The word fulfill means to "fill in", or to "fill up", or to complete what is already there. Jesus didn't add to the law He completed it fully and filled it with obedience and meaning.

So when Jesus lived a perfect life He filled the Moral Law with meaning.

When He died a perfect death He fulfilled the Ceremonial Law, and allowed the Temple to be destroyed all the ceremonial rituals were done.

When Jesus lived and perfect life, and rejected by Israel warned them that their nation was going to be taken away and they killed Him He fulfilled the Judicial Law and it was taken away from them with their nation.

So to Jesus all of the Old Testament was the inspired Word from God. The Scriptures are the Divine teachings of the Divine Ruler, who is to be obeyed. Jesus even stated five times that all of Scripture was pointed at Him. In Luke 24:27, 44 above plus in:

Jesus Fulfills all Scriptures. Matthew 5:17 (NKJV) "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

All of Scripture testifies of Christ. John 5:39 (NKJV) You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

Jesus did God's Will by Obeying the Scriptures. Hebrews 10:7 (NKJV) Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God.'

Now, the we need to consider the second half of that question:

Let me give it to you simply. He fulfilled the whole Old Testament law by being its fulfillment. Not by what He said or did, so much, but by what He was.

The whole judicial system was only good as long as Israel was God's people. When that was

over, the system was over. The ceremonial system was only good until the final sacrifice came, and when it came, then the system was done away. That only leaves one element of God's law abiding still, and what is that? The moral law. That's what undergirded everything. That will be with us until we see Him face to face.

Think of it this way: in every way, Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial system.

Look at the tabernacle; what was that picturing?

1. The tabernacle had a door. Christ said, "I am the door."
2. It had a brazen altar, He said He was the altar, the ransom for many.
3. It had a laver, He said He would wash and cleanse us.
4. It had lamps, He said He was the light.
5. It had bread, He said He was the bread.
6. It had insense, He said, "My prayers ascend for you."
7. It had a veil, He said, "The veil is my body."
8. It had a mercy seat, He said, "I am the mercy seat."

Everything pictured Him.

Look at the Levitical offerings;

there was a burnt offering to speak of the perfection of life. He was that perfection of life.

A meal offering spoke of dedication; He was that one, dedicated wholly to God.

There is a peace offering; He is the peace.

There was a sin offering; He became sin for us who knew no sin.

There was a trespass offering and He provided for our trespasses.

Think of the feasts in the ceremonies of Israel.

He is our Passover.

The unleavened bread speaks of a holy walk; He is the one who walked in holiness.

The feast of first fruits - He is the one who rose from the dead, the first fruits of them that slept.

The feast of Pentecost - He is the one who poured out His Spirit.

The feast of trumpets - He is one who, someday, has His angel blow the trumpet and gathers the elect from the four corners of the earth.

The feast of atonement - He is the one who paid the price of atonement.

The feast of tabernacles which speaks of reunion - He is the one who will gather His people into His house forever.

Eternal Law

What was His attitude toward the Mosaic Law?

Let's go back to verse 17. "Think not that I have come to destroy the law." He says, "I didn't come to destroy it."

The word is *kataluo* and it means 'abrogate, destroy, nullify.' In a physical sense, the word is used of pulling down a wall or smashing a house to the ground. He didn't come to smash down the Old Testament or pull it to pieces. By the way, that word is applied to the temple, and it is applied, in II Corinthians 5, to the body. It is used in a physical sense of the breaking down, or destruction, of a building or a body. Here, in the spiritual sense, He didn't come to destroy the law.

To our Lord Jesus Christ, the new covenant did not throw away the old covenant; it did not annul everything. It was fulfilled, and that's different. He didn't come to tear it down, He came to fulfill it. That's very different, and what our Lord is saying is that the law is preeminent; nothing surpasses it or takes its place, and He gives three reasons in this verse.

The law is inviolable, the law is binding because God is the author of that law.

All the principles, patterns, prophecies, types, symbols, and pictures - everything in the Old Testament is authored by God and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Now we come to the third point. This is literally overwhelming. We're going to develop this in weeks to come as we go through the Sermon on the Mount, so just take as much as you can get tonight.

1. The Law Reflects God's Character. First of all, the law of God is binding because it is authored by God.

2. The Law was Repeated by the Prophets. Secondly, it is affirmed by the prophets, and

3. The Law is Fulfilled by Christ. thirdly, it is accomplished by Christ. This is the heart of the matter. It is accomplished by Christ.

Five times in the New Testament, Jesus claimed to be the theme of the whole Old Testament. Did you know that? Five times. Hebrews 10:7, John 5:39, Matthew 5:17, Luke 24:27, and Luke 24:44. Five times He said, "I am the theme of the whole thing." In II Corinthians 1:20, the Apostle Paul said, "All the promises of God, in Him, are yes and amen." He is the one who fulfills it all.

First of all, that's not what the word means. It doesn't mean 'to fill out,' it means 'to fill up.' It doesn't mean 'to add to,' it means 'to complete something that's already there.'

Jesus really didn't add anything new, did you know that? He just clarified God's original meaning. Let me tell you this: Jesus didn't come to give a moral lecture. The law isn't fulfilled by lecturing about it or adding to it; it is fulfilled another way. So some people say He fulfilled it

because He met its demands. Some Bible teachers say, "In His life, He kept every part of God's law, the moral, judicial, and ceremonial law. He worshiped in the right way, He was fair and equitable, He never violated a rules God made, He was perfectly righteous, He was the absolutely holy one, the perfect righteousness." And that's true.

You say, "How did Jesus fulfill that?" When Jesus died on the cross, that was the final, full rejection by Israel of her Messiah, right? That was it. And that was the end of God dealing with that nation as a nation. The judicial law that He gave to Israel passed away when God no longer dealt with them as a nation anymore and Jesus built His church.

That leaves only one other, the ceremonial law. How did He fulfill that? This is fantastic. He did it by dying on a cross.

The whole judicial system was only good as long as Israel was God's people. When that was over, the system was over. The ceremonial system was only good until the final sacrifice came, and when it came, then the system was done away. That only leaves one element of God's law abiding still, and what is that? The moral law. That's what undergirded everything. That will be with us until we see Him face to face.

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