

## What Did the Tabernacle Furnishings Mean?

[Hebrews 9:1-5](#)

Hebrews, Day 28

*Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. - Hebrews 9:1-5, ESV*

Good teachers have clear purpose behind every aspect of their lessons. If the Tabernacle worship never cleansed anyone of sin and was never intended to be the way of salvation, then what was the point? God gave Moses detailed instructions, so what was this lesson meant to teach God's people?

The main point of the object lesson of Tabernacle worship was to drive home to God's people the reality of His awesome holiness and their desperate need for forgiveness. Every day, with sacrifice after sacrifice, the people were reminded of their sin before a holy God. The regulations for worship were designed to teach God's people that they must approach Him in a very specific way. A holy God must be approached on His terms, not ours.

Inside the Holy Place of worship, God had His people build a lampstand, to be reminded that He is the Light, and they need His light for their lives and worship. Light is a powerful symbol for God's wisdom, holiness, truth and goodness, and the light of the lampstand, symbolizing God's light, filled the tabernacle.

The table of the bread of the Presence reminded God's people that He was their only sustenance. It had 12 loaves, one for each of the tribes of Israel. All of God's people are kept alive by God and by God alone. When Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life," He had the bread of the Presence partially in view. When Jesus fed 5,000 people, the disciples picked up 12 baskets of leftover pieces, just like the 12 loaves of bread. Jesus is the satisfying sustenance of all of God's people.

The altar of incense represented the prayers of God's people, continually ascending to God, their aroma mixed with the smoke of the offerings. The formula for the incense was given by God and had to be followed exactly, a lesson Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu learned the hard way. This shows us that our prayers need to be shaped by God's will, not ours.

The Ark of the Covenant was the centerpiece of Tabernacle worship. It represented the very presence of God and was kept in the inner chamber of the Tabernacle, in the Most Holy Place. It was covered by a mercy seat and contained the Law of God, written on tablets of stone. God's Law and God's presence in the midst of God's people had to be covered in mercy for God's people to be safe. The mercy seat had to be sprinkled with atoning blood, which we'll explore later in Hebrews.

All of this detail is significant - every small aspect of it. It teaches us so much about God and about us, and it all points us to the One whose coming made the Tabernacle obsolete: Jesus Christ. Jesus fulfilled every aspect of the Tabernacle in His holiness, His mercy, His atonement, His satisfaction of all of God's people, and in His perfect reconciling work. Whatever else we may see in a study of the Tabernacle, we must see Him in it all, or we've missed the whole point!