THE TABERNACLE
AND THE FEASTS

Pictures of Christ in the Tent, the Priests, the Offerings, and the Seven Feasts



One gate. One Lamb. One way into the presence of God.

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Enterprises

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Andrew Dominguez

The Tabernacle and the Feasts: Pictures of Christ in the Tent, the Priests, the Offerings, and the Seven Feasts

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A note before you begin. This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Before You Begin

And they shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst.

Exodus 25:8 (SLB)

Most people who decide to read the whole Bible get through Genesis just fine. Genesis has stories: Creation, the Flood, Abraham, Joseph. Exodus starts out strong too, with the burning bush, the plagues, and the Red Sea. Then somewhere around Exodus 25 the stories stop, and the measurements start. Cubits. Boards. Sockets of silver. Curtains of blue, purple, and scarlet. Then comes Leviticus, with its offerings, its priests, and its rules for skin diseases and mildew, and a lot of good people quietly put the Bible back on the shelf.

Translating the Steadfast Literal Bible, I saw how many Christians skip Exodus and Leviticus because the details feel distant. When I studied the tabernacle and the seven feasts next to the New Testament, every board, offering and date pointed to Jesus. I wrote this book for believers who want to see how the Old Testament points to Christ.

I understand. I have been there. But I want to tell you something I have learned. Those chapters are not filler. God spent more chapters on the tabernacle than on the creation of the world. Genesis gives Creation two chapters. Exodus gives the tabernacle thirteen chapters, the plans in chapters 25 to 31 and the building in chapters 35 to 40, and then Leviticus spends most of its twenty-seven chapters on how it all worked. When God takes that much time on something, it is worth our time too.

The reason is simple. The tabernacle, its priests, its offerings, and the feasts of Israel are pictures. They are God's own drawings of what Jesus would come to do. The New Testament says so plainly, again and again. The book of Hebrews calls them a copy and a shadow of heavenly things. Paul says the feasts were a shadow and the body belongs to Christ. Jesus Himself said the Scriptures testify about Him.

Once you see it, you can't unsee it. The one gate into the courtyard. The bronze altar where an innocent animal died in the place of the guilty. The lampstand that never went out. The bread that sat before God every week. The veil that kept everyone out of the Most Holy Place, until the day it tore from top to bottom. The Passover lamb, the firstfruits, the day of Pentecost, and the three fall feasts that are still waiting to be fulfilled. All of it points to one Person.

What You Will Find in This Book

Part One: The Pattern explains what a picture or "type" is, how to read one without stretching it, and the story of how the tabernacle came to be. It also walks you around the whole layout, with a diagram, so you know where everything sat.

Part Two: The Furniture takes you from the gate, through the courtyard, past the bronze altar and the basin, into the Holy Place with its lampstand, table, and incense altar, through the veil, and all the way to the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat. One chapter for each.

Part Three: The Priests and the Offerings looks at the high priest and his clothes, the priests at work, and the five offerings of Leviticus 1 to 7.

Part Four: The Feasts of the LORD covers the weekly Sabbath and the seven feasts of Leviticus 23: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles. Jesus fulfilled the first four at His first coming, right down to the day. The last three are still ahead, and I will show you why I believe they point to the rapture of the church, the return of Christ, and His kingdom.

Part Five: The Tent and You follows the picture from the tent to the temple to the believer, and then to the end of the Bible, where God lives with His people forever.

Every chapter closes with a short summary box called **The Picture**, which sums up what the item or feast shows us about Jesus, and with **Study Questions** for your own reading or a small group. At the back you will find the tabernacle, the offerings, and the feasts in quick reference tables, a page of measurements, a list of words to know, the sources I used, and an index of every Bible verse cited, with page numbers.

How I Handle the Pictures

Here is my promise to you. I will separate three things and tell you which is which.

- **What the Bible says.** When the New Testament itself says that something in the tabernacle or the feasts points to Jesus, I will show you the verse. Those are on solid ground.
- **What follows clearly from it.** Sometimes the New Testament gives the big picture and we can see the details fit, such as the bronze altar and the cross. I will say so and show my reasons.
- **What teachers have suggested.** Over the centuries Bible teachers have found meanings in almost every color, metal, and measurement. Some of those are helpful. Some are a stretch. When I pass one along, I will tell you it is a suggestion, not something the Bible states, so you can weigh it for yourself.

I would rather give you a little less and have all of it hold up than give you a lot and have half of it fall apart the first time someone asks, “Where does it say that?”

A Few Notes Before We Start

Scripture quotations in this book come from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). Words set in bold italics inside a quotation are words added in English to make the sentence read clearly. When I don’t quote a passage, I give the reference so you can read it for yourself, and I hope you will. Open your Bible and check what I say, the way the Bereans did in Acts 17:11.

I capitalize the pronouns that refer to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit (He, Him, His, You, Your) as a sign of reverence. Inside a Scripture quotation, I leave the capitals exactly as the translation prints them. Inside quotations from other writers, like the Jewish historian Josephus, I leave their words exactly as they were translated.

The Bible gives the tabernacle's sizes in cubits. A cubit was the length from a man's elbow to the tip of his middle finger, about 18 inches. I give the feet and inches as close estimates, not exact numbers. Appendix D lists them all.

On the end times, I hold the pre-tribulation view: Jesus will take His church to be with Him before the seven years of tribulation, then return with His church at the end of those years to set up His kingdom on earth. I lay out my reasons where the fall feasts come up, and I tell you plainly where other believers see it differently.

Part One: The Pattern

Chapter 1: Pictures That Point to Jesus

> *You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and these are they that testify concerning Me*
>
> John 5:39 (SLB)

On the Sunday Jesus rose from the dead, two of His followers were walking from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles away. They were sad and confused. They had hoped Jesus was the One who would redeem Israel, and now He was dead. Then a stranger joined them on the road and asked what they were talking about. It was Jesus, though they did not recognize Him yet.

What He did next is the reason this book exists.

> *And having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, He was explaining to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* (Luke 24:27)

Think about what that means. The only Bible those two men had was what we call the Old Testament. Jesus took them through it, from Moses on, and showed them Himself. Not in one or two verses. In all the Scriptures. Later that same night He told the whole group of disciples that everything written about Him in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms had to be fulfilled (Luke 24:44).

I would give a lot to have heard that Bible study. We don't have a recording of it. But we do have the rest of the New Testament, written by men who were there or who learned from those who were. And they keep coming back to the same places. They talk about the Passover lamb, the veil, the high priest, the mercy seat, the sacrifices, and the feasts. They learned to read Moses the way Jesus taught them to read Moses.

When I build a guitar, I work from templates and drawings before I cut any wood. A drawing is not the finished guitar, yet every line points to the real instrument to come. A biblical type works the same way: a real person, object or event that God designed to point ahead to Jesus. Unlike an allegory, a type is anchored in real history and confirmed by Scripture.

What Is a Type?

Bible teachers use a word for these pictures. They call them **types**. A type is a real person, thing, event, or ceremony in the Old Testament that God designed to point ahead to something greater in Christ. The greater thing it points to is called the **antitype**, or the fulfillment.

The word comes from the Greek word *typos*, which means a mark left by a blow, like the print a seal leaves in wax. Paul uses it when he says Adam was a type of the One who was to come (Romans 5:14). The idea is that the shape is pressed in ahead of time, and when the real thing arrives, it fits the print exactly.

Here is the important part. A type is not a made-up story with a hidden meaning. The tabernacle was real. Real men cut real acacia wood and hammered real gold. Real lambs died at a real Passover in Egypt. The history is true, and on top of the history, God built in a picture. Both are true at the same time.

How Do We Know the Tabernacle Is a Picture?

You might ask, "Isn't that just Christians reading Jesus into the Old Testament?" It's a fair question. Here is my answer. We did not come up with this idea. The Bible did. Listen to Hebrews talk about the priests who served in the tabernacle:

> *who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly **things**, just as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to complete the tabernacle; for "See," He says, "**that** you make all things according to the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain."* (Hebrews 8:5)

A copy and a shadow. A shadow is real, but it is not the thing that casts it. If you see the shadow of a man coming around a corner, you know a man is there, and you know roughly his shape and size, but you have not met him yet. Hebrews goes on to say the law had a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of them (Hebrews 10:1). Paul says the same about the feasts and the Sabbaths:

> *Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink or in respect of a feast or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of the **things** coming, but the body **is** of Christ.* (Colossians 2:16-17)

That is our starting point. The tabernacle and the feasts were shadows. Christ is the body that cast them. So when we study the shadow, we are really learning about Him.

God also told Moses something that matters a great deal here. He did not let Moses design the tabernacle.

> *And see, and make **them** by their pattern which you are being shown on the mountain.* (Exodus 25:40)

Moses was shown a pattern on the mountain, and he had to follow it exactly. Hebrews 8:5 quotes this very verse to prove the earthly tabernacle was a copy of something in heaven. That is why the details matter. God was not decorating. He was drawing.

Four Kinds of Pictures in This Book

As we go, you will run into four kinds of pictures.

1. **Places.** The tabernacle itself, its courtyard, its two rooms, and the way you moved from the gate toward the presence of God.
2. **Things.** The furniture: the bronze altar, the basin, the lampstand, the table of bread, the incense altar, the veil, and the ark with its mercy seat.
3. **People.** The high priest and the priests, who stood between a holy God and a sinful people.
4. **Times.** The offerings, done every morning and evening, and the feasts, which marked out Israel's whole year on a calendar God set.

Each one shows a different side of what Jesus came to do. The places show the way to God. The things show what it takes to get there. The people show who brings us. The times show when God carries out His plan.

Rules for Reading the Pictures

Now a warning, because this is where a lot of books go wrong. Once people discover types, some of them get carried away. Every board becomes a believer, every peg becomes a promise, and every color becomes a sermon. Some of that is harmless. Some of it ends up saying things the Bible never says. So here are the rules I follow in this book.

- **Start with what the New Testament says.** If the New Testament itself links the picture to Jesus, we stand on rock. Hebrews 9 and 10 alone cover the tabernacle, the veil, the high priest, the blood, and the Day of Atonement.
- **Look for the main point.** A picture usually makes one big point. The bronze altar is about substitution: something dies in my place. I do not need to find a meaning in each of its horns and rings to get the point.
- **Never let a picture teach a new doctrine.** Types illustrate what the Bible teaches plainly elsewhere. If a reading of the tabernacle gives you an idea you can't find stated anywhere in plain words, set it down.
- **Don't lose the history.** The tabernacle was a real place where real people met with God. It meant something to them before it meant something to us.
- **Say which is which.** When I share a meaning that is only a suggestion, I will tell you.

Why This Matters to You

You may be wondering why any of this matters to someone who has never seen a lamb sacrificed and never will. Here is why. The tabernacle answers the biggest question a human being can ask: how can a sinful person come near a holy God and live?

Every piece of furniture is part of that answer. Every offering is part of it. Every feast tells part of the story of how God carries it out. And when you put the pieces together, you find that the answer is a Person, and His name is Jesus.

Paul says the things written in the Old Testament were written for our instruction, so that through the endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we may have hope (Romans 15:4). That is what I want for you as we walk through this together. Not just information about ancient Israel, but hope, because you will see how carefully and how long God planned to bring you home.

The Picture

The tabernacle, the priests, the offerings, and the feasts were real, and they were also pictures God designed to point to Jesus. The New Testament itself calls them a copy and a shadow. Christ is the body that cast the shadow.

Study Questions

1. Read Luke 24:13-35. What did the two disciples say about their hearts after Jesus explained the Scriptures to them? Why do you think they felt that way?
2. In your own words, what is a type? How is it different from a made-up story with a hidden meaning?
3. Read Hebrews 8:5 and Colossians 2:16-17. What does the word "shadow" tell you about the relationship between the Old Testament pictures and Jesus?

4. Why do you think God told Moses to follow the pattern exactly, rather than letting him design the tabernacle himself?

5. Which of the reading rules in this chapter do you think is most important, and why?

Chapter 2: God Moves In

> *And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will be God for them. And they shall know that I **am** the LORD their God, who brought them out from the land of Egypt, that I might dwell in their midst; I **am** the LORD their God.*
>
> Exodus 29:45-46 (SLB)

Before we look at a single board or curtain, I want you to see the big idea behind the whole tabernacle. It is found in one short verse.

> *And they shall make for Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst.* (Exodus 25:8)

Read that again slowly. God did not say, "Make a sanctuary so you can visit Me." He said, "I will dwell in their midst." The Creator of heaven and earth wanted to live in the middle of a camp of former slaves in the desert. That is the heart of the tabernacle. It was God moving in.

Paradise Lost

To feel the weight of that, we have to go back to the beginning. In the Garden of Eden, God walked with Adam and Eve. There was no veil, no altar, no priest. They were simply with Him. Then sin came in, and they hid from Him among the trees (Genesis 3:8). God sent them out of the garden and placed cherubim with a flaming sword on the east side to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24).

Hold on to that picture, because it comes back. Cherubim guarding the way. An entrance on the east. In the tabernacle, the gate faced east, and cherubim were woven into the veil that kept people out of the Most Holy Place (Exodus 26:31). The whole layout says what Genesis 3 says: the way back to God has been closed by sin. And the whole layout also says something new: God has made a way to come near again, if you come the way He says.

The Story Behind the Tent

The tabernacle came at a turning point in Israel's history. God had brought the people out of Egypt with great signs. He had split the sea. He had fed them with manna and given them water from the rock. At Mount Sinai He came down in fire and spoke the Ten Commandments out loud to the whole nation (Exodus 19 to 20). Then Moses went up the mountain into the cloud.

> *And the glory of the LORD dwelt on the mountain of Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and He called to Moses on the seventh day from the midst of the cloud. And the appearance of the glory of the LORD **was** like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain to the eyes of the sons of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.* (Exodus 24:16-18)

During those forty days God gave Moses the plans for the tabernacle, in Exodus 25 to 31. And down at the bottom of the mountain, something terrible was happening. The people decided Moses was not coming back.

> *And the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, and the people assembled against Aaron, and they said to him, "Arise, make for us gods who shall go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him."* (Exodus 32:1)

Aaron made them a golden calf. Think about that. While God was on the mountain giving Moses the plans for how He would live among them, they were at the bottom making a god of their own out of the gold God had given them as they left Egypt (Exodus 12:35-36). It was the same gold. One use led to worship of a false god. The other would cover the ark of the covenant.

God's judgment fell, and for a moment it looked like the whole plan was off. God told Moses He would send an angel ahead of them but would not go up in their midst Himself, because they were a stiff-necked people (Exodus 33:3). Moses pleaded with Him, and his prayer is one of the most moving in the Bible.

> *And He said, "My presence shall go, and I will give you rest." And he said to Him, "If Your presence is not going, do not bring us up from here. And by what then shall it be known that I have found favor in Your eyes, I and Your people? **Is it** not in Your going with us, and **in that** we shall be distinguished, I and Your people, from all the people that **are** on the face of the ground?"* (Exodus 33:14-16)

Moses understood something we need to understand. The land was not the prize. The presence of God was the prize. Without Him, nothing else mattered. God heard him, renewed the covenant, and the building of the tabernacle went ahead. When you read Exodus 35 to 40, you are reading about a second chance. God moved in among people who had just failed Him badly. That is grace.

A Willing People

God did not order a tax to pay for the tabernacle. He asked for a gift from willing hearts.

> *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and let them take for Me a contribution; from every man whose heart makes him willing you shall take My contribution."* (Exodus 25:1-2)

And the people gave. They brought gold and silver and bronze, colored yarn and fine linen, goats' hair and skins, acacia wood, oil, spices, and precious stones. They gave so much that the craftsmen came to Moses and said, in effect, "Please make them stop."

> *and they said to Moses, saying, "The people are bringing much, more than enough for the service for the work which the LORD has commanded to do." And Moses commanded, and they caused a proclamation to pass through the camp, saying, "Let neither man nor woman make work anymore for the contribution of the holy place." And the people were restrained from bringing. And the work was sufficient for them for all the work, to do it, and **there was** more than enough.* (Exodus 36:5-7)

I have been around church work long enough to know that does not happen very often. When people really see what God has done for them, giving stops being a duty and becomes a joy. Paul says the same thing in 2 Corinthians 9:7: God loves a cheerful giver.

The amounts were large. Exodus 38 records about twenty-nine talents of gold, a hundred talents of silver, and seventy talents of bronze (Exodus 38:24-29). The SLB gives modern estimates right in the text: roughly 2,200 pounds of gold, 7,500 pounds of silver, and 5,250 pounds of bronze. The silver came from a half shekel paid by each man counted in the census, a payment the law called atonement money, the ransom for his life (Exodus 30:11-16). We will come back to that silver in Chapter 4, because it ended up under the feet of the whole building.

Filled With the Spirit to Build

God also chose the builders. He named Bezalel from the tribe of Judah and Oholiab from the tribe of Dan.

> *See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him **with** the Spirit of God, with wisdom and with understanding and with knowledge and with all **kinds of** work* (Exodus 31:2-3)

This is the first time in the Bible that someone is said to be filled with the Spirit of God, and it is a craftsman. Not a prophet. Not a king. A man who worked with gold, wood, and stone. I love that. It tells me God cares about skilled work done for Him. If you work with your hands, your work can be holy too.

The Glory Comes Down

The tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month of the second year after the Exodus (Exodus 40:17), almost one year after they left Egypt. Moses checked everything, and it had all been done just as the LORD commanded (Exodus 39:42-43). Then this happened:

> *And the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to go into the tent of meeting, for the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD had filled the tabernacle.* (Exodus 40:34-35)

The glory was so heavy that even Moses could not go in. From that day on, a cloud stood over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, where everyone in the camp could see it (Exodus 40:38). When the cloud lifted, the camp packed up and followed. When it stayed, they stayed. God was living with His people, and He was leading them.

Why It Was a Tent

God could have told them to build a stone temple. Instead He had them build a tent that could be taken down, carried, and set up again. That made sense for a people on the move through the wilderness. But it also says something about God. He was willing to come down and travel with His people where they were. He did not wait for them to arrive somewhere grand before He moved in.

The Hebrew word for tabernacle is *mishkan*, from a root that means to settle down or dwell. The Bible also calls it the tent of meeting, because it was where God met with His people (Exodus 29:42-43).

The Word Who Pitched His Tent

Now jump ahead about fifteen hundred years. The apostle John opens his Gospel with these words:

> *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from **the** Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

The word translated "dwelt" is the Greek word *eskenosen*. It comes from *skene*, the word for a tent, and the same word the Greek Old Testament used for the tabernacle. You could translate John's words, "The Word became flesh and pitched His tent among us." And then John adds, "we beheld His glory." In the wilderness, the glory came down and filled a tent. In Bethlehem, the glory came down and filled a human body.

That is why Jesus could say, when He was speaking about His body, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). He was the true dwelling place of God among men. Matthew tells us one of His names is Immanuel, which means God with us (Matthew 1:23). The tabernacle was God with us in a tent. Jesus is God with us in the flesh.

And the story does not end there. At the very end of the Bible, John hears a voice from heaven announcing the final fulfillment:

> *And I heard a loud voice out of heaven, saying, "Look, the tabernacle of God **is** with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them, their God."* (Revelation 21:3)

The SLB brings out the wording well: God will tabernacle with them. From Eden to Sinai to Bethlehem to the new heaven and new earth, the plan has always been the same. God wants to live with His people. The tabernacle is where the Bible first spells that out in wood, cloth, and gold.

Outside the Bible: Josephus on the Tabernacle (*Text confirmed*)

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, writing about A.D. 93, describes the tabernacle at length in *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 3, chapters 6 and 7. He believed its layout carried meaning, though he read it as a picture of the universe, not of the Messiah. He wrote that when Moses divided the tabernacle into three parts and gave two of them to the priests, "he denoted the land and the sea, these being of general access to all; but he set apart the third division for God, because heaven is inaccessible to men" (*Antiquities* 3.7.7, Whiston translation).

I include this to show that the idea of the tabernacle as a picture is not a modern Christian invention. Jews in the first century already believed its design meant something. The New Testament tells us what it ultimately meant.

The Picture

God told Israel to build the tabernacle so He could dwell in their midst. Jesus is the fulfillment: the Word became flesh and pitched His tent among us. One day God will tabernacle with His people forever.

Study Questions

1. Read Exodus 25:8 and Exodus 29:45-46. What reason does God give for the tabernacle?
2. Compare Genesis 3:24 with the tabernacle's entrance on the east and the cherubim on the veil. What do these details say about the way back to God?

3. The people built a golden calf while God was giving Moses the plans for the tabernacle. What does it tell you about God that He still went ahead with the plan?

4. Read Exodus 36:5-7. What do you think made the people give so freely? What would it take for you to give that way?

5. John 1:14 says the Word “dwelt” or tabernacled among us. How does knowing about the tabernacle help you understand who Jesus is?

Chapter 3: A Walk Around the Tabernacle

> *How lovely **are** Your dwelling places, LORD of armies! My soul has longed, and also has wasted away, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh shout for joy to the living God.*
>
> Psalm 84:1-2 (SLB)

Before we study each piece one at a time, let's take a walk around the whole thing, the way an Israelite would have seen it. If you have a hard time picturing it, you are not alone. The best help I know is a simple drawing, so keep Figure 1 handy as you read.

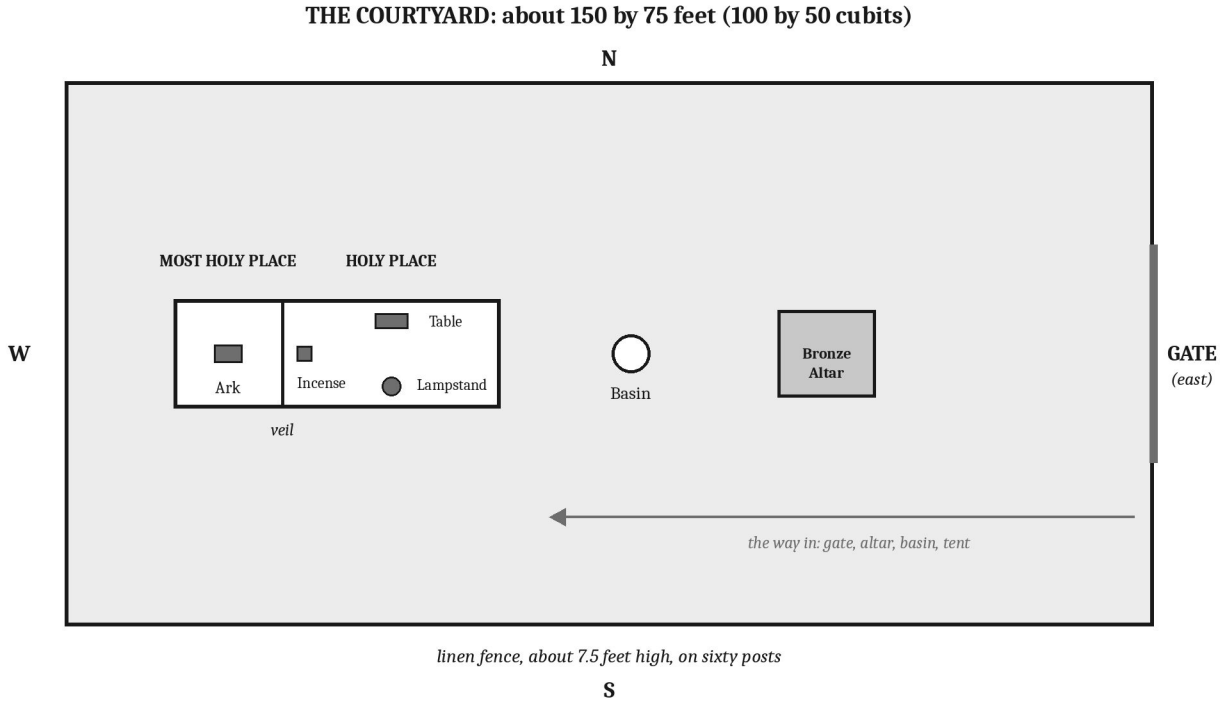


Figure 1. The Tabernacle and Its Courtyard (not to scale)

The Camp Around It

Picture the camp first. More than six hundred thousand men of fighting age, plus women, children, and the Levites, spread out across the desert floor in tents (Numbers 1:46). God did not leave the arrangement to chance. Each tribe had its place under its own banner, and all of them faced the tabernacle in the center.

> *Each man by his standard, with the signs of the house of their fathers, the sons of Israel shall camp; at a distance, all around the tent of meeting, they shall camp.* (Numbers 2:2)

Three tribes camped on each side. On the east, toward the sunrise, were Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, with Judah leading. On the south were Reuben, Simeon, and Gad. On the west were Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. On the north were Dan, Asher, and Naphtali (Numbers 2:3-31). Closer in, between the tribes and the tabernacle, camped the Levites: the clans of Gershon on the west, Kohath on the south, and Merari on the north. The east side, right in front of the entrance, belonged to Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons, the priests (Numbers 3:23-38).

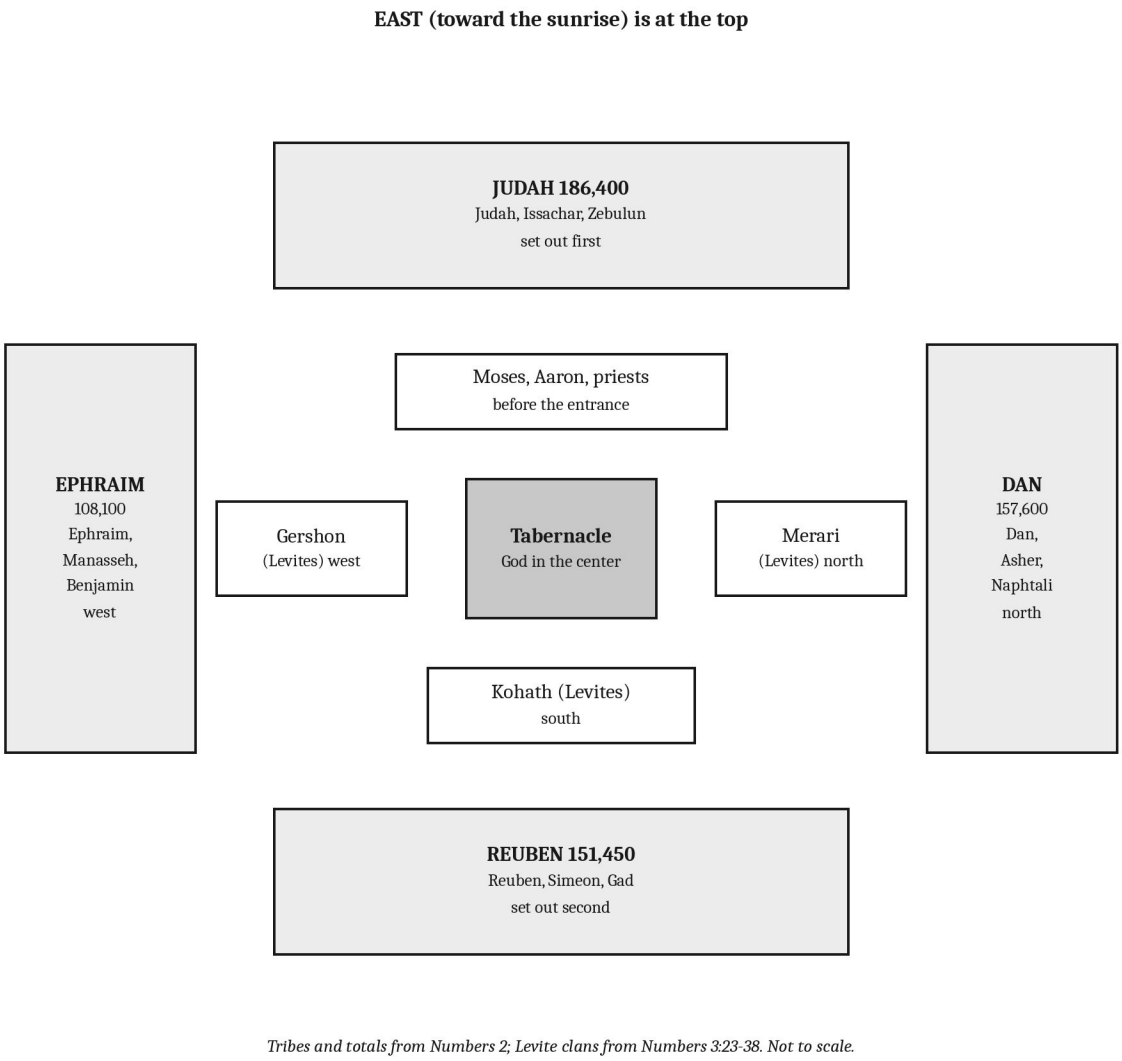


Figure 2. The Camp of Israel Around the Tabernacle (Numbers 2 and 3)

Notice that the tribe of Judah camped on the east, right in front of the gate, and led the march whenever the camp moved (Numbers 2:9). Judah was the tribe of David, and the tribe of Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).

Some teachers have pointed out that if you add up the numbers in Numbers 2, the east side was the largest at 186,400 men, the west the smallest at 108,100, and the north and south fell in between at 157,600 and 151,450. Drawn to scale, they say, the camp would have looked like a cross from above. I find that interesting, and the numbers are right, but the Bible never says it, and we do not know how the

tribes were spread out on the ground. So I pass it along as a suggestion, not a teaching. The real point of Numbers 2 is plain enough: God was in the center, and everyone's life was arranged around Him.

The Courtyard Fence

Walk toward the center and the first thing you would see is a white wall of linen, about seven and a half feet high. It ran around a courtyard about 150 feet long and 75 feet wide, a hundred cubits by fifty (Exodus 27:18). The hangings were held up by sixty posts set in bronze bases, with hooks and bands of silver (Exodus 27:9-17).

A grown man could not see over that fence. From the outside, all you saw was clean white linen and, rising above it, the dark top of the tent and the smoke of the altar. The message was clear before you ever went in. God is holy, and you can't just wander in any way you like.

One Gate

There was only one way in. On the east side, facing the sunrise, was a gate thirty feet wide, a screen of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen, embroidered, hung on four posts (Exodus 27:16). You would see the colors from a long way off. Every other side was plain white. Only one side had a door.

The Courtyard

Once through the gate, you would come first to the bronze altar, the biggest piece of furniture in the tabernacle, about seven and a half feet square and four and a half feet high (Exodus 27:1). This is where the sacrifices were offered. Beyond it stood the bronze basin, full of water, where the priests washed (Exodus 40:6-7). Most Israelites went no farther than the courtyard. Only the priests went into the tent.

The Tent Itself

The tent stood at the west end of the courtyard. Its walls were made of upright boards of acacia wood overlaid with gold, each about fifteen feet tall and two and a quarter feet wide (Exodus 26:15-16, 29). There were twenty boards on the south side, twenty on the north, and six on the back, plus two corner boards (Exodus 26:18-23). That makes the tent about forty-five feet long. Its width is not stated in one place, but from the boards it comes to about fifteen feet, and most scholars agree on that.

Over the boards hung four layers. The inside layer was the beautiful one: ten curtains of fine linen with blue, purple, and scarlet, and cherubim woven into them (Exodus 26:1). Over that went a tent of goats' hair, then a covering of rams' skins dyed red, and on the very outside a covering of tough leather, which the SLB translates as the skins of dolphins (Exodus 26:7, 14). Scholars are not sure what animal the Hebrew word means. Other translations say porpoise, sea cows, badgers, or fine leather. Whatever it was, it was plain and weatherproof.

That tells you something. From the outside, the tabernacle did not look like much. It was a dull-colored tent. All its beauty was on the inside, where only those who came in could see it. Isaiah said the same of the Messiah: He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him (Isaiah 53:2). Those who came close found glory.

Two Rooms

Inside, the tent was divided into two rooms by the veil (Exodus 26:33).

The first room was the **Holy Place**, about thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide. On the left, on the south side, stood the golden lampstand. On the right, on the north side, stood the table with the bread of the Presence. Straight ahead, right in front of the veil, stood the golden altar of incense (Exodus 26:35; 40:22-26).

The second room was the **Most Holy Place**, also called the Holy of Holies. It was a perfect cube, about fifteen feet on each side, though like the width, this is worked out from the boards rather than stated outright. Inside it was one piece of furniture: the ark of the covenant, with its gold cover called the mercy seat and two golden cherubim facing each other above it. There was no window and no lamp. The only light was the glory of God.

The Order Matters

Here is something you will see again and again in this book. Look at the order of the furniture as you walk in from the gate:

1. The gate, the only way in.
2. The bronze altar, where the sacrifice died.
3. The basin, where the priests were washed.
4. The lampstand, the table, and the incense altar, in the Holy Place.
5. The veil.
6. The ark and the mercy seat, where God's presence rested.

That is the way to God, step by step. You enter by the one door. You come by way of the sacrifice. You are cleansed. You walk in the light, feed on the bread, and pray. And finally you come into the very presence of God. Every step of that path is filled by Jesus. He is the door (John 10:9). He is the Lamb of God (John 1:29). He washes us (Titus 3:5). He is the light of the world (John 8:12) and the bread of life (John 6:35). He lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). His flesh is the veil torn open for us (Hebrews 10:20). And His blood is on the mercy seat (Romans 3:25).

God's instructions to Moses run the other way. They start in the Most Holy Place with the ark and work outward to the courtyard (Exodus 25 to 27). God starts with Himself and comes out to us. We start where we are and come in to Him. Both directions meet in Christ.

Gold, Silver, and Bronze

One more thing to notice on our walk is the metal. The courtyard furniture and the bases of the fence were bronze. The fence hooks and the bases under the tent boards were silver. Everything inside the tent was gold or covered with gold. The closer you got to God, the more precious the metal.

Many teachers see a meaning in each metal: bronze for judgment, since the bronze altar is where sin was judged; silver for redemption, since the silver came from the ransom money of Exodus 30; and gold for

the glory and nature of God. The silver link is the strongest, because Exodus itself ties the silver to atonement. The others are suggestions. They fit the pattern well, but the Bible does not state them, so hold them loosely.

The Picture

There was one way in, through one gate on the east. From the gate to the ark, the path led past the altar, the basin, the lampstand, the table, the incense, and the veil, and every step of that path is filled by Jesus.

Study Questions

1. Read Numbers 2. Why do you think God placed the tabernacle at the center of the camp rather than at the front?
2. The courtyard fence was too tall to see over, and it had only one gate. What does that say about how people come to God?
3. The outside of the tent was plain leather, but the inside was beautiful. How does Isaiah 53:2 connect to that?
4. Walk through the order of the furniture from the gate to the ark. Which step in the path means the most to you right now, and why?
5. Read Psalm 84. How does the writer feel about the house of God? Do you feel that way about time with God?

Part Two: The Furniture

Chapter 4: The Gate, the Fence, and the Foundation

> *Enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise; give thanks to Him, bless His name.*
>
> Psalm 100:4 (SLB)

When Jesus wanted to tell people how to be saved, He did not hand them a list. He pointed to a door.

> *I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and he will go in and will go out and will find pasture.* (John 10:9)

Jesus was speaking about a sheepfold when He said that, and the picture fits shepherds first. But every Jew listening had also grown up with the story of the tabernacle, a holy enclosure with one door. Either way, the point is the same, and the tabernacle shows it in cloth and wood. There is one way in.

The Fence Says, "Keep Out"

The linen fence around the courtyard stood about seven and a half feet high and ran about four hundred fifty feet around (Exodus 27:9-18). It was made of fine white linen. Later in the Bible, white linen stands for righteousness. Revelation 19:8 says the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

So picture an Israelite standing outside that fence. All he can see is a wall of spotless white. It is beautiful, but it is a barrier. It tells him that God's standard is perfect righteousness, and he does not measure up. That is what the law does. Paul says the law shows us our sin (Romans 3:20). It is good and holy, but it can't get us in. It can only show us that we are outside.

The Gate Says, "Come In"

But the fence was not the whole story. On the east side there was a gate, and it was wide. Thirty feet across, hung with embroidered blue, purple, and scarlet (Exodus 27:16). It was not hidden. It was not narrow. Anyone in Israel who wanted to bring an offering could come through it.

I want you to notice the balance. There was only one gate, but it was a big one. Jesus is the only way to God (John 14:6). But the way is open to anyone. The tabernacle did not have a gate only for the tribe of Levi, or only for the rich. It had one gate for everybody. The New Testament says the same:

> *And **there** is not salvation in any other; for neither is **there** another name under heaven which has been given among men by which we must be saved.* (Acts 4:12)

People sometimes object to this. They say it is narrow minded to claim there is only one way to God. I understand why it can sound that way. But think about it like this. If I am drowning, I do not need many ropes. I need one rope that holds. The fact that God made a way at all is the amazing part. And the way He made is open to every person on earth, whatever they have done.

The Colors of the Gate

The gate, the inner curtains, the veil, and the high priest's clothes all used the same three colors with white: blue, purple, and scarlet. Many Bible teachers see a meaning in each one. Blue is the color of the sky, so it points to heaven and to Jesus as the One who came from above. Purple was the most costly dye in the ancient world and was worn by kings, so it points to Jesus as King. Scarlet is the color of blood, so it points to His sacrifice. White linen points to His perfect righteousness.

Some have gone further and matched the four colors to the four Gospels: Matthew shows Jesus as King, Mark as Servant, Luke as the Son of Man, and John as the Son of God. I like that, and I find it helpful for remembering what each Gospel stresses. But I want to be honest with you. The Bible does not tell us what the colors mean. These are suggestions from teachers over the centuries. They fit well with what the Bible teaches about Jesus, but they are not stated in Scripture, so we should not build anything on them.

What we can say for certain is that God chose the same colors for the gate that He chose for the veil and for the high priest. The way in, the way to God's presence, and the man who represented the people all looked alike. That is no accident. Jesus is all three.

Standing on Silver

Now let's look at something most people never notice, because it was underneath everything. The upright boards of the tent did not sit on the sand. Each one had two tenons, like pegs, at the bottom, and each tenon fit into a heavy base of silver (Exodus 26:19). There were forty-eight boards, so ninety-six bases, plus four more under the posts that held the veil, for a total of one hundred (Exodus 26:32; 38:27).

And where did that silver come from? It came from the half shekel each man paid when Israel was counted. God called it a ransom.

> *When you take the sum of the sons of Israel by their enrolled **men**, then they shall give each man a ransom for his soul to the LORD when enrolling them, and there shall not be a plague among them when enrolling them.* (Exodus 30:12)

Every man paid the same amount, rich or poor.

> *The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than approximately 1/5 ounce (the half of the shekel), in giving the contribution of the LORD, to make atonement for your souls. And you shall take the silver of the atonement from the sons of Israel, and you shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting; and it shall be for the sons of Israel for a memorial before the LORD, to make atonement for your souls.* (Exodus 30:15-16)

Exodus 38:25-27 tells us that this silver, a hundred talents, about 7,500 pounds, went into casting those hundred bases. Each one weighed a talent, about seventy-five pounds.

Put it together. The whole house of God rested on the ransom money, the silver of atonement. Every board stood on it. Not one board touched the ground on its own. That is a picture I can say with confidence, because Exodus itself ties the silver to atonement. Peter puts it this way:

> *knowing that you were redeemed not with perishable things, silver or gold, from your futile conduct handed down from **your** fathers, but with **the** precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot* (1 Peter 1:18-19)

And notice that everyone paid the same. The rich did not pay more, and the poor did not pay less. No one is too rich to need the ransom, and no one is too poor to receive it. We all come the same way.

The Boards and the Bars

The boards themselves were acacia wood, overlaid with gold (Exodus 26:29). Acacia is a tough desert tree that resists rot. Many teachers see the wood and gold together as a picture of Jesus' two natures: fully human, like the wood that grew out of the dry ground, and fully God, like the gold. Isaiah 53:2 says the Messiah would grow up like a root out of dry ground. I think that suggestion fits well. Just keep in mind that the Bible does not say it outright.

The boards were held together by five bars on each side, running through gold rings, with the middle bar running the whole length from end to end (Exodus 26:26-28). They stood side by side, each one on its own silver base, all held together as one wall. Paul uses a similar picture for the church: we are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22). Each believer stands on the same ransom. And we are joined together into one house.

Outside the Bible: What Was a Shekel? (*Background*)

A shekel was a unit of weight, not a coin, at the time of Moses. Coins did not come into use until centuries later. The SLB text gives the half shekel as about one fifth of an ounce. Exodus 30:13 says it was to be weighed by the shekel of the holy place, a standard weight kept so that no one could cheat. By New Testament times the half shekel had become the yearly temple tax, which is why the collectors asked Peter whether Jesus paid it (Matthew 17:24-27).

The Picture

There was one gate, open to everyone, and only one. The whole tent stood on silver that came from the ransom money. Jesus is the one door, and our standing before God rests entirely on the ransom He paid.

Study Questions

1. The white linen fence kept people out. How does Romans 3:20-23 explain why we need more than the law?
2. Why do you think the gate was so wide, even though there was only one?
3. Read Exodus 30:11-16. Why do you think the rich and the poor paid exactly the same amount?
4. Every board stood on silver from the ransom money. What does that teach you about what your relationship with God rests on?
5. Read 1 Peter 1:18-19. What does Peter say we were redeemed with, and what does he say we were not redeemed with?

Chapter 5: The Bronze Altar

> *saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"*
>
> Revelation 5:12 (SLB)

The first thing you met after walking through the gate was the altar. You could not get to the basin, the tent, or the presence of God without going past it. Before anything else, something had to die.

That sounds harsh to modern ears. We do not like to think about blood. But if you want to understand the tabernacle, and if you want to understand the cross, you have to start here, because God started here.

When Pastor Jimmy Carter led me to Christ as a boy, I learned that my sin needed a real payment. Years later, after I had drifted and failed, that truth became personal again when I saw I could never clean up my own record. At the bronze altar, an innocent substitute died so a guilty sinner could draw near (Exodus 27). Stop trying to pay for your own sin and trust Jesus, who took your place.

What It Looked Like

The altar was a square box about seven and a half feet on each side and four and a half feet high, made of acacia wood covered with bronze. It was hollow, built of planks, with a bronze grate inside, and it had a horn on each of its four corners (Exodus 27:1-8).

> *And you shall make the altar **of** acacia wood, approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) **in** length and approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) **in** breadth; the altar shall be square, and approximately 4.5 feet (three cubits) **shall be** its height. And you shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be from it; and you shall overlay it **with** bronze.* (Exodus 27:1-2)

It had rings and poles so it could be carried when the camp moved. It was by far the largest piece of furniture. Every other item could have fit inside it. I think that is fitting. The cross is the biggest thing in the Christian faith. Everything else fits inside what Jesus did there.

A Fire That Never Went Out

When the priests first offered sacrifices on the altar, God Himself lit the fire.

> *And fire went out from before the LORD, and it consumed on the altar the burnt offering and the fat **portions**; and all the people saw, and they shouted, and they fell on their faces.*
> (Leviticus 9:24)

After that, the priests were never to let it go out.

> *A fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it shall not go out.* (Leviticus 6:13)

Every morning and every evening, a lamb was offered as a burnt offering, day after day, year after year (Exodus 29:38-42). On top of that came the offerings people brought for their own sins, for thanks, and

for vows. The fire never stopped because the sin never stopped. That is a sobering thought. All those animals, all those years, and the work was never finished.

The Hand on the Head

When an Israelite brought an animal for a burnt offering, he did something very personal. He put his hand on the animal's head.

> *And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.* (Leviticus 1:4)

That simple act said, "This animal is taking my place." The man was guilty. The animal was innocent. It had to be a male without defect (Leviticus 1:3). Then the man himself killed it at the north side of the altar (Leviticus 1:5, 11), and the priests caught the blood and splashed it on the altar. The animal died, and the man walked away alive.

This is called **substitution**: one dies in the place of another. It runs through the whole Bible. God provided a ram in Isaac's place on Mount Moriah. When Isaac asked where the lamb was, Abraham gave an answer that turned out to be a prophecy:

> *And Isaac said to Abraham his father, and he said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, and where **is** the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "God will see to the lamb for Himself for a burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went together.* (Genesis 22:7-8)

God told Israel why the blood mattered so much:

> *For the life of the flesh **is** in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it **is** the blood **that** makes atonement by the life.* (Leviticus 17:11)

Life for life. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and God does not pretend that sin costs nothing. But in His mercy He allowed a substitute to die. The New Testament sums it up in one line: apart from shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22).

The Lamb of God

Now you can hear what John the Baptist meant when he saw Jesus coming toward him by the Jordan River.

> *On the next day John sees Jesus coming to him, and says, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29)

Every Jew who heard that knew about lambs. They knew about the lamb every morning and every evening at the altar. They knew about the Passover lamb. And here was John saying, "This Man is the Lamb." Not a lamb for one man or one family, but for the sins of the world.

Isaiah saw it seven hundred years before:

> *And He **was** pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; the chastening of our peace **was** on Him, and by His wound **there** was healing for us. All of us like the sheep have gone astray; each to his own way we have turned; and the LORD has caused to fall on Him the iniquity of all of us.* (Isaiah 53:5-6)

And Paul puts it as plainly as it can be put:

> *For He made the One who did not know sin **to be** sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

When the Israelite put his hand on the animal's head, his guilt was pictured as moving onto the animal. On the cross, our guilt really moved onto Jesus. He who knew no sin became sin for us. That is substitution at its fullest.

The Horns of the Altar

The four horns at the corners were more than decoration. Blood from the sin offering was put on the horns (Leviticus 4:25, 30). And in Israel's history, a man running for his life would sometimes grab hold of the horns of the altar, asking for mercy (1 Kings 1:50-51). In the ancient world a horn stood for strength. The altar's power to save was in its horns.

I like to think of it this way, and this is my application rather than something the Bible says directly. When you are guilty and you know it, there is a place to run. You can take hold of the cross. You can't hide behind your own good works. You run to the place where the blood was shed.

Once for All

Here is where the picture and the real thing part ways, and it is the best part. The fire at the bronze altar never went out because the sacrifices were never finished. Hebrews says those animal sacrifices could never really take away sin.

> *For **it is** impossible **for the** blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins.* (Hebrews 10:4)

They were a picture. They were real acts of obedience, and God forgave those who offered them in faith. But the forgiveness pointed ahead to a sacrifice that would actually pay the debt. When Jesus died, the payment was made in full.

> *By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest indeed stands every day ministering and repeatedly offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at **the** right hand of God* (Hebrews 10:10-12)

Notice the contrast. The priests stood, because their work was never done. There was not a single chair in the tabernacle. Jesus sat down, because His work is done. On the cross He said, "It has been finished" (John 19:30). The fire at the bronze altar can finally go out.

What This Means for You

You can't get to God without coming past the altar. Many people want to skip it. They want the light and the bread and the presence of God, but they don't want to talk about sin and blood. But the tabernacle won't let us skip it, and neither will the gospel. Jesus died in your place. If you have never put your hand on the head of the Lamb, so to speak, by trusting Him to take your sin, that is where the path to God begins. Not at the lampstand. Not at the table. At the altar.

And if you have trusted Him, you never have to bring another sacrifice for your sin. It's paid. Hebrews 13:10 says we have an altar too, and it is the cross of Jesus.

The Picture

The bronze altar is where an innocent substitute died in the place of the guilty. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The priests offered sacrifices standing, day after day. Jesus offered one sacrifice for all time and sat down.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think the altar was the first thing a person met inside the gate?
2. Read Leviticus 1:1-9. What did the worshiper have to do himself? What does laying his hand on the animal's head show?
3. Read Leviticus 17:11 and Hebrews 9:22. Why does forgiveness require the shedding of blood?
4. The priests stood because their work was never finished. What does it mean to you that Jesus sat down?
5. Have you ever trusted Jesus to take your sin in your place? If so, how would you explain that to someone who hasn't?

Chapter 6: The Bronze Basin

Wash me abundantly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

Psalm 51:2 (SLB)

Between the bronze altar and the door of the tent stood a large bronze basin full of water. The older translations call it the laver. It is the simplest piece of furniture in the tabernacle, and the one the Bible tells us the least about. But it carries a lesson every believer needs.

What We Know About It

Here is God's whole instruction for it:

> *"And you shall make a laver of bronze and its base **of** bronze for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water there. And Aaron and his sons shall wash from it their hands and their feet. When they go into the tent of meeting they shall wash **with** water, and they shall not die; or when they draw near to the altar to minister, to make a fire offering smoke to the LORD, then they shall wash their hands and their feet, and they shall not die; and it shall be for them a statute forever, for him and for his seed throughout their generations."* (Exodus 30:18-21)

Notice what is missing. For every other piece of furniture, God gave Moses measurements. For the basin, He gave none. We do not know how big it was or exactly what shape it had. All we know is that it was bronze, it stood on a bronze base, it held water, and it sat between the altar and the tent (Exodus 40:7, 30).

I have heard teachers say the missing measurements mean God's cleansing has no limit. That is a nice thought, and it is true that God's cleansing has no limit. But I can't prove that is why the size was left out. What I can tell you is what the Bible says the basin was for.

Made From Mirrors

There is one more detail, and it is a beautiful one.

> *And he made the laver **of** bronze and its base **of** bronze, with the mirrors of the serving **women** who served **at** the entrance of the tent of meeting.* (Exodus 38:8)

In the ancient world, mirrors were made of polished bronze. Women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting gave up their mirrors, and Bezalel melted them down to make the basin. Something that had been used to look at yourself became something used to be made clean.

James uses a mirror as a picture of God's Word. He says a man who hears the Word but doesn't do it is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror, walks away, and forgets what he looks like (James 1:23-24). God's Word shows us what we really are, and then it washes us. Paul ties the washing to the Word too: Christ cleansed the church by the washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:26).

Wash or Die

Twice in four verses God says the priests had to wash so that they would not die (Exodus 30:20-21). That is serious. A priest who had offered a perfect sacrifice at the altar still could not walk into the Holy Place with dirty hands and feet. The altar dealt with his guilt. The basin dealt with the dirt he picked up along the way.

Think about what the priests did all day. They handled animals. They worked with blood, fat, and ashes. They walked barefoot on the desert ground inside the courtyard. By the time a priest finished at the altar, he would be filthy. Before he could go in to serve God at the lampstand, the table, or the incense altar, he had to stop and wash.

Two Kinds of Washing

This is where the basin teaches us something important about the Christian life. On the day a priest was ordained, Moses washed him all over with water (Exodus 29:4; Leviticus 8:6). That happened once. After that, every time he went in to serve, he washed his hands and feet at the basin. That happened over and over.

Jesus taught the same thing on the night before He died. He got up from supper, wrapped a towel around Himself, and washed His disciples' feet. When it was Peter's turn, Peter refused. Then he swung the other way and asked Jesus to wash all of him.

> *Peter says to Him, "You will certainly never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter says to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also the hands and the head." Jesus says to him, "The **one** who has bathed has no need except to wash the feet, but is wholly clean; and you are clean, but not all."* (John 13:8-10)

There it is. The one who has bathed only needs to wash his feet. When you trusted Christ, you were washed all over. Paul calls it the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5). You were made new, once for all. You never need to be saved again. But as you walk through this world, your feet get dirty. You sin. You get impatient with your wife, you lie to get out of trouble, you let your mind go places it shouldn't. That does not undo your salvation, but it does get in the way of your fellowship with God.

So what do we do? We come back to the basin. John tells us how:

> *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous so that He may forgive us the sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)

Confess, and be washed. Not to get saved again, but to walk with God with clean hands and feet. I have found that the believers who walk closest to God are not the ones who never sin. They are the ones who keep short accounts. They don't let the dirt build up. They stop at the basin every day.

The Order Matters Again

Notice where the basin stood. After the altar, not before it. You can't clean yourself up first and then come to the sacrifice. Many people get this backward. They think they need to fix their lives before they can

come to Jesus. The tabernacle says no. First the altar, then the basin. First the blood that saves you, then the water that keeps you clean as you serve.

And notice it stood before the Holy Place. You don't get to serve God in the light of the lampstand and at the table of bread with dirt on your hands. Washing is for service. Hebrews puts the altar and the basin together in one sentence when it calls us to come near to God:

> *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having **our** hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and **our** body washed with pure water.* (Hebrews 10:22)

Hearts sprinkled, the work of the blood. Body washed, the work of the water. Both are needed, and Jesus provides both.

The Picture

The basin was for priests who were already accepted at the altar, so they could serve without dying. Jesus washed us all over once when we were saved. Now He keeps us clean through His Word and through confession, so we can walk with Him.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think the basin came after the altar and not before it?
2. The basin was made from bronze mirrors. How does James 1:22-25 help explain that picture?
3. Read John 13:1-17. What is the difference between being bathed and having your feet washed?
4. Is there anything you need to bring to the basin today? Read 1 John 1:9 and take a moment to do it.
5. What does it mean to "keep short accounts" with God? How could you build that habit into your day?

Chapter 7: The Golden Lampstand

> *A lamp to my foot **is** Your word, and a light to my pathway.*
>
> Psalm 119:105 (SLB)

Step through the curtain at the door of the tent, and the first thing you notice is the light. The Holy Place had no windows. Above you were four layers of covering. The only light in the room came from one source: the golden lampstand on the left, on the south side.

Before I got sober in May 2020, I spent years managing my life in the dark and pretending everything looked fine. When I stepped into the light, I saw how blind I had been. The Holy Place had no windows, so the golden lampstand was its only light (Exodus 25:31-40). Without Jesus' light through His Word and Spirit, we stumble in the dark without knowing it.

Hammered From One Piece

> *And you shall make a lampstand of pure gold; **of** hammered work the lampstand shall be made; its base and its shaft, its cups, its bulbs, and its blossoms shall be from it.* (Exodus 25:31)

The lampstand was not cast in a mold, and it was not put together from parts. It was hammered out of one piece of pure gold, about seventy-five pounds of it (Exodus 25:39). It had a center shaft with three branches coming out of each side, seven lamps in all. Each branch was decorated with cups shaped like almond blossoms, with buds and flowers (Exodus 25:32-36).

Think about how much work it took to hammer seventy-five pounds of gold into a lampstand with seven branches, flowers, and buds, all from one lump. Every blow of the hammer shaped it. Many teachers have seen that as a picture of Jesus' sufferings. Isaiah says He was crushed (Isaiah 53:10), and the light He gives came through His being beaten. That is a suggestion, not a statement of Scripture, but I think it fits.

The Almond Blossoms

The almond is one of the first trees to bloom in Israel, often in late winter, before the other trees have woken up. The Hebrew word for almond, *shaqed*, sounds like the word for watching or being awake, *shoqed*. God made a play on those two words when He showed Jeremiah an almond branch and said He was watching over His word to do it (Jeremiah 1:11-12).

The almond shows up again in the tabernacle story. When the leaders of Israel challenged Aaron's priesthood, God told each tribe to bring a staff and put it in the tent overnight. In the morning Aaron's staff had sprouted, budded, blossomed, and produced ripe almonds (Numbers 17:8). A dead stick came to life overnight. Many teachers see that as a picture of resurrection, because God chose His priest by bringing life out of death. Jesus' resurrection is what proves He is the High Priest God chose. That staff was later kept in the ark (Hebrews 9:4). So the lampstand that lit the Holy Place was covered with the same blossoms that marked out God's chosen priest.

Never Let It Go Out

The lamps burned pure olive oil, beaten, not pressed, which gave the cleanest light (Exodus 27:20). Every evening and every morning the high priest tended the lamps, trimming the wicks and filling the oil, so that the light burned all night before the LORD.

> *Command the sons of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil, beaten, for the light, to cause a lamp to go up continually. Outside the veil of the testimony, in the tent of meeting, Aaron shall arrange it from evening until morning before the LORD continually;* ***it is*** *a statute forever throughout your generations. On the pure lampstand he shall arrange the lamps before the LORD continually.* (Leviticus 24:2-4)

The lampstand had one job: to give light. Exodus 25:37 says its lamps were set up to give light on the space in front of it. It lit up the table of bread on the other side of the room and the incense altar in front of the veil. Without the lampstand, the priest would have been in the dark. He could not have seen the bread, the altar, or anything else.

The Light of the World

Now listen to what Jesus said.

> *Therefore again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. The* ***one*** *following Me will certainly not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12)

Jesus said that in the temple, during or just after the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2, 37; 8:2, 20). We will see in Chapter 22 why that timing matters. But the point here is plain. Jesus is the true light. John opens his Gospel the same way:

> *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it.* (John 1:4-5)

Just as the lampstand lit up everything in the Holy Place, Jesus lights up everything about God. Without Him we are in the dark. We can't see who God is, we can't see ourselves clearly, and we can't see the way. With Him, everything comes into view.

You Are the Light of the World

Here is something surprising. Jesus also said this:

> *You are the light of the world. A city lying on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under the basket, but on the lampstand, and it shines for all who* ***are*** *in the house. Thus let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and may glorify your Father who* ***is*** *in the heavens.* (Matthew 5:14-16)

How can both be true? Because a lamp gives light only as long as it has oil. In the Bible, oil is often a picture of the Holy Spirit. Kings and priests were anointed with oil when God set them apart, and the Spirit came on David when Samuel anointed him (1 Samuel 16:13). The prophet Zechariah saw a vision of a golden lampstand fed by two olive trees, and the angel explained it this way:

> *And he answered and said to me, saying, "This **is** the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel, saying, 'Not by strength and not by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of armies."* (Zechariah 4:6)

Jesus is the light. We shine with His light, by His Spirit. We don't make our own oil. We can't work up the light by trying harder. Our job is to stay filled, stay trimmed, and stay on the stand where people can see.

In Revelation, Jesus appears to John standing in the middle of seven golden lampstands.

> *And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in **the** midst of the seven lampstands **One** like a son of man, clothed **in a robe** reaching to the feet, and girded around at the breasts with a golden sash.* (Revelation 1:12-13)

Then He tells John what they mean: the seven lampstands are the seven churches (Revelation 1:20). Jesus walks among His churches, trimming the lamps. And He warns one church that if it does not repent, He will remove its lampstand (Revelation 2:5). A church that stops shining has lost its reason to be there.

One Day, No Lamp Needed

At the end of the Bible, the picture comes full circle.

> *And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine in it; for the glory of God illuminated it, and its lamp **is** the Lamb.* (Revelation 21:23)

In the New Jerusalem there is no lampstand, no sun, no moon. The Lamb Himself is the lamp. What the golden lampstand pictured in a dark tent in the desert will be the light of a whole city forever.

The Picture

The lampstand was the only light in the Holy Place, hammered from one piece of gold and kept burning with pure oil. Jesus is the light of the world. By His Spirit, His people shine with His light.

Study Questions

1. What would the Holy Place have been like without the lampstand? What would your life be like without Jesus' light?
2. Read Numbers 17:1-11. How does Aaron's budding staff connect to the almond blossoms on the lampstand?
3. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," and also, "You are the light of the world." How do these two statements fit together?
4. Read Zechariah 4:1-6. What does the oil in the vision stand for? What does that mean for how you shine?
5. Read Revelation 2:1-5. What does it mean for a church to lose its lampstand?

Chapter 8: The Table and the Bread of the Presence

> *And He humbled you, and caused you to hunger, and caused you to eat the manna, which you had not known, and your fathers had not known, in order to make you know that man does not live on bread alone, but on everything that goes out of the mouth of the LORD man lives.*
>
> Deuteronomy 8:3 (SLB)

Across the Holy Place from the lampstand, on the north side, stood a small gold table. On it were twelve loaves of bread, always. It may seem like an odd thing to keep in God's house. God does not get hungry. So why the bread?

The Table

> *And you shall make a table of acacia wood: approximately 3 feet (two cubits) **shall be** its length, and approximately 18 inches (a cubit) its breadth, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its height. And you shall overlay it **with** pure gold, and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around.* (Exodus 25:23-24)

The table was about three feet long, eighteen inches wide, and twenty-seven inches high, made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold. It had a gold rim around the top, rings and poles for carrying, and gold dishes, pans, pitchers, and bowls (Exodus 25:25-29). It was not large. It looked like a small dining table, and in a sense that is what it was.

Bread Always Before God

God's instruction for what went on it was short:

> *And you shall put on the table bread of **the** Presence before Me continually.* (Exodus 25:30)

The Hebrew name is *lechem panim*, the bread of faces, or the bread of the Presence. It sat before the face of God. Older Bibles call it the showbread. Leviticus tells us how it was made and kept:

> *"And you shall take fine flour and bake it **into** twelve cakes; the one cake shall be approximately 4 quarts (two tenths **of an ephah**). And you shall set them **in** two rows, six **in** the row, on the pure table before the LORD. And you shall put pure frankincense on the row, and it shall be for the bread for a memorial portion, a fire offering to the LORD. On the day of the Sabbath, on the day of the Sabbath, he shall arrange it before the LORD continually, from the sons of Israel, a covenant forever. And it shall be for Aaron and for his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, for it **is** a holy of holies to him from the fire offerings of the LORD, a due forever."* (Leviticus 24:5-9)

Twelve loaves, one for each tribe of Israel. Each loaf was large, made from about four quarts of fine flour. They were set out in two rows of six, with pure frankincense on each row. Every Sabbath, the priests set out fresh bread and ate the old bread in the holy place. The table was never empty.

What the Bread Showed

The bread said two things at once. First, all twelve tribes were always before God. Not just the large tribes or the faithful ones. Every tribe had its loaf, and every tribe was remembered. The high priest also wore the names of the twelve tribes on his shoulders and over his heart (Exodus 28:9-12, 29). God never forgot any of His people.

Second, the bread was a meal. Each week the priests sat down, so to speak, and ate bread that had been in God's presence. Eating together in the ancient world meant friendship and peace. You did not eat with your enemies. The table in the Holy Place said that God wanted fellowship with His people. He was not only a judge to be satisfied at the altar. He was a host who set a table.

David and the Holy Bread

There is a famous story about this bread. When David was running from King Saul, he came to the priest Ahimelech at Nob, hungry, with his men. The only bread the priest had was the holy bread that had just been taken off the table.

> *And the priest gave him holy **bread**, for there was no bread there except the bread of the presence which was removed from before the LORD, to put hot bread **in its place** on the day it was taken away.* (1 Samuel 21:6)

Years later the Pharisees criticized Jesus' disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath, and Jesus pointed to this very story.

> *But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those with him, how he entered into the house of God and ate the loaves of the presentation, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?"* (Matthew 12:3-4)

Then Jesus said something remarkable. He said that something greater than the temple was there (Matthew 12:6). He was talking about Himself.

The Bread of Life

In John 6, Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. The next day the crowd came looking for more bread. They reminded Him that their fathers ate manna in the wilderness. Jesus told them the true bread from heaven was not manna. It was Him.

> *And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. The **one** coming to Me will certainly not hunger, and the **one** believing in Me will certainly not thirst at any time."* (John 6:35)

And a little later He said it even more strongly:

> *I am the living bread which came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* (John 6:51)

Bread does you no good sitting on the table. You have to take it and eat it. Jesus was saying that it is not enough to admire Him, or to know about Him. You have to take Him in, trust Him, depend on Him for life the way your body depends on food. Many people in that crowd turned away that day (John 6:66). They wanted bread for their stomachs, not bread for their souls.

The Lord's Table

Every time Christians gather around the Lord's Supper, we are at a table with bread, in the presence of God. Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said it was His body given for us (Luke 22:19). The table in the Holy Place was a weekly reminder that God wanted to share a meal with His people. The Lord's table is a reminder that He paid for that meal with His own body.

And one day there will be a much bigger table. Jesus told His disciples He would not drink of the fruit of the vine again until He drinks it new with them in His Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29). Revelation calls it the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

I love how Jesus put it to the church at Laodicea:

> *Look, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.* (Revelation 3:20)

That is the table of the Presence, opened to anyone who will open the door.

The Picture
Twelve loaves sat before God every week, one for each tribe, and the priests ate them in His presence. Jesus is the bread of life. He feeds those who come to Him, and He invites us to His table.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think God wanted bread always on the table before Him?
2. The twelve loaves stood for all twelve tribes. What does that tell you about how God sees His people?
3. Read John 6:26-40. What were the people looking for, and what did Jesus offer them instead?
4. What is the difference between knowing about bread and eating it? How does that apply to knowing Jesus?
5. How can the Lord's Supper remind you of the table in the Holy Place?

Chapter 9: The Golden Altar of Incense

> *And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of **the** hand of the angel before God.*
>
> Revelation 8:4 (SLB)

The third piece of furniture in the Holy Place stood straight ahead as you walked in, right in front of the veil. It was the smallest altar in the tabernacle, and the closest to God's presence. No animal was ever sacrificed on it. Only sweet-smelling incense was burned there.

What It Looked Like

> *And you shall make an altar **for** the smoking of incense; **of** acacia wood you shall make it. Approximately 18 inches (a cubit) **shall be** its length, and approximately 18 inches (a cubit) its breadth; it shall be square; and approximately 3 feet (two cubits) its height; its horns **shall be** from it. And you shall overlay it **with** pure gold, its top and its sides all around and its horns; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around.* (Exodus 30:1-3)

It was about eighteen inches square and three feet tall, acacia wood covered with pure gold, with a horn at each corner and a gold rim around the top. Like the other pieces, it had rings and poles for carrying. It was taller than the table and the ark, and it stood closest to the veil.

> *And you shall put it before the veil which **is** by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat which **is** over the testimony, where I will meet with you there. And Aaron shall make incense of fragrances smoke on it; morning by morning, when he tends the lamps, he shall make it smoke. And when Aaron lifts up the lamps between the two evenings, he shall make it smoke, a continual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.* (Exodus 30:6-8)

Every morning when the high priest tended the lamps, he burned incense on this altar. Every evening when he lit the lamps, he burned it again. Morning and evening, the same times the lamb was offered at the bronze altar outside. The incense was continual, just like the burnt offering. As the smoke rose from the altar in the courtyard, the fragrance rose from the altar inside.

Holy Incense, Made God's Way

The incense was a special blend of four ingredients, stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense, in equal parts, salted and pure (Exodus 30:34-35). No one was allowed to make it for personal use. Anyone who did would be cut off from Israel (Exodus 30:37-38). And nothing else was ever to be burned on this altar. No other incense, no animal, no grain, no drink offering (Exodus 30:9).

God took that seriously. On the first days of the priesthood, two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered incense with fire God had not commanded.

> *And the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, took each man his censer, and they put fire in them, and they placed incense on it, and they brought near before the LORD strange fire, which He*

> *had not commanded them. And fire went out from before the LORD, and it consumed them, and they died before the LORD.* (Leviticus 10:1-2)

It is a hard story. We do not know every detail of what they did wrong, though Leviticus 10:9 warns the priests against wine right afterward, which may hint that they were drunk. What is clear is that they came to God their own way, not His. Worship is not something we make up. God tells us how to approach Him.

Incense and Prayer

What did the incense picture? The Bible tells us.

> *Let my prayer be established **as** incense before You, the lifting up of my palms **as** an evening offering.* (Psalm 141:2)

David asked God to receive his prayer like the incense rising in the tabernacle. And in the New Testament, when Zechariah the priest went into the temple to burn incense, the whole crowd outside was praying at the same hour.

> *Now it came to pass, while he was serving as priest in the order of his division before God, according to the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to burn incense, having entered into the temple of the Lord. And all the multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of the incense. Then an angel of **the** Lord appeared to him, standing on **the** right of the altar of the incense.* (Luke 1:8-11)

That was the moment God chose to announce the birth of John the Baptist. Prayer and incense went up together, and God answered.

In heaven, John saw the same thing. The elders held golden bowls full of incense, and Revelation says plainly what the incense is:

> *And when He took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having harps and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.* (Revelation 5:8)

Later an angel offers incense on the golden altar before the throne, mixed with the prayers of the saints, and the smoke goes up before God (Revelation 8:3-4). The altar of incense in the tabernacle was a copy. The real one is in heaven, and your prayers reach it.

Jesus Our Intercessor

But there is more. The person who burned the incense was the high priest. The incense went up because he offered it. That points us to Jesus, our High Priest, who prays for us.

> *Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, always living to intercede for them.* (Hebrews 7:25)

Always living to intercede. Jesus is praying for you right now. Paul says the same thing:

> *who **is** the one who condemns? Christ **is** the One who died, and rather also was raised, who is also at **the** right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.* (Romans 8:34)

On the night before He died, Jesus told Peter that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat, and then He said He had prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:31-32). Peter still denied Him three times, but his faith did not fail. He came back. I take great comfort in that. My prayers are weak and often distracted. But they go up to God mixed with the prayers of Jesus, the way the incense went up mixed with the fragrance of the high priest's offering.

Fire From the Altar

One more detail ties everything together. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest took burning coals from the altar before the LORD in a censer and carried them inside the veil with incense (Leviticus 16:12-13). Most commentators understand that altar to be the bronze altar outside. Wherever the coals came from, the incense could only be burned with fire God had lit. Nadab and Abihu died for using other fire.

Here is the lesson I take from it. Prayer works because of the sacrifice. We come to God in prayer only because Jesus died for us. That is why we pray in His name. Not as a magic phrase at the end, but because His blood is the only reason we can come into the Holy Place at all.

Where Did the Altar Stand?

If you read Hebrews 9 closely, you will notice something.

> *And behind the second veil **was** a tabernacle which is called **the** Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which **was** a golden jar having the manna, and the staff of Aaron which budded, and the tablets of the covenant* (Hebrews 9:3-4)

Hebrews seems to place the golden altar of incense in the Most Holy Place, behind the veil. But Exodus puts it in front of the veil, in the Holy Place (Exodus 30:6; 40:26). Is that a mistake?

I don't believe so, and here is why. Some scholars point out that the Greek word in Hebrews 9:4 can mean either an incense altar or a censer, and the King James Version translates it as a golden censer. Others, including many who read it as the altar, note that Hebrews says the Most Holy Place *had* it, not that the altar was *inside* it, because the altar belonged to the Most Holy Place in purpose. First Kings 6:22 even calls the incense altar the altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary. It stood right at the veil, and on the Day of Atonement its incense was carried inside. So the altar served the Most Holy Place, even though it stood just outside the veil. I lay this out because I would rather you hear it from me than run across it and think it shakes the Bible. It doesn't.

The Picture

The golden altar stood closest to God's presence, and incense rose from it morning and evening. The Bible says incense is a picture of prayer. Jesus, our High Priest, always lives to intercede for us, and our prayers rise to God because of His sacrifice.

Study Questions

1. The altar of incense stood closest to the veil. What does that suggest about prayer?
2. Read Leviticus 10:1-3. Why do you think God dealt so seriously with Nadab and Abihu?
3. Read Psalm 141:2, Revelation 5:8, and Revelation 8:3-4. What do these verses tell you about your prayers?
4. What does it mean to you that Jesus is praying for you right now (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34)?
5. How does the coal from the altar help explain why we pray in Jesus' name?

Chapter 10: The Veil

> *Having therefore, brothers, confidence for the entrance into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh*
>
> Hebrews 10:19-20 (SLB)

At the back of the Holy Place hung a heavy curtain. On one side of it, the priests did their daily work with the lamps, the bread, and the incense. On the other side was the presence of God. Between the two was the veil, and it said one thing to every priest who stood in front of it: no further.

What It Looked Like

> *And you shall make a veil **of** blue and purple and crimson scarlet and twisted fine linen; the work of a designer he shall make it, **with** cherubim. And you shall put it on four pillars of acacia overlaid **with** gold, their hooks **of** gold, on four bases of silver. And you shall put the veil under the clasps, and you shall bring there, inside the veil, the ark of the testimony; and the veil shall separate for you between the holy place and the holy of holies.* (Exodus 26:31-33)

The veil was made of the same blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen as the gate and the inner curtains, but with one difference. Cherubim were worked into it by a skilled designer. It hung on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold, set in silver bases. And its job was to separate. The SLB says it plainly: the veil shall separate for you between the holy place and the holy of holies.

Remember Genesis 3:24. When Adam and Eve were sent out of the garden, God placed cherubim to guard the way back. The veil carried the same picture. Cherubim stood guard over the way into God's presence. Sin had closed the door, and no one could walk through it on his own.

Once a Year, Not Without Blood

Only one man could ever go behind the veil, and only on one day of the year.

> *but into the second the high priest alone **enters** once in the year, not without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of ignorance of the people; the Holy Spirit signifying this, that the way into the holy places has not yet been made manifest while the first tabernacle still has standing* (Hebrews 9:7-8)

The high priest, on the Day of Atonement, with blood, and with a cloud of incense covering the mercy seat so that he would not die (Leviticus 16:2, 13). Even Aaron could not come in whenever he wanted. Leviticus 16:2 tells Moses to warn him not to come at just any time inside the veil, or he would die.

Hebrews says the Holy Spirit was teaching something by this. As long as the first tabernacle was standing, the way into the holy places had not yet been opened. The veil was a sign that the old system could not bring people all the way to God. It could bring them to the courtyard. It could bring the priests to the Holy Place. But the way into the presence of God stayed closed.

Torn From Top to Bottom

Now come to the cross. By Jesus' day the tabernacle had been replaced by the temple in Jerusalem, and the temple had its own veil hanging between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, made the same way, with cherubim (2 Chronicles 3:14). At about the ninth hour, three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out and died (Matthew 27:46-50).

> *And Jesus, having cried out again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit. And look, the veil of the temple was torn into two from top to bottom, and the earth was shaken, and the rocks were split* (Matthew 27:50-51)

Mark and Luke record it too (Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). Think about the people who saw it. It was the middle of the afternoon at Passover, and priests were on duty at the temple. And suddenly the curtain no man was allowed to pass was ripped in two in front of them. Not from the bottom up, as a man would tear it, but from the top down. God tore it. God opened the way.

Outside the Bible: How Thick Was the Veil? (*Background*)

You may have heard that the temple veil was four inches thick and that horses tied to each side could not pull it apart. That claim comes from Jewish tradition written down long after the temple was destroyed, in the Mishnah and Talmud. I was not able to open and check those texts myself for this book, and the Bible gives no thickness. What the Gospels do tell us is enough: the veil was torn in two, from top to bottom, at the moment Jesus died.

His Flesh

Hebrews tells us what the veil pictured, and it is one of the most striking statements in the New Testament.

> *Having therefore, brothers, confidence for the entrance into the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and **having** a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having **our** hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and **our** body washed with pure water.* (Hebrews 10:19-22)

The veil was His flesh. When the veil of the temple was torn, it was a picture of what was happening on the cross: the body of Jesus was being torn for us. The way into God's presence was opened through His death. The same moment His body was broken, the barrier came down.

Notice the words Hebrews uses: confidence, a new and living way, draw near, full assurance. The old way said, "Keep out, or you will die." The new way says, "Come in with confidence." Not because we are better than the priests of Israel, but because the blood of Jesus has been offered once for all, and the veil is open.

Boldly

Hebrews says it again in another place:

> *Let us therefore come with boldness to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.* (Hebrews 4:16)

Do you pray that way? Many believers still pray as if the veil were hanging. They come to God unsure whether He wants to hear from them, as if they had to earn a hearing. I understand that. When you know your own heart, it is hard to feel bold. But our boldness is not based on how we feel. It is based on where Jesus is. Hebrews says He has gone inside the veil as a forerunner for us (Hebrews 6:19-20). He went ahead of us, and where He went, we follow. Our hope is anchored on the other side of that curtain.

The Veil Over Hearts

Paul uses the idea of a veil in another way too. When Moses came down from the mountain, his face shone, and he put a veil over his face (Exodus 34:33-35). Paul says that even in his day, when the Old Testament was read, a veil lay over the hearts of many who heard it. But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away (2 Corinthians 3:14-16).

That is my prayer for anyone reading this book who has not yet trusted Christ. You can read about the tabernacle as a piece of history, the way you would read about an old building. Or you can turn to the Lord, and the veil comes off, and you begin to see Him in every board and curtain.

The Picture

The veil, with cherubim woven into it, shut everyone out of God's presence except the high priest once a year. When Jesus died, God tore the temple veil from top to bottom. Hebrews says the veil was His flesh. Through His death, the way to God is open, and we can come with confidence.

Study Questions

1. Read Genesis 3:22-24 and Exodus 26:31-33. What do the cherubim on the veil remind you of?
2. Why do you think only the high priest could go behind the veil, and only once a year?
3. The veil was torn from top to bottom. Why does the direction matter?
4. Read Hebrews 10:19-22. List the words that describe how we can now come to God. Which one means the most to you?
5. Do you pray with confidence or with hesitation? What would change if you prayed believing the veil is truly open?

Chapter 11: The Ark and the Mercy Seat

> *And I will meet with you there, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which **are** on the ark of the testimony, all that I will command you concerning the sons of Israel.*
>
> Exodus 25:22 (SLB)

We have finally come to the center of it all. Behind the veil, in a dark room shaped like a cube, sat one piece of furniture. When God gave Moses the plans for the tabernacle, this is where He started. It was the first thing He described, because it was the reason for everything else.

The Ark

> *And they shall make an ark of acacia wood: approximately 3.75 feet (two cubits and a half) **shall be** its length, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its breadth, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its height. And you shall overlay it **with** pure gold; from inside and from outside you shall overlay it; and you shall make on it a molding of gold all around.* (Exodus 25:10-11)

The ark was a chest about three feet nine inches long and two feet three inches wide and high, made of acacia wood covered with pure gold inside and out. It had four gold rings and two poles so the Levites could carry it on their shoulders (Exodus 25:12-15). The poles were never to be removed. The word “ark” simply means a box or chest.

And inside it went the testimony.

> *And you shall put into the ark the testimony which I will give to you.* (Exodus 25:16)

The testimony was the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, written by the finger of God (Exodus 31:18). Later, a gold jar of manna and Aaron’s staff that budded were also kept with the ark (Exodus 16:33-34; Numbers 17:10), and Hebrews 9:4 lists all three. By the time Solomon moved the ark into the temple, only the tablets were left inside (1 Kings 8:9). The Bible does not tell us what happened to the other two.

The Mercy Seat

On top of the ark sat its lid, and this is the part I most want you to see.

> *And you shall make a mercy seat of pure gold: approximately 3.75 feet (two cubits and a half) **shall be** its length, and approximately 2.25 feet (a cubit and a half) its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; **of** hammered work you shall make them, from the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub from the end on this **side**, and one cherub from the end on that **side**; from the mercy seat you shall make the cherubim on its two ends. And the cherubim shall be spreading out wings upward, covering over the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces **shall be** each toward its fellow; toward the mercy seat the faces of the cherubim shall be.*

> *And you shall put the mercy seat on the ark from above, and into the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. And I will meet with you there, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which **are** on the ark of the testimony, all that I will command you concerning the sons of Israel.* (Exodus 25:17-22)

The cover was a slab of pure gold the same size as the ark, with two cherubim hammered out of the same piece of gold, one at each end. They faced each other, looking down at the cover, with their wings spread over it. And God said, "I will meet with you there."

The Hebrew word for this cover is *kapporet*. It comes from the same root as *kippur*, as in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The root has to do with covering or making atonement. Older English Bibles followed William Tyndale, who called it the mercy seat, and the name stuck because it fits. It was the place where mercy was given.

God described Himself as the One who sits above the cherubim (Psalm 80:1). The ark was pictured as His throne, or His footstool, on earth. When Moses went into the tent to speak with God, he heard the voice coming from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim (Numbers 7:89).

Law Underneath, Mercy on Top

Think about what was inside the box and what was on top of it. Inside were the tablets of the law, the law Israel had already broken before the tablets even reached the camp. Moses smashed the first set at the foot of the mountain when he saw the golden calf (Exodus 32:19). God had to write a second set.

So inside the ark was the law that condemned. Above the ark was the presence of a holy God. And between the two was the mercy seat. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest sprinkled blood right on it.

> *And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and spatter **it** with his finger on the face of the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat he shall spatter some of the blood with his finger seven times. "And he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which **is** for the people, and he shall bring its blood inside the veil, and he shall do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and he shall spatter it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat."* (Leviticus 16:14-15)

When God looked down from between the cherubim, He did not see the broken law. He saw the blood on the mercy seat. The law was not thrown out or ignored. It stayed in the ark. But it was covered by blood, and so God could meet with His people in mercy instead of judgment.

Psalm 85:10 says, "Steadfast love and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed." I can't think of a better description of the mercy seat. God's righteousness was not set aside. His love was not held back. Both met at the place where the blood was sprinkled.

Jesus, Our Mercy Seat

Now here is the beautiful part. When the Old Testament was translated into Greek a couple of centuries before Christ, the translators used the word *hilasterion* for the mercy seat. Hebrews 9:5 uses that same word for the mercy seat in the tabernacle. And Paul uses it for Jesus.

> *whom God set forth **as** a propitiation through faith in His blood, for a demonstration of His righteousness because of the passing over of the sins that had previously occurred, in the forbearance of God* (Romans 3:25)

The word the SLB translates as "propitiation" is *hilasterion*, the mercy seat word. Propitiation means satisfying God's just anger against sin, so that He can show mercy. Paul is saying God set Jesus forth as the place of atonement, the true mercy seat, where His righteous anger against sin was satisfied by blood. And the blood was His own.

John uses a related word, *hilasmos*:

> *and He Himself is **the** propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.* (1 John 2:2)

In the tabernacle, the mercy seat was hidden behind a veil, and only one man ever saw it, once a year. Paul says God set Jesus forth publicly. He was lifted up on a cross outside the city, where anyone passing by could see. The mercy seat is no longer hidden.

Don't Touch

The ark was holy, and Israel learned that the hard way. When the Philistines captured it, God struck them with plagues until they sent it back (1 Samuel 5 to 6). When it came back, men of Beth-shemesh looked inside it, and God struck many of them (1 Samuel 6:19). Years later, when David moved it to Jerusalem on a new cart instead of on the shoulders of the Levites, the oxen stumbled, and a man named Uzzah reached out to steady it.

> *And they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, and Uzzah stretched out **his hand** to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen had stumbled. And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for the error, and he died there beside the ark of God.* (2 Samuel 6:6-7)

That story bothers people, and I understand why. Uzzah seems to have meant well. But God had said clearly how the ark was to be carried, and that no one but the priests was to touch the holy things (Numbers 4:15). David tried to do God's work his own way, and it cost a man his life. When David tried again, he had the Levites carry it on their shoulders as God commanded, and it went well (1 Chronicles 15:13-15).

The lesson is not that God is touchy. The lesson is that God is holy, and He alone decides how sinners may come near Him. We can't handle Him on our own terms. That is exactly why we need a mercy seat, and a High Priest, and blood.

Where Is the Ark Now?

People ask me this all the time. The honest answer is that nobody knows. The ark is last clearly mentioned in the Old Testament when King Josiah told the Levites to put it back in the temple (2 Chronicles 35:3). The Babylonians destroyed the temple in 586 B.C. Whether the ark was carried off, destroyed, or hidden, the Bible does not say. Jeremiah said a day would come when people would not even

miss it or make another one (Jeremiah 3:16). There are many stories about where it might be, but none of them has ever been proven.

What the Bible does show us is an ark in heaven.

> *And the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple; and there were lightnings and voices and thunders and an earthquake and great hail.* (Revelation 11:19)

The ark Moses built was a copy. The real throne of God, with its true mercy seat, has never been lost.

The Picture

The ark held the law that Israel had broken, and above it, between the cherubim, God met His people. Blood on the mercy seat covered the broken law so God could show mercy. Paul calls Jesus our mercy seat, set forth publicly, where God's justice and love meet.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think God began His instructions to Moses with the ark, the very center of the tabernacle?
2. What was inside the ark, and what was on top of it? What does that picture tell you about the law and mercy?
3. Read Romans 3:21-26. What does it mean that God set Jesus forth as a propitiation, or mercy seat?
4. Read 2 Samuel 6:1-15 and 1 Chronicles 15:11-15. What did David learn about doing God's work God's way?
5. Psalm 85:10 says righteousness and peace have kissed. Where do you see that happen at the cross?

Part Three: The Priests and the Offerings

Chapter 12: The High Priest and His Garments

> *Having therefore a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the confession.*
>
> Hebrews 4:14 (SLB)

A tabernacle with no priest would have been an empty building. Somebody had to stand between a holy God and a sinful people, offer the sacrifices, tend the lamps, burn the incense, and once a year carry the blood behind the veil. God chose Aaron, the brother of Moses, and his sons for that job, and He gave Aaron clothes unlike anyone else's in Israel.

When I served as a lay pastor and preached, my job was to open the Bible and speak God's Word to people. A prophet stood before people to speak for God. A priest stood before God for the people, carrying their names on his shoulders and over his heart (Exodus 28). Jesus is both.

What a Priest Is

Hebrews gives us a simple definition.

> *For every high priest being taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men **in** the **things** relating to God, so that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins* (Hebrews 5:1)

A priest is a go-between. A prophet speaks to people on behalf of God. A priest goes to God on behalf of people. He represents them, brings their offerings, and prays for them. And Hebrews adds that no one takes this job for himself. God has to call him, just as He called Aaron (Hebrews 5:4).

Garments for Glory and Beauty

> *And you, bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, for him to serve as priest to Me: Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron. And you shall make garments of holiness for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.* (Exodus 28:1-2)

For glory and for beauty. God wanted the high priest to look like what he was: someone set apart, wearing the colors of the tabernacle itself. Exodus lists the pieces.

> *And these **are** the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe, and a tunic of checkered work, a turban, and a sash; and they shall make garments of holiness for Aaron your brother and for his sons, for him to serve as priest to Me.* (Exodus 28:4)

Let's look at them from the inside out, the way he would have dressed. First, linen undergarments, for modesty (Exodus 28:42). Next, a long linen tunic woven in a checkered pattern, tied with an embroidered sash. Over the tunic went a robe, and over the robe the ephod with its breastpiece. On his head went a linen turban with a gold plate on the front.

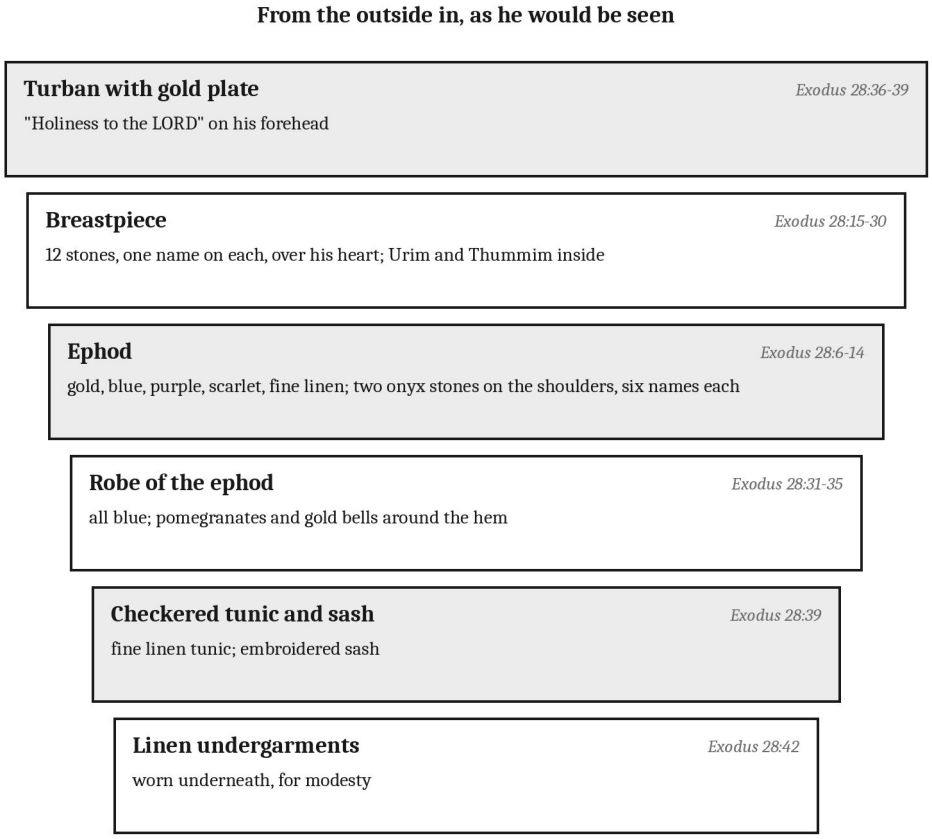


Figure 3. The High Priest's Garments (Exodus 28)

The Robe With Bells

The robe of the ephod was all blue, woven in one piece, with an opening for the head reinforced so that it would not tear (Exodus 28:31-32). Around its hem hung pomegranates made of colored yarn, with gold bells between them.

> *And you shall make on its hem pomegranates of blue and purple and crimson scarlet, on its hem all around, and bells of gold in their midst all around: a bell of gold and a pomegranate, a bell of gold and a pomegranate, on the hems of the robe all around. And it shall be on Aaron to minister, and its sound shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before the LORD and when he comes out, and he shall not die.* (Exodus 28:33-35)

That last line is sobering. The bells were heard as he moved about before the LORD, so he would not die. Some later Jewish traditions say a rope was tied to the high priest's ankle on the Day of Atonement in case he died inside. That idea comes from writings long after the Bible, and I have not found it in any ancient source I could check, so don't put weight on it. What the Bible does say is enough. Serving before a holy God was not casual work.

The Ephod and the Stones on His Shoulders

The ephod was a kind of apron or vest made of gold thread, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen (Exodus 28:6). On each shoulder strap was an onyx stone set in gold.

> *And you shall take two onyx stones, and you shall engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the second stone, according to their generations.* ***With*** *the work of an engraver in stone,* ***like*** *the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones according to the names of the sons of Israel; surrounded* ***with*** *filigree settings of gold you shall make them. And you shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, stones of memorial for the sons of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for a memorial.* (Exodus 28:9-12)

Twelve names on his shoulders. When Aaron went before God, he carried the whole nation on his shoulders. That is a picture of strength. Jesus told a story about a shepherd who found his lost sheep and laid it on his shoulders, rejoicing (Luke 15:5). Our High Priest carries us. We don't have to carry ourselves into God's presence.

The Breastpiece Over His Heart

Fastened to the front of the ephod was the breastpiece, a square pouch about nine inches on each side, with twelve precious stones set in four rows of three. Each stone was engraved with the name of one tribe (Exodus 28:15-21).

> *And Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastpiece of judgment over his heart when he goes into the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually. And you shall put into the breastpiece of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over the heart of Aaron when he goes in before the LORD; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.* (Exodus 28:29-30)

The names on the shoulders were on two stones, six names each. The names on the breastpiece were each on their own stone, over his heart. One picture is strength. The other is love. Jesus carries you on His shoulders and over His heart. And notice that every tribe had its own stone. Not one stone for all of Israel. Each one by name. Jesus knows you by name (John 10:3).

Inside the breastpiece were the Urim and Thummim. The Bible never fully explains what they were. They seem to have been used to ask God for a decision, perhaps giving a yes or no answer (Numbers 27:21; 1 Samuel 14:41). Their names probably mean lights and perfections. Beyond that, we honestly do not know.

Holiness to the LORD

On the front of the turban was a plate of pure gold, tied on with a blue cord.

> *And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and you shall engrave on it* ***like*** *the engravings of a signet, 'Holiness to the LORD.' And you shall put it on a lace of blue, and it shall be on the turban; at the front of the face of the turban it shall be. And it shall be on the forehead of Aaron, and Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel sanctify, for all the*

> *gifts of their holy things; and it shall be on his forehead continually, for acceptance for them before the LORD.* (Exodus 28:36-38)

Holiness to the LORD, right across his forehead. And notice why: so that Aaron would bear the iniquity of the holy things. Even the people's gifts to God were not perfect. Their worship was mixed with sin. The high priest's holiness covered the imperfection in their offerings, so that God would accept them.

That is true of us too. Our best prayers and our best service still have sin mixed in. We are accepted, not because our offerings are perfect, but because our High Priest is.

The Linen Day

There was one day when the high priest set all this glory aside. On the Day of Atonement, before he went behind the veil, he took off the garments of glory and beauty and put on plain white linen.

> *He shall put on a linen tunic of holiness, and linen undergarments shall be on his flesh, and with a linen sash he shall gird himself, and with a linen turban he shall wrap **himself**; they **are** garments of holiness. And he shall bathe his flesh in water and put them on.* (Leviticus 16:4)

I find that moving. To do the most important work of the whole year, the high priest dressed in the plainest clothes. He looked like a servant. When Jesus came to make atonement for us, He set aside the glory He had with the Father and took the form of a servant.

> *but emptied Himself, having taken **the** form of a slave, having come to be in **the** likeness of men; and having been found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, having become obedient as far as death, even death of a cross.* (Philippians 2:7-8)

After the work was done, the high priest washed again and put his garments of glory back on (Leviticus 16:23-24). After the cross, Jesus was raised and exalted and given the name above every name (Philippians 2:9).

A Better High Priest

Hebrews spends whole chapters comparing Jesus to Aaron, and Jesus wins every comparison. Aaron's priests died, and new ones had to take their place. Jesus lives forever. Aaron had to offer sacrifices for his own sins first. Jesus had no sin. Aaron offered animals. Jesus offered Himself.

> *And they indeed have become many priests because they are prevented by death from continuing; but He, because He abides forever, holds the priesthood permanently. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, always living to intercede for them. For such a high priest was fitting for us: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and having become higher than the heavens; who does not have need every day, as the high priests **do**, to offer up sacrifices first for their own sins, then for those of the people; for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.* (Hebrews 7:23-27)

Jesus was not from the tribe of Levi. He was from Judah. Hebrews explains that His priesthood comes from a different order, the order of Melchizedek, the priest-king who blessed Abraham long before Aaron was born (Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7). Melchizedek was both king and priest. So is Jesus.

And Jesus does not serve in a tent of goats' hair in the desert. He serves in the real thing.

> *Now the main point of the things being spoken **is this**: we have such a high priest, who sat down at **the** right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.* (Hebrews 8:1-2)

He Understands

There is one more thing I want you to know about your High Priest. He is not distant.

> *For we do not have a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but **one** who has been tempted in all things according to likeness, without sin.* (Hebrews 4:15)

Aaron was a man, so he knew what weakness felt like. But he was also a sinner. Jesus became a man and faced every kind of temptation we face, and He never sinned. So He knows exactly what you are going through, and He has the power to help you through it. That is why Hebrews follows this verse with the invitation to come boldly to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16).

The Picture

Aaron carried the names of Israel on his shoulders and over his heart, wore Holiness to the LORD on his forehead, and set aside his glory to make atonement in plain linen. Jesus is our great High Priest. He lives forever, had no sin, offered Himself, and understands our weakness.

Study Questions

1. In your own words, what is the difference between a prophet and a priest?
2. The high priest carried Israel's names on his shoulders and over his heart. What do those two places say about how Jesus cares for you?
3. Read Exodus 28:36-38. Why did even the people's gifts to God need someone to bear their iniquity?
4. Why do you think the high priest wore plain linen on the Day of Atonement? How does Philippians 2:5-11 connect to that?
5. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. How does knowing Jesus understands your weakness change the way you pray?

Chapter 13: The Priests at Work and the Priesthood of Believers

> *And you, you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These **are** the words which you shall speak to the sons of Israel.*
>
> Exodus 19:6 (SLB)

Aaron was the high priest, but he did not serve alone. His sons served with him as priests, and the rest of the tribe of Levi helped carry and care for the tabernacle. In this chapter we look at how a priest was made, what his days looked like, and what all of it has to do with you. Because if you belong to Jesus, the New Testament says you are a priest too.

How a Priest Was Made

God gave Moses detailed instructions for ordaining Aaron and his sons in Exodus 29, and Leviticus 8 tells us Moses carried them out. The ceremony lasted seven days (Leviticus 8:33). Here are the main steps.

- **Washed.** Moses brought them to the entrance of the tent and washed them with water (Exodus 29:4). This was the full washing we talked about at the basin. It happened once.
- **Clothed.** Moses dressed them in the priestly garments God had designed (Exodus 29:5-9). They did not bring their own clothes. God provided what they wore.
- **Anointed.** Moses poured the holy anointing oil on Aaron's head (Exodus 29:7). Psalm 133:2 remembers that oil running down Aaron's beard and onto his robes.
- **Covered by sacrifice.** A bull was offered as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering (Exodus 29:10-18).
- **Marked with blood.** A second ram, the ram of ordination, was killed, and its blood was put on the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe of each priest (Exodus 29:20).
- **Hands filled.** Parts of the offering were placed in their hands and waved before the LORD (Exodus 29:22-24). The Hebrew phrase for ordaining a priest means, word for word, to fill his hand.

Look at the blood on the ear, the thumb, and the toe. Many teachers have pointed out that it marked what the priest heard, what he did, and where he went. That reading is not stated in the text, but it is a natural one. A priest belonged to God from head to foot. His ears were to listen to God, his hands were to work for God, and his feet were to walk in God's ways.

Do you see the gospel in those steps? Washed, clothed in garments someone else provided, anointed with oil, covered by sacrifice, marked by blood, and given work to do. That is exactly what God does for every believer. Isaiah said it this way:

> *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; let my soul exult in my God; for He has clothed me **with** garments of salvation; He has covered me **with** a robe of righteousness, like the bridegroom **who** acts as a priest **with** a headdress, and like the bride **who** adorns herself **with** her ornaments.* (Isaiah 61:10)

A Day in the Life

Most of a priest's work happened in the courtyard. Every morning and every evening a lamb was offered on the bronze altar, with a grain offering and a drink offering (Exodus 29:38-42). In between, priests offered the sacrifices people brought: burnt offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, peace offerings, and grain offerings. They examined skin diseases and declared people clean or unclean (Leviticus 13 to 14). They kept the fire burning and carried out the ashes. Inside the Holy Place, the high priest or a priest tended the lamps and burned the incense morning and evening, and every Sabbath they changed the bread.

It was hard, hot, messy, holy work. The priests also had a teaching job that people often forget. They were to teach Israel the difference between holy and common, clean and unclean, and all the statutes God had given (Leviticus 10:10-11). Malachi said it well:

> *For the lips of a priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek law from his mouth; for he **is** the messenger of the LORD of armies.* (Malachi 2:7)

And they blessed the people. God gave Aaron and his sons the words to say:

> *"May the LORD bless you, and may He keep you; may the LORD make His face shine toward you, and may He be gracious to you; may the LORD lift up His face toward you, and may He set peace for you."'* (Numbers 6:24-26)

That blessing has been spoken over God's people for about thirty-four hundred years. I still love to hear it at the end of a service.

When the Priests Failed

The priesthood did not always live up to its calling. Aaron himself made the golden calf. His sons Nadab and Abihu died offering strange fire. In the days of Samuel, Eli's sons Hophni and Phinehas took the best of the offerings for themselves and treated the LORD's offering with contempt (1 Samuel 2:12-17). Malachi rebuked the priests of his day for offering blind and sick animals (Malachi 1:6-8). And in Jesus' day, the chief priests plotted His death.

I don't say that to run anyone down. I say it because it shows why we needed a better priest. Any system that depends on sinful men will fail sooner or later. Hebrews says if perfection had come through the Levitical priesthood, there would have been no need for another priest to arise (Hebrews 7:11). God planned all along to send a High Priest who would never fail.

Every Believer a Priest

Now here is the surprise. When God first brought Israel to Mount Sinai, He said He wanted the whole nation to be a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). Peter takes those words and applies them to the church.

> *But you **are** a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for **His** possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light* (1 Peter 2:9)

> *you yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* (1 Peter 2:5)

And John, opening the book of Revelation, praises Jesus for it.

> *and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him **be** the glory and the dominion to the ages of the ages. Amen.* (Revelation 1:5-6)

In Israel, only the sons of Aaron could go into the Holy Place. In Christ, every believer can come to God directly. You don't need anyone but Jesus to stand between you and God. That is what the Reformers called the priesthood of all believers. It does not mean we don't need pastors and teachers. God gives those to His church (Ephesians 4:11-12). It means every Christian has direct access to God through Jesus, and every Christian has priestly work to do.

Our Sacrifices

What sacrifices do believer-priests offer? Not animals. That work is finished. The New Testament names several spiritual sacrifices.

- **Our bodies.** Paul urges us to present our bodies as a living, holy sacrifice (Romans 12:1). Not dead on an altar, but alive and given over to God every day.
- **Our praise.** Hebrews 13:15 calls praise a sacrifice, the fruit of lips confessing His name.
- **Our good works and sharing.** Hebrews 13:16 says God is well pleased with sacrifices of doing good and sharing what we have.
- **Our giving.** Paul called a gift from the Philippians a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God (Philippians 4:18).
- **Our prayers.** As we saw at the altar of incense, the prayers of the saints rise before God like incense (Revelation 8:3-4).
- **The people we bring.** Paul spoke of his ministry to the Gentiles as priestly service, so that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable (Romans 15:16).

Your Monday morning can be priestly work. So can your prayers for your family, your giving on Sunday, the meal you take to a neighbor, and the conversation where you tell a friend about Jesus. All of it can be offered to God through Jesus Christ.

The Picture

Priests were washed, clothed, anointed, and marked by blood before they served. Every believer has been made a priest through Jesus, with direct access to God and spiritual sacrifices to offer: our bodies, praise, good works, giving, prayer, and the people we bring to Him.

Study Questions

1. Read Exodus 29:1-9 and 19-21. Which step of the priests' ordination stands out to you most, and why?

2. The blood was put on the ear, thumb, and toe. How would your week look different if your ears, hands, and feet all belonged to God?

3. Why do you think God allowed the priesthood to fail so often in Israel's history?

4. Read 1 Peter 2:4-10. What does it mean for you personally to be part of a royal priesthood?

5. Which spiritual sacrifice from the list in this chapter do you most need to offer this week?

Chapter 14: The Five Offerings

> *and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of fragrance.*
>
> Ephesians 5:2 (SLB)

The first seven chapters of Leviticus are where many Bible reading plans go to die. Animal after animal, fat and kidneys, blood on the horns of the altar. If you have ever stalled out here, I want to help you see these chapters with new eyes. They are not just rules for butchering. They are five portraits of what Jesus did for us, each from a different angle.

When I took an honest inventory of my life in a 12-step program, one of the hardest things was seeing damage I had done without noticing. God made provision for sins people did not even know they had committed (Leviticus 4:2; Psalm 19:12). Jesus' sacrifice covers the sins we see and the ones we miss.

The Big Picture

Leviticus 1 to 7 describes five main offerings. Three of them were voluntary, offered when a worshiper wanted to draw near to God or thank Him. Two were required, offered when someone had sinned. The voluntary offerings were called a soothing aroma to the LORD. The required ones dealt with guilt.

Offering	Hebrew name	What was offered	Main idea	Where it points
Burnt offering (Leviticus 1; 6:8-13)	*olah*, what goes up	A male animal without blemish, or birds for the poor; all of it burned	Complete surrender to God	Jesus gave Himself completely to the Father (Ephesians 5:2)
Grain offering (Leviticus 2; 6:14-23)	*minchah*, a gift	Fine flour with oil and frankincense, salted, no leaven or honey	Dedication of one's life and work	Jesus' perfect, sinless life offered to God
Peace offering (Leviticus 3; 7:11-36)	*shelamim*, from *shalom*	A male or female animal without blemish; fat burned, meat shared	Fellowship and thanks with God	Jesus made peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20)
Sin offering (Leviticus 4:1 to 5:13; 6:24-30)	*chatat*, sin	From a bull to a goat to doves to flour, by rank and means	Cleansing from sin, including sins done unknowingly	Jesus was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21)
Guilt offering (Leviticus 5:14 to 6:7; 7:1-10)	*asham*, guilt	A ram, plus repayment and one fifth more	Payment for wrongs done against God or a neighbor	Jesus' soul made a guilt offering (Isaiah 53:10)

Notice the order. God starts with the burnt offering, the offering of complete devotion, and ends with the guilt offering. But a sinner coming to God starts at the other end. He first needs his guilt dealt with, then his sin cleansed, and then he can enjoy peace with God, offer his life, and give himself completely. God starts with what pleases Him most. We start with what we need most. Both meet in Christ.

The Burnt Offering: All for God

The burnt offering was the oldest kind of sacrifice in the Bible. Noah offered burnt offerings after the Flood (Genesis 8:20), and Abraham was told to offer Isaac as one (Genesis 22:2). Its Hebrew name, *olah*, means that which goes up, because the whole animal went up in smoke. Except for the hide, which went to the priest (Leviticus 7:8), nothing was kept back.

> *And its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water; and the priest shall make all **of it** smoke on the altar **as** a burnt offering, a fire offering of a soothing aroma to the LORD.* (Leviticus 1:9)

That is what Paul had in mind when he wrote that Christ gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of fragrance (Ephesians 5:2). Jesus held nothing back from the Father. In the garden He prayed, "not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). His whole life, and then His death, went up to God as a pleasing offering.

The burnt offering also allowed for the poor. If you could not afford a bull, you could bring a sheep or a goat. If you could not afford those, you could bring two turtledoves or young pigeons (Leviticus 1:10, 14). When Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus to the temple, they offered birds, the offering of the poor (Luke 2:22-24; Leviticus 12:8). The Son of God was born into a family that could not afford a lamb, and He became the Lamb.

The Grain Offering: A Life Given to God

The grain offering was the only one of the five with no blood. It was a gift of fine flour, sometimes baked into cakes, with oil poured on it and frankincense on top.

> *And when a soul brings near an offering of a grain offering to the LORD, his offering shall be fine flour; and he shall pour oil on it, and he shall put frankincense on it.* (Leviticus 2:1)

Two things could never go into it: leaven or honey (Leviticus 2:11). And one thing always had to be in it: salt, the salt of the covenant (Leviticus 2:13). In the Bible, leaven is often a picture of sin or corruption spreading quietly (1 Corinthians 5:6-8; Matthew 16:6). Salt preserves and stops corruption. Many teachers see the grain offering as a picture of Jesus' perfect life. The fine flour, ground smooth and even, with no lumps, fits a life with no flaws. The oil fits the Holy Spirit, who came on Him at His baptism. The frankincense fits a life that was a fragrance to God. And no leaven means no sin. Those specific matches are suggestions, but the main point stands on its own. The grain offering was a gift of a person's labor, the work of his hands from the field to the oven, given back to God. Jesus' whole life was that kind of gift.

And grain has to be crushed to become flour. Jesus said that unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit (John 12:24).

The Peace Offering: A Meal With God

The peace offering was the happiest of all the sacrifices. Its name, *shelamim*, comes from *shalom*, which means peace, wholeness, being right with someone. It could be offered as thanksgiving, to fulfill a vow, or simply as a freewill offering (Leviticus 7:11-16).

Here is what made it different. Only the fat and certain inner parts were burned on the altar for God. The priest received the breast and the right thigh. And the worshiper and his family ate the rest in a fellowship meal (Leviticus 7:15, 31-34). God, the priest, and the worshiper all shared the same sacrifice. It was like sitting down to dinner with God.

That is what peace with God means. Not just that He has stopped being angry, but that we are now welcome at His table.

> *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ* (Romans 5:1)

Paul says Jesus Himself is our peace (Ephesians 2:14). He made peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20). And the Lord's Supper is our peace offering meal, where we share in the benefit of the one sacrifice and give thanks together.

The Sin Offering: Cleansing for Sin

The sin offering dealt with sin, especially sins done unintentionally, without knowing at the time that it was wrong.

> *"Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'When a soul sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which are not to be done, and does any one of them, if the anointed priest sins, for the guilt of the people, then he shall bring near for his sin which he has sinned a young bull, a son of the herd, without blemish to the LORD for a sin offering.* (Leviticus 4:2-3)

Did you notice? You could sin without knowing it, and it was still sin. Ignorance did not make it clean. I find that humbling. I have sinned in ways I don't even know about. David prayed for God to cleanse him from hidden faults (Psalm 19:12).

The animal for the sin offering depended on who sinned. If the high priest sinned, or the whole nation, it took a bull. A leader brought a male goat. An ordinary person brought a female goat or lamb. A poor person could bring two doves, and the very poor could bring a little fine flour with no oil or frankincense (Leviticus 4:3, 13-14, 22-23, 27-32; 5:7, 11). The greater a person's responsibility, the greater the offering. But no one was too poor to be forgiven.

For the most serious sin offerings, the ones for the high priest and the whole nation, the body of the bull was not eaten. It was carried outside the camp and burned (Leviticus 4:11-12, 21). Hebrews picks up on that detail.

> *For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest for sin are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, so that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.* (Hebrews 13:11-12)

Jesus was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem, outside the camp, like the sin offering. Paul says God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin (Romans 8:3). And He goes further: God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Guilt Offering: Paying the Debt

The guilt offering, also called the trespass offering, is close to the sin offering, but it has one special feature. It dealt with sins that caused loss or damage, either to God's holy things or to a neighbor, and it required paying back what was taken, plus one fifth more.

> *then it shall be, when he sins and is guilty, that he shall return the thing robbed which he robbed, or the thing extorted which he extorted, or the deposit which was deposited with him, or the lost thing which he found, or anything about which he swore to a falsehood; and he shall repay it in its principal, and let him add its fifth to it; to* ***the one*** *whose it* ***is*** *he shall give it, on the day of his being guilty.* (Leviticus 6:4-5)

That is restitution. It was not enough to say you were sorry. You had to make it right, and then some. Zacchaeus understood that principle when he met Jesus and promised to pay back four times what he had cheated anyone (Luke 19:8).

Sin is a debt. It takes something from God and from others that we cannot pay back. And here is where the guilt offering points to Jesus in a remarkable way. Isaiah 53, the great chapter on the suffering Servant, uses the very word for this offering.

> *And the LORD was pleased to crush Him; He made* ***Him*** *sick. If His soul makes a guilt offering, He will see offspring, He will prolong days, and the pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.* (Isaiah 53:10)

The word "guilt offering" there is *asham*, the same word used in Leviticus 5 and 6. Isaiah says the Servant's soul would be made a guilt offering. Jesus did not just cover our debt. He paid it in full and more. What we stole from God's glory He restored, and He added to it.

Five Offerings, One Sacrifice

Why five? Because no single picture could show everything Jesus did. The burnt offering shows His total devotion to the Father. The grain offering shows His perfect life. The peace offering shows the fellowship His death bought for us. The sin offering shows Him taking our sin. The guilt offering shows Him paying our debt.

Israel needed all five, over and over, every day for centuries. We need only one. Hebrews says the blood of bulls and goats could clean the outside, but the blood of Christ cleans the conscience.

> *For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?* (Hebrews 9:13-14)

Next time you read Leviticus 1 to 7, try reading it with this chart open beside you. Every time you see an animal die, every time you see flour and oil, every time you see the fat go up in smoke or the family sitting down to eat, ask yourself, "What does this show me about Jesus?" You will be surprised how quickly those chapters come alive.

The Picture

The five offerings of Leviticus show five sides of one sacrifice. Jesus gave Himself completely to God, lived a perfect life, made peace with God for us, became sin for us, and paid our debt in full.

Study Questions

1. Which three offerings were voluntary, and which two were required? What does that difference tell you?
2. Why do you think God allowed poorer people to bring smaller offerings, all the way down to a little flour?
3. Read Leviticus 7:11-15. What made the peace offering a meal? How does that change the way you think about peace with God?
4. Read Leviticus 4:2 and Psalm 19:12. Are there sins in your life you might not even be aware of? How does that make you feel about Jesus' sacrifice?
5. The guilt offering required paying back what was taken plus one fifth more. Is there anything you need to make right with someone?

Part Four: The Feasts of the LORD

Chapter 15: The Appointed Times of the LORD

> *'These **are** the appointed times of the LORD, convocations of holiness, which you shall proclaim at their appointed time.*
>
> Leviticus 23:4 (SLB)

We have walked through the tabernacle from the gate to the mercy seat. We have met the priests and looked at their offerings. Now we turn from the place to the calendar. God did not only tell Israel where to meet Him. He told them when.

God's Calendar

Leviticus 23 is the master list of Israel's holy days.

> *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'The appointed times of the LORD, which you shall proclaim **as** convocations of holiness, these, they **are** My appointed times."* (Leviticus 23:1-2)

The word translated "appointed times" is *moedim*. It means a set time, an appointment. It is the same word used in Genesis 1:14, where God made the sun, moon, and stars for signs and for appointed times. God built the calendar into the sky on the fourth day of creation, long before Israel existed.

Notice whose feasts these are. Not the feasts of Israel or the feasts of the Jews, though people often call them that. God says they are "My appointed times." They are the feasts of the LORD. He set the dates. And as we will see, He kept the appointments.

The other word in that verse, "convocation," means a gathering called together. These were times when the people stopped their work and came together before God.

The Sabbath First

Before God lists the yearly feasts, He starts with the weekly one.

> *Six days work shall be done, and on the seventh day **is** a Sabbath of Sabbath rest, a convocation of holiness; you shall not do any work; it **is** a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings.*
> (Leviticus 23:3)

The Sabbath came every seventh day. It reached all the way back to creation, when God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3). The yearly feasts were built on the same pattern of sevens. Three of the seven feasts fall in the seventh month, Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles each last seven days, and Pentecost comes after seven weeks of seven days.

The Sabbath was a gift. Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). It was a day to stop, rest, and remember that God is the One who provides. And like everything else in this book, it pointed ahead. Jesus invited the tired and worn out to come to Him for rest (Matthew 11:28). Hebrews says there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, and that the one who enters it rests

from his own works, as God did from His (Hebrews 4:9-10). Our true rest is not a day of the week. It is a Person, and the finished work He did for us.

Seven Feasts in Two Seasons

After the Sabbath, Leviticus 23 lists seven yearly feasts. They fall into two groups, one in the spring and one in the fall, with the long summer harvest season in between.

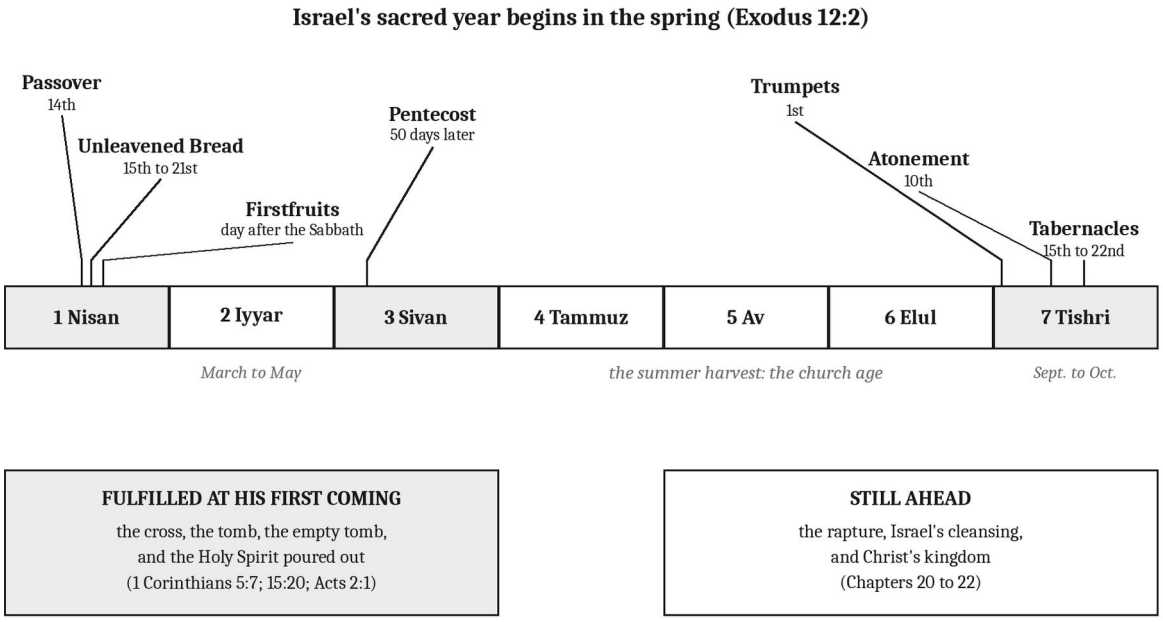


Figure 4. The Feasts of the LORD Through the Year (Leviticus 23)

Feast	Date on God's calendar	Leviticus 23	Season
Passover	14th day of the 1st month (Nisan), at evening	23:5	Spring
Unleavened Bread	15th to 21st of the 1st month	23:6-8	Spring
Firstfruits	The day after the Sabbath, during Unleavened Bread	23:9-14	Spring
Weeks (Pentecost)	Fifty days after Firstfruits, in the 3rd month	23:15-22	Late spring
Trumpets	1st day of the 7th month (Tishri)	23:23-25	Fall
Day of Atonement	10th day of the 7th month	23:26-32	Fall
Tabernacles (Booths)	15th to 21st of the 7th month, plus an 8th day	23:33-43	Fall

God's year began in the spring. When Israel left Egypt, God told Moses that the month of the Exodus would be the first month of their year (Exodus 12:2). In the Bible it is called Abib, and later Nisan, and it falls in March or April on our calendar. The seventh month, later called Tishri, falls in September or October. Because Israel's months follow the moon, the dates move around on our calendar from year to year, the same way Easter does.

Three of the feasts were pilgrim feasts, when every man in Israel was to come before the LORD at the place He chose (Deuteronomy 16:16): Unleavened Bread, Weeks, and Tabernacles. That is why Jerusalem was packed with visitors when Jesus was crucified at Passover, and again fifty days later at Pentecost, when Peter preached to people from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5).

Harvest Feasts

Israel was a farming people, and the feasts followed the harvest. Firstfruits came at the start of the barley harvest. Pentecost came seven weeks later, at the start of the wheat harvest. Tabernacles came in the fall, when the last of the grapes and olives were gathered in. Exodus 23:16 calls it the Festival of Ingathering.

That fits the picture, because the whole story the feasts tell is a harvest story. Jesus said the fields were white for harvest (John 4:35). He is the firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20). The church began with a great harvest of three thousand souls at Pentecost. And at the end of the age there will be a final ingathering.

The Pattern of Fulfillment

Here is what amazed me when I first saw it, and it still does. Jesus fulfilled the four spring feasts at His first coming, and He did it on the very days of the feasts.

- **Passover:** Jesus died at Passover as the Lamb of God. Paul says, “our Passover was sacrificed for us: Christ” (1 Corinthians 5:7).
- **Unleavened Bread:** His sinless body lay in the tomb during the feast of bread without leaven.
- **Firstfruits:** He rose on the day after the Sabbath, the day the firstfruits were waved before the LORD. Paul calls Him the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).
- **Pentecost:** Fifty days later, on the very day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and the church was born (Acts 2:1-4).

Those are not guesses. The New Testament itself ties each one to its feast. And if God kept the first four appointments right down to the day, I see good reason to expect He will keep the last three just as exactly.

The fall feasts, Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles, have not yet been fulfilled the way the spring feasts were. Between the spring feasts and the fall feasts lies the long summer harvest, and that is where we live now, in the church age, while the gospel goes out to the world. In the chapters on the fall feasts, I will show you why I believe they point to the rapture of the church, the return of Christ to Israel and her national repentance, and His thousand-year kingdom on earth. I will also be honest about where good Bible teachers see it differently.

Should Christians Keep the Feasts?

This question comes up a lot, so let me answer it plainly. I do not believe Christians are required to keep the feasts of Leviticus 23. Paul says the feasts were a shadow of what was to come, and the body belongs to Christ (Colossians 2:16-17). He told the Galatians, who were being pushed to keep the law to be right with God, that he feared for them because they were observing days and months and seasons and years (Galatians 4:10-11).

At the same time, I don't believe Christians are forbidden to observe them either. Paul himself hurried to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 20:16). Some believers, especially Jewish believers, find that celebrating Passover or Tabernacles helps them see Jesus more clearly. Paul's rule for that kind of question is simple.

> *One judges **one** day above **another** day, but another judges every day **alike**. Let each be fully assured in his own mind.* (Romans 14:5)

So here is where I land. Keep them or don't, as you are convinced before God. Just don't keep them to earn anything, and don't judge a brother who does differently. The point of the feasts was always the Person they pointed to.

The Picture

God set seven yearly feasts as His appointed times, four in the spring and three in the fall. Jesus fulfilled the four spring feasts on the very days of the feasts at His first coming. The three fall feasts still wait for their fulfillment.

Study Questions

1. Leviticus 23:2 calls these "My appointed times." Why does it matter that they are the LORD's feasts and not just Israel's?
2. Read Hebrews 4:1-11. What is the true Sabbath rest, and how do we enter it?
3. Look at the calendar chart. What stands out to you about the way the feasts are spread through the year?
4. Jesus fulfilled the spring feasts on the very days they were celebrated. What does that tell you about God's timing in your own life?
5. Read Colossians 2:16-17 and Romans 14:5-6. How would you answer someone who asks whether Christians must keep the feasts?

Chapter 16: Passover: The Lamb Who Was Slain

> *And the blood shall be for you for a sign on the houses where you **are**; and I will see the blood, and I will pass over you, and **there** shall not be among you a plague for destruction when I strike in the land of Egypt.*
>
> Exodus 12:13 (SLB)

Passover is where Israel's story as a nation begins, and it is where the story of the cross comes into focus. If you understand Passover, you will understand why Jesus chose to die when He did.

The Night in Egypt

God had sent nine plagues on Egypt, and Pharaoh still would not let Israel go. The tenth plague would be the death of every firstborn in the land. But God gave Israel a way to be spared. It began with a lamb.

> *Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they shall take for themselves, each man, a lamb for **each** house of fathers, a lamb for **each** household.*
> (Exodus 12:3)

On the tenth day of the first month, each household chose a lamb. It had to be a perfect one.

> *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male, a son of a year; you shall take **it** from the sheep or from the goats. And it shall be for you for keeping until the fourteenth day of this month; and all the assembly of the congregation of Israel shall slaughter it between the two evenings. And they shall take **some** of the blood, and they shall put **it** on the two doorposts and on the lintel, on the houses in which they eat it.* (Exodus 12:5-7)

They kept the lamb for four days, from the tenth to the fourteenth. I imagine the children got attached to it. Then at twilight on the fourteenth, the whole nation killed their lambs. They painted the blood on the two doorposts and the top of the doorframe, roasted the lamb whole, and ate it that night with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, dressed and ready to leave (Exodus 12:8-11).

> *And I will pass through the land of Egypt in this night, and I will strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from mankind and to livestock; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments. I **am** the LORD. And the blood shall be for you for a sign on the houses where you **are**; and I will see the blood, and I will pass over you, and **there** shall not be among you a plague for destruction when I strike in the land of Egypt.* (Exodus 12:12-13)

"I will see the blood, and I will pass over you." That is where the name Passover comes from. The houses with blood on the door were not spared because the people inside were better than the Egyptians. They were spared because a lamb had died in their place, and its blood was applied. That night, every firstborn in Egypt died, from Pharaoh's palace to the prison (Exodus 12:29). And in the houses marked with blood, every firstborn lived.

A Memorial Forever

God told Israel to keep this night every year.

> *And this day shall be for you for a memorial, and you shall celebrate it **as** a festival to the LORD throughout your generations; **as** a statute forever you shall celebrate it.* (Exodus 12:14)

Leviticus 23:5 sets the date: the fourteenth day of the first month, between the two evenings, that is, at twilight. When Israel was settled in the land, the Passover lambs were to be killed at the place God chose (Deuteronomy 16:5-6), which later meant the temple in Jerusalem. Families would come from all over to sacrifice their lambs and eat the meal together.

And God gave one more detail that turns out to matter a great deal.

> *In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not bring out any of the flesh from the house outside; and you shall not break a bone of it.* (Exodus 12:46)

Behold, the Lamb

Now come forward fifteen hundred years. John the Baptist points at Jesus and says, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Peter says we were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:19). And Paul says it outright:

> *Therefore cleanse out the old leaven, so that you may be a new lump, just as you are unleavened. For also our Passover was sacrificed for us: Christ.* (1 Corinthians 5:7)

Jesus is the Passover Lamb. Look at how closely the details match.

- **A lamb without blemish.** The Passover lamb had to be perfect. Jesus was without sin (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22).
- **Chosen ahead of time.** The lamb was chosen four days early. John 12:1 says Jesus came to Bethany six days before the Passover, and the next day He rode into Jerusalem while crowds waved palm branches (John 12:12-13). Counting the days, many teachers place that entry close to the tenth of the month, the day the lambs were chosen. The exact day depends on how you count, so I offer it as a likely connection, not a certain one. What is certain is that Jesus presented Himself publicly in Jerusalem in the days before Passover, and for those days He was watched, questioned, and tested by the religious leaders, and they could find no fault in Him. Pilate said three times that he found no guilt in Him (John 18:38; 19:4, 6).
- **Killed at Passover.** Jesus was crucified at Passover. All four Gospels place His death at the feast.
- **Not a bone broken.** The Roman soldiers broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus to hurry their deaths, but when they came to Jesus, He was already dead, so they did not break His legs. John says this happened to fulfill the Scripture.

  > *For these things took place so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "A bone of His will not be broken."* (John 19:36)

John is quoting the Passover command in Exodus 12:46 (see also Numbers 9:12 and Psalm 34:20). The Roman soldiers had no idea they were following the instructions for the Passover lamb.

- **The blood applied.** The lamb's death saved no one until its blood was put on the door. In the same way, Jesus' death saves those who trust Him, who by faith apply His blood to their own lives.

- **Judgment passed over.** Paul says those who are in Christ Jesus are under no condemnation (Romans 8:1). When God sees the blood, judgment passes over.

The Last Supper

On the night before He died, Jesus ate a Passover meal with His disciples.

> *And He said to them, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."* (Luke 22:15)

During that meal He took the bread and the cup, things that had been part of Passover for centuries, and gave them a new meaning.

> *And having taken bread, having given thanks, He broke **it** and gave **it** to them, saying, "This is My body, which is being given for you; do this for My remembrance." And likewise the cup after dining, saying, "This cup **is** the new covenant in My blood, which is being poured out for you."* (Luke 22:19-20)

The Passover meal remembered how God saved Israel from Egypt through the blood of a lamb. Jesus said that from now on, this meal would remember how He saves us from sin through His own blood. Every time we take the Lord's Supper, we are keeping the Christian Passover. Paul says we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Outside the Bible: When Exactly Did Jesus Die? (*Background*)

Matthew, Mark, and Luke present the Last Supper as a Passover meal (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:15). John says that on the morning of Jesus' trial, the religious leaders had not yet eaten the Passover (John 18:28), and that Jesus was sentenced on the day of Preparation of the Passover (John 19:14), which would put His death at the time the Passover lambs were being killed. Scholars have offered several ways to fit these together. Some think different groups in Israel kept Passover on different days that year, using different calendars. Some think John's "Passover" means the whole week of the feast, not only the lamb meal. Others think the Last Supper was a Passover-style meal held a day early. Good Bible teachers disagree, and I won't pretend the question is settled. What all four Gospels agree on is the main thing: Jesus died at Passover, as the Lamb of God, and His bones were not broken.

Later Traditions

If you attend a Passover meal today, called a seder, you will see many customs that are not in the Bible: four cups of wine, a piece of hidden bread called the *afikoman*, and a set order of readings. Most of these took shape over centuries, and many were written down after the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. Some Christians have found beautiful pictures of Jesus in them, and some of the customs may go back to Jesus' time, since the Gospels mention more than one cup at the Last Supper (Luke 22:17, 20). But I want to be careful here. I can't prove which modern customs Jesus would have known, so I have built this chapter only on what the Bible itself says. That is more than enough.

What This Means for You

On the night of the first Passover, there were only two kinds of houses in Egypt: houses with blood on the door, and houses with a death inside. It did not matter how big the house was, how religious the family was, or whether they were Israelite or Egyptian. The Bible says a mixed crowd went out with Israel (Exodus 12:38), so some non-Israelites must have trusted God's word that night too. All that mattered was the blood.

That is still true. The question is not whether you are a good person, or whether you go to church. The question is whether you are under the blood of the Lamb. If you have never trusted Jesus as your Passover Lamb, you can do it right now. Tell God you know you are a sinner who deserves judgment, and that you are trusting Jesus, who died in your place and rose again, to save you. When God sees the blood, He will pass over you.

The Picture

On the first Passover, a perfect lamb died and its blood on the door saved the firstborn from judgment. Jesus is our Passover Lamb. He died at Passover, without blemish, with no bone broken, and those under His blood are passed over by judgment.

Study Questions

1. Read Exodus 12:1-13. List the instructions for the Passover lamb. Which ones point most clearly to Jesus?
2. Why wasn't it enough for the lamb to die? Why did the blood have to be applied?
3. Read John 19:31-37. Why do you think John made a point of mentioning that Jesus' bones were not broken?
4. How does knowing about Passover change the way you think about the Lord's Supper?
5. Are you under the blood of the Lamb? If so, who do you know who needs to hear this message?

Chapter 17: Unleavened Bread: The Sinless One

> *So then let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with **the** leaven of malice and wickedness, but with **the** unleavened **bread** of sincerity and truth.*
>
> 1 Corinthians 5:8 (SLB)

Passover lasted one evening. The very next day, the fifteenth of the month, began a seven-day feast that went with it. The two were so closely tied that by Jesus' day people often used the names for each other (Luke 22:1). This was the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

When my wife caught me on May 29, 2020, there was no slow transition. I went to my first 12-step meeting that same day. Leaving an old life often takes a clean break. Israel ate unleavened bread because they left Egypt in haste (Exodus 12). Remembering how fast God rescued us keeps old sin from creeping back like yeast.

The Feast

> *And on the fifteenth day of this month **is** the Festival of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day a convocation of holiness shall be for you; you shall not do any work of labor. And you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD seven days. On the seventh day **is** a convocation of holiness; you shall not do any work of labor.'*
> (Leviticus 23:6-8)

For seven days, Israel ate bread made without yeast. The first and last days were holy gatherings with no regular work. And before the feast started, every family had to get all the leaven out of the house.

> *Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; surely on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for anyone eating leavened **bread**, that soul shall be cut off from Israel, from the first day until the seventh day.* (Exodus 12:15)

That was serious. Not a crumb of leaven was to be found anywhere in their territory for those seven days (Exodus 13:7). Even today, Jewish families do a thorough cleaning before Passover to remove every trace of leavened bread from the house.

Why No Leaven?

The first reason was history. On the night they left Egypt, Israel left in such a hurry that their bread dough did not have time to rise.

> *And they baked the dough which they had brought out from Egypt **into** unleavened cakes, for it was not leavened, because they had been driven out from Egypt, and they were not able to delay; and also they had not made provisions for themselves.* (Exodus 12:39)

The flat bread reminded every generation that God brought them out suddenly and powerfully. Deuteronomy 16:3 calls it the bread of affliction, so they would remember the day they came out of Egypt all the days of their lives.

But there is a second reason, and the New Testament spells it out. In Scripture, leaven usually pictures sin or false teaching. A small piece of leaven works its way quietly through a whole lump of dough until all of it is puffed up. Jesus warned His disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, meaning their teaching (Matthew 16:6, 12). Paul uses the very picture of this feast.

> *Your boasting **is** not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore cleanse out the old leaven, so that you may be a new lump, just as you are unleavened. For also our Passover was sacrificed for us: Christ. So then let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with **the** leaven of malice and wickedness, but with **the** unleavened **bread** of sincerity and truth.* (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

Paul wrote that to a church that was tolerating open sin in its fellowship. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Sin that is allowed to stay does not stay small. It spreads.

One honest note. Leaven is not always a picture of evil. In Matthew 13:33, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven itself to leaven spreading through dough, and there it means quiet, unstoppable growth. A picture means what its setting says it means. But in the feasts and offerings, leaven was kept away from the altar, and the New Testament reads it as sin.

The Bread Without Sin

So what does the Feast of Unleavened Bread show us about Jesus? First, it shows His sinless life. Jesus is the bread of God who came down from heaven (John 6:33), and there was no leaven in Him. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth (1 Peter 2:22). Even His enemies could not make a charge stick.

Second, the timing. Jesus was crucified at Passover and buried before the evening that began the feast (John 19:31, 42). His body lay in the tomb during the first days of Unleavened Bread. Peter, preaching at Pentecost, quoted David's words about the Messiah:

> *because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor will You give Your Holy One to see decay.* (Acts 2:27)

Corruption is what leaven does. It is a process of breaking down, of decay. Jesus' body did not decay in the tomb. The sinless One could not be held by death (Acts 2:24). Many teachers have seen the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a picture of His burial, the sinless body resting in the grave without corruption. The New Testament does not state that connection in so many words, but Peter's sermon puts the ideas side by side, and I think it fits well.

Clean Out the Old Leaven

Notice the order in Paul's words. "Cleanse out the old leaven, so that you may be a new lump, just as you are unleavened." In other words, become what you already are. If you belong to Christ, God already sees you as unleavened, clean in His sight. Now live like it.

That is the order of the feasts too. Passover came first, then Unleavened Bread. You did not clean out the leaven to get the lamb. The lamb died first, and then you got rid of the leaven. In the same way, we don't clean up our lives to get saved. We are saved by the blood of the Lamb, and then we spend the rest of our lives, the full seven days, so to speak, getting the leaven out.

And it is a whole-house job. Israel searched every room. There is no room in your life that God does not want to clean out. Your thought life. Your money. Your marriage. Your words. Your secret habits. The leaven of malice and wickedness, Paul says, has to go, and in its place comes the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I'll be honest with you. I have found leaven in rooms I thought were clean. Bitterness I did not know I was holding. Pride dressed up as being right. You may find the same. Don't be discouraged when you do. Bring it to the Lord, confess it, and throw it out. That is what the feast is for.

The Picture

Unleavened Bread followed Passover and lasted seven days with no leaven anywhere. Leaven pictures sin, and Jesus is the sinless bread from heaven whose body did not see decay in the tomb. Saved by the Lamb, we spend our lives clearing out the old leaven.

Study Questions

1. Why did Israel eat unleavened bread the night they left Egypt? Why do you think God wanted them to keep remembering it?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-8. What was the "leaven" in the Corinthian church, and what did Paul tell them to do about it?
3. Why does it matter that Passover came before Unleavened Bread, and not after?
4. Read Acts 2:22-32. How does Peter connect the burial and resurrection of Jesus to Psalm 16?
5. Is there a room in your life where leaven has been hiding? What would it look like to clean it out this week?

Chapter 18: Firstfruits: The Risen Lord

> *But now Christ has been raised from **the** dead; He became **the** firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*
>
> 1 Corinthians 15:20 (SLB)

Of all the feasts, Firstfruits is the one most people have never heard of. It did not even get its own name in Leviticus 23. It was a short ceremony, a priest waving a bundle of barley before the LORD. But it pictures the greatest event in history: the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Sheaf of the First Harvest

> *Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you come into the land which I am giving to you, and you reap its harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the first of your harvest to the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for your acceptance; on the next day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.* (Leviticus 23:10-11)

The barley ripened first in the spring, around Passover time. Before anyone in Israel could eat any of the new harvest, they had to bring the very first sheaf to the priest. He would lift it up and wave it before the LORD, and they would offer a lamb as a burnt offering with it (Leviticus 23:12-13).

> *And bread and roasted grain and fresh grain you shall not eat until this very day, until you have brought the offering of your God; **it is** a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.* (Leviticus 23:14)

The first of the harvest belonged to God. Bringing it was an act of faith and thanks. It said, "This is Yours, and we trust You for the rest." And it was a promise. If the first sheaf was ripe, the whole harvest was coming.

The Day After the Sabbath

The date of Firstfruits is a little unusual. Most feasts had a fixed date in the month. Firstfruits was set by the week: on the day after the Sabbath. In practice, that meant the day after a Sabbath during the week of Unleavened Bread.

Which Sabbath? The Jewish groups of Jesus' day disagreed. The Pharisees read it as the day after the first day of Unleavened Bread, which was itself a day of rest, so Firstfruits would always fall on the sixteenth of the month. Josephus, a Pharisee himself, says this.

Outside the Bible: Josephus on Firstfruits (*Text confirmed*)

"But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them. And while they suppose it proper to honor God, from whom they obtain this plentiful provision, in the first place, they offer the first-fruits of their barley" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 3.10.5, Whiston translation). Josephus describes the practice of his own day, the first century, when the temple was still standing.

The Sadducees, who ran the temple priesthood, read "the Sabbath" as the regular weekly Sabbath, so Firstfruits would always fall on a Sunday. Scholars still discuss which view the temple followed in Jesus' time.

Here is what strikes me. In the year Jesus died, if we follow John's Gospel, He was crucified on the day of Preparation, a Friday, the fourteenth of the month, and the next day was a Sabbath that John calls a great day (John 19:31). That would make Saturday the fifteenth, both the weekly Sabbath and the first day of Unleavened Bread. And Sunday would be the sixteenth. On either reading, Pharisee or Sadducee, Firstfruits fell on the same day that year: Sunday, the first day of the week. The day the women found the tomb empty (Matthew 28:1). I can't prove the calendar of that exact year, and the timing questions we saw in the Passover chapter apply here too. But the first day of the week is certain, and it is exactly the day Leviticus names: the next day after the Sabbath.

Christ the Firstfruits

We do not have to guess at the meaning. Paul tells us.

> *But now Christ has been raised from **the** dead; He became **the** firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since through a man **came** death, through a man also **came the** resurrection of **the** dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ **the** firstfruits, after that those of Christ at His coming* (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

On the morning the priest in Jerusalem was lifting up the first sheaf of the new harvest, Jesus was walking out of His tomb. He was the first of the harvest. Not the only one, the first. Just as the first sheaf promised the whole harvest, Jesus' resurrection promises ours. Each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then those who belong to Christ at His coming.

That is why Paul calls Him the firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18). Others in the Bible had been raised from the dead before, like the widow's son and Lazarus, but they all died again. Jesus was the first to rise in a resurrection body, never to die again (Romans 6:9).

Matthew records a strange and wonderful detail. When Jesus died, tombs were opened, and after His resurrection many saints who had died were raised, came into the holy city, and appeared to many (Matthew 27:52-53). Some teachers see that small group as part of the wave sheaf, a handful lifted up with Christ as a sign of the harvest to come. That is a suggestion, not something the text says, and Matthew gives us very little detail. But it does show that Jesus' resurrection was not a private event. It was the beginning of something.

The Harvest Is Coming

Firstfruits was a promise, and so is the resurrection. If you belong to Jesus, His empty tomb is God's guarantee that yours will be empty too. Paul spends the rest of 1 Corinthians 15 explaining it. Our bodies are sown perishable and raised imperishable, sown in weakness and raised in power (1 Corinthians 15:42-43).

The idea of firstfruits shows up in other places in the New Testament too. Paul says believers now have the firstfruits of the Spirit, a down payment, while we wait for the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23). James says God brought us forth by the word of truth so that we would be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures (James 1:18). The first sheaf is Jesus. Those who belong to Him are the start of a harvest God is still gathering.

Give God the First

Before we leave Firstfruits, there is a practical lesson. Israel could not eat any of the new harvest until God got the first of it. Proverbs says to honor the LORD with your wealth and with the first of all your produce (Proverbs 3:9).

I have tried to live by that, and it has not always been easy. It is tempting to give God what is left over, of our money, our time, our energy. Firstfruits says God gets the first, not the leftovers. When I give God the first part of my paycheck, the first part of my day, and the first of my attention, I am saying what Israel said with that sheaf of barley: "This is Yours, and I trust You for the rest."

The Picture

On the day after the Sabbath, the priest waved the first sheaf of the barley harvest before the LORD as a promise of the full harvest. Jesus rose on that day, the first day of the week, as the firstfruits of those who have died. His resurrection guarantees ours.

Study Questions

1. Read Leviticus 23:9-14. Why do you think Israel was not allowed to eat any of the new harvest until the firstfruits were offered?
2. What does the word "firstfruits" promise about the rest of the harvest?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-23. What would be true if Christ had not been raised? What is true because He was?
4. How does Jesus' resurrection change the way you think about your own death, or the death of a believer you love?
5. Are you giving God your firstfruits or your leftovers? What would change if you gave Him the first?

Chapter 19: Pentecost: The Spirit Poured Out

> *And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all with one accord together. And suddenly **there** came out of heaven a sound as of a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*
>
> Acts 2:1-2 (SLB)

Fifty days after Firstfruits came the fourth spring feast. Leviticus calls it a new grain offering. Deuteronomy calls it the Festival of Weeks. The Greek-speaking Jews of Jesus' day called it Pentecost, from the Greek word for fiftieth. And on this feast, God did something that changed the world.

God commanded Israel, in the middle of the Pentecost instructions, to leave the corners of their fields for the poor and the foreigner (Leviticus 23:22). Worship and care for people in need belong together. Real gratitude for God's harvest shows up in how generously we treat people who have less.

Counting Seven Weeks

> *'And you shall count for yourselves from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven complete Sabbaths they shall be. Until the next day after the seventh Sabbath you shall count fifty days; and you shall bring near a new grain offering to the LORD. From your dwellings you shall bring bread of a wave offering, two **loaves**; of approximately 4 quarts (two tenths **of an ephah**) of fine flour they shall be; leavened they shall be baked, firstfruits to the LORD.* (Leviticus 23:15-17)

Israel counted the days from Firstfruits. Seven full weeks, forty-nine days, and then on the fiftieth day they celebrated. The barley harvest had come in at Firstfruits. Now the wheat harvest was beginning. It was a day of joy and thanksgiving, when the whole community, including servants, the poor, foreigners, widows, and orphans, rejoiced before the LORD (Deuteronomy 16:10-12).

Right in the middle of the Pentecost instructions, God added a command that seems out of place at first.

> *"'And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not finish the edge of your field in your reaping, and the gleaning of your harvest you shall not gather; for the poor and for the sojourner you shall leave them. I **am** the LORD your God.'"* (Leviticus 23:22)

In the middle of a harvest feast, God reminded Israel to leave the edges of their fields for the poor and the foreigner. That is how Ruth, a woman from Moab, ended up gleaning in the field of Boaz and became the great-grandmother of King David (Ruth 2). God's harvest always had room for outsiders. Keep that in mind, because Pentecost was going to bring a lot of them in.

Two Loaves With Leaven

Here is a surprise. At Pentecost the people brought two loaves of bread to wave before the LORD, and they were baked with leaven. Josephus confirms the practice in his day.

Outside the Bible: Josephus on Pentecost (*Text confirmed*)

"When a week of weeks has passed over after this sacrifice, [which weeks contain forty and nine days,] on the fiftieth day, which is Pentecost, but is called by the Hebrews Asartha, which signifies Pentecost, they bring to God a loaf, made of wheat flour, of two tenth deals, with leaven" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 3.10.6, Whiston translation). Josephus speaks of a loaf of two tenth deals, while Leviticus 23:17 specifies two loaves, each of two tenths of an ephah. Either way, he confirms that the Pentecost bread, unlike almost every other grain offering, was baked with leaven.

Leaven was forbidden on the altar (Leviticus 2:11), and these loaves were not burned on the altar. They were waved before the LORD and given to the priests (Leviticus 23:20). Why leaven here, at this one feast?

Many Bible teachers believe the two leavened loaves picture the church. Jesus, the sinless firstfruits, had no leaven. But the church is made of forgiven sinners, still imperfect, still being cleaned out. And yet God accepts us, because we are presented with the sacrifice (Leviticus 23:18-19). Some go further and see two loaves as Jews and Gentiles, made into one new man in Christ (Ephesians 2:15-16). I find that picture beautiful, and it fits what happened at Pentecost and after. But it is a suggestion. Leviticus does not explain the two loaves, so I won't claim more than it says.

Sinai and Pentecost

Jewish tradition connects the Festival of Weeks with the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. The Bible does tell us Israel arrived at Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt (Exodus 19:1), the same month as Pentecost, so the timing is close. But the Old Testament never names Pentecost as the anniversary of the law, and that link appears in Jewish writings that come after the Bible. So I treat it as tradition, not Scripture.

Even so, the comparison between Sinai and Pentecost is worth making, because the New Testament itself compares the old covenant written on stone with the new covenant written on hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3-6). At Sinai, there was fire on the mountain and a loud sound, and the law was given on tablets of stone. At Pentecost, there was a sound from heaven and tongues of fire, and the Spirit was given to live in people's hearts.

There is one more contrast I can't pass up. When Moses came down from Sinai and found the golden calf, the Levites killed about three thousand men that day.

> *And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and **there** fell of the people on that day about three thousand men.* (Exodus 32:28)

At Pentecost, after Peter preached, about three thousand were saved.

> *So then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and **there** were added on that day about three thousand souls.* (Acts 2:41)

Paul said the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6). I can't think of a clearer picture of that than three thousand dead at the giving of the law and three thousand alive at the giving of the Spirit.

The Day of Pentecost Was Fulfilled

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). He went up forty days after His resurrection (Acts 1:3), so they waited about ten more days. And then:

> *And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all with one accord together. And suddenly **there** came out of heaven a sound as of a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And **there** appeared to them tongues being distributed, as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with **the** Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues, just as the Spirit was giving them to speak forth.* (Acts 2:1-4)

Notice the wording in the SLB: "when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled." That is a very literal rendering of Luke's Greek, and I think it is fitting. God had set this appointment fifteen hundred years earlier, and He kept it to the day.

Jerusalem was full of Jews and converts from all over the world who had come for the feast: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Rome, Crete, and Arabia (Acts 2:9-11). Each one heard the gospel in his own language. Pentecost was a harvest feast, and on that day the harvest began. Not the barley or the wheat, but souls. The church was born.

What God Promised

The prophets had promised this. Jeremiah said God would make a new covenant and write His law on people's hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). Ezekiel said God would give a new heart and put His Spirit within His people (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Joel said God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, and Peter quoted that very passage on the day of Pentecost (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21).

Jesus had told His disciples it was better for them that He go away, because if He did not go, the Helper would not come (John 16:7). The cross, the empty tomb, the ascension, and Pentecost were all part of one plan. Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks: four feasts, fulfilled in about seven weeks, right on schedule.

The Spirit in You

The tabernacle had the glory of God dwelling in it. On Pentecost, the Spirit came to dwell in people. Paul asks the Corinthians, "do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). We will come back to that in Chapter 23.

For now, here is what I want you to take from Pentecost. If you are a believer, the Holy Spirit lives in you. He is not a visitor. He is the firstfruits of everything God has promised you (Romans 8:23). He gives you power to live for Christ and to tell others about Him (Acts 1:8). The same Spirit who filled a room in Jerusalem and turned frightened fishermen into bold preachers lives in you.

The Picture

Pentecost came fifty days after Firstfruits, at the start of the wheat harvest, with two leavened loaves waved before the LORD. On that very day the Holy Spirit was poured out, about three thousand were saved, and the church was born. The harvest of souls began.

Study Questions

1. Read Leviticus 23:15-22. Why do you think God put a command about the poor and foreigners in the middle of the instructions for this feast?
2. What might the two leavened loaves picture? Why would leaven be allowed here when it was kept off the altar?
3. Compare Exodus 32:28 with Acts 2:41. What does 2 Corinthians 3:6 add to that comparison?
4. Read Acts 2:1-41. What did the Holy Spirit do that day, and what did Peter preach?
5. The Holy Spirit lives in every believer. How should that change the way you live this week?

Chapter 20: Trumpets: The Next Appointment

> *awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*
>
> Titus 2:13 (SLB)

After Pentecost, Israel's calendar goes quiet. There are no more feasts for about four months. The long, hot summer is harvest time, when the wheat, grapes, figs, and olives come in. Then, on the first day of the seventh month, a trumpet sounds, and the fall feasts begin.

We are now moving from what has already happened to what has not. Jesus fulfilled the spring feasts at His first coming. The fall feasts still wait. So in this chapter and the next two, I want to be especially careful to tell you what the Bible says, what I believe it means, and where good Bible teachers disagree.

The Feast

Leviticus gives this feast only three verses.

> *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'In the seventh month, on the first **day** of the month, **there** shall be for you a Sabbath rest, a memorial of a loud blast, a convocation of holiness. You shall not do any work of labor, and you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD.'"* (Leviticus 23:23-25)

That's it. A day of rest, a holy gathering, an offering, and a loud blast. Numbers 29:1 calls it a day of a loud blast for you. In Jewish tradition the instrument was the *shofar*, a ram's horn, and the day is now called Rosh Hashanah, the head of the year, because it became the Jewish civil new year. But in the Bible, the first month is in the spring, and this feast is simply the day of the trumpet blast on the first of the seventh month.

Leviticus does not say why the trumpets were to be blown. It calls the day a memorial, a reminder. That leaves room for the question: a reminder of what?

What Trumpets Did in Israel

To answer, it helps to see how Israel used trumpets elsewhere. God told Moses to make two silver trumpets.

> *Make for yourself two trumpets of silver; **of** hammered work you shall make them; and they shall be for you for the calling of the congregation and for the journeying of the camps.*
> (Numbers 10:2)

Trumpets called the people together, signaled the camp to move out, sounded the alarm for battle, and announced the feasts and new moons (Numbers 10:2-10). A trumpet blast meant, "Pay attention. Something is about to happen. Gather." Trumpets sounded at Sinai when God came down on the mountain, so loud that the people trembled (Exodus 19:16, 19). Trumpets brought down the walls of

Jericho (Joshua 6:20). The prophets used the trumpet as a picture of the coming day of the LORD (Joel 2:1; Zephaniah 1:14-16) and of the great regathering of Israel.

> *And it will be in that day **that** a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and the outcasts in the land of Egypt will come, and they will bow down to the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.* (Isaiah 27:13)

So a trumpet in the Bible can mean a call to gather, a signal to move, a warning of judgment, or the announcement that God Himself is coming. The Feast of Trumpets stands at the head of the fall feasts like a herald announcing the king.

The Trumpet of God

Now here is why so many Bible teachers, myself included, connect this feast with the rapture of the church. Paul describes the moment Jesus comes for His church, and the trumpet is right in the middle of it.

> *because the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with **the** voice of an archangel and with **the** trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are living, who remain, will be caught away together with them in **the** clouds to meet the Lord in **the** air; and so we will always be with **the** Lord.* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

"Caught away" is the phrase the Latin Bible translated with the word *rapiemur*, which is where our English word rapture comes from. Paul tells the Corinthians the same thing.

> *Look, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in an instant, in **the** blink of an eye, at the last trumpet; for **the** trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed.* (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

A trumpet. A gathering. A sudden change. A people taken to meet their Lord. Everything a trumpet meant in Israel, a call to assemble, a signal to move out, the announcement of the King, is there.

Why I Believe the Rapture Comes Before the Tribulation

I hold the pre-tribulation view. I believe Jesus will come for His church before the seven years of tribulation described in Daniel 9 and Revelation 6 to 19, and then come back with His church at the end of those years to judge the world and set up His kingdom. Here, briefly, is why.

- **We are not appointed to wrath.** Paul says Jesus is delivering us from the wrath that is coming (1 Thessalonians 1:10), and that God did not appoint us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:9). The tribulation is a time when God's wrath is poured out on the earth (Revelation 6:16-17).
- **Kept from the hour.** Jesus promised the faithful church in Philadelphia that He would keep them from the hour of testing that is about to come on the whole world (Revelation 3:10). Not through it, but from it.
- **The church is missing.** The church is mentioned again and again in Revelation 1 to 3. From Revelation 4 to 18, during the tribulation judgments, the word "church" does not appear once. In Revelation 4:1, John hears a voice like a trumpet saying, "Come up here."

- **Two different scenes.** In the rapture, Jesus meets His people in the air and takes them to the Father's house (John 14:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). At His return in glory, He comes all the way down to the earth, His feet stand on the Mount of Olives, and every eye sees Him (Zechariah 14:4; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-16). Those read to me like two stages of His coming, not one.
- **A blessed hope.** Paul calls Christ's appearing our blessed hope (Titus 2:13), something to comfort one another with (1 Thessalonians 4:18). If the church first had to go through the worst seven years in history, it is hard to see how the next thing to look for would be the blessed hope rather than the Antichrist.

Some ask about Paul's phrase "the last trumpet" in 1 Corinthians 15:52, and whether it is the same as the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15, which comes late in the tribulation. I don't believe so. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians some forty years before John wrote Revelation, so the Corinthians had no way to know about Revelation's seven trumpets. Revelation's trumpets are judgments blown by angels. Paul's trumpet is the trumpet of God that raises the dead in Christ. The "last trumpet" most likely means the final trumpet that ends the church age, the signal for God's people to move out, the way the last trumpet blast told Israel's camp it was time to march.

I want to be fair. Many godly Bible teachers hold other views. Some believe the rapture comes in the middle of the tribulation, some near the end of God's wrath, and some believe the church goes through the tribulation and is caught up as Jesus returns. Some see the Feast of Trumpets not as the rapture at all but as the regathering of Israel when Jesus returns, since Matthew 24:31 speaks of angels sent with a great trumpet to gather His elect. I understand that verse as describing the gathering at His return in glory after the tribulation, which is a different event from the rapture. Believers who love the Lord disagree on this, and it is not a test of fellowship. But I am convinced the Bible teaches that Jesus is coming for His church before the wrath begins, and the Feast of Trumpets, the next appointment on God's calendar, fits that hope well.

No One Knows the Day

Now a warning, and I mean this seriously. Every few years someone announces that the rapture will happen on the Feast of Trumpets in a certain year. They run the numbers, they point to the stars, they make videos. And every time, they have been wrong.

Jesus said:

> *But concerning that day and the hour no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens, except My Father alone.* (Matthew 24:36)

Some people argue that because the Feast of Trumpets depended on spotting the new moon, no one knew in advance the exact day or hour it would start, and so Jesus was hinting at this feast. I have heard that idea many times. I can't find it in the text, and it has been used to set dates, which Jesus told us not to do. Here is what I know for sure: Jesus kept the spring feasts on their days, and I expect Him to keep His appointments in the fall too. But He has not told us the year, and anyone who claims to know it is wrong. Our job is not to calculate. It is to be ready.

Listening for the Trumpet

When Israel was in the wilderness, the people never knew which morning the trumpets would sound and the cloud would lift. They had to live ready to move. That is how Jesus wants us to live. Not afraid, not obsessed, but ready.

I'll be honest. Some days I think about this a lot, and some days I hardly think about it at all. But I have noticed that when I remember Jesus could come today, I live differently. I hold my possessions more loosely. I am quicker to forgive. I am more willing to talk about Him to people I care about. John said everyone who has this hope purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:3).

The next sound on God's calendar is a trumpet. Are you listening for it?

The Picture

The Feast of Trumpets, on the first day of the seventh month, opens the fall feasts with a loud blast, the Bible's signal to gather and move. The New Testament says the dead in Christ will rise and believers will be caught up at the trumpet of God. I believe it pictures the rapture of the church, the next appointment on God's calendar.

Study Questions

1. Read Numbers 10:1-10. List the different reasons Israel blew the silver trumpets. Which of them fit what Jesus will do when He comes for His church?
2. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. What comfort does Paul give to believers who have lost loved ones?
3. What are the main reasons given in this chapter for believing the rapture comes before the tribulation? Which one is most convincing to you?
4. Why is it wrong to set dates for the rapture, even if the Feast of Trumpets points to it?
5. Read 1 John 3:2-3. How does the hope of Jesus' coming change the way you live today?

Chapter 21: The Day of Atonement: Once for All

> *nor through blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered once for all into the holy places, having obtained eternal redemption.*
>
> Hebrews 9:12 (SLB)

Ten days after the Feast of Trumpets came the most solemn day of Israel's year. It was the only day the high priest went behind the veil, the only day all Israel was commanded to afflict their souls, and the day when the sins of the whole nation were dealt with at once. Today it is called Yom Kippur. The Bible calls it the Day of Atonement.

> *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Surely on the tenth of this seventh month, it **is** the Day of Atonement; a convocation of holiness it shall be for you, and you shall afflict your souls, and you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD. And you shall not do any work on this very day, for it **is** a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God."*
> (Leviticus 23:26-28)

This was not a feast of celebration. It was a day of humbling. The phrase "afflict your souls" is generally understood to include fasting, which is why Acts 27:9 calls it simply "the fast." Anyone who did not humble himself that day was to be cut off from the people (Leviticus 23:29). Leviticus 16 gives the full order of the day, and it is one of the most important chapters in the Old Testament.

The Order of the Day

Here, step by step, is what the high priest did.

1. **He washed and put on plain linen.** He took off his garments of glory and beauty and dressed in white linen (Leviticus 16:4), as we saw in Chapter 12.
2. **He offered a bull for himself.** Before he could deal with the nation's sin, he had to deal with his own and his family's (Leviticus 16:6, 11).
3. **He brought incense behind the veil.** He filled a fire pan with coals from the altar and brought incense inside the veil, so that the cloud of incense would cover the mercy seat and he would not die (Leviticus 16:12-13).
4. **He sprinkled the bull's blood.** He went back out, took the bull's blood, and sprinkled it on the front of the mercy seat and seven times before it (Leviticus 16:14).
5. **He cast lots for two goats.** One goat was for the LORD, and one was for Azazel, the goat sent away (Leviticus 16:7-10).
6. **He killed the LORD's goat.** He brought its blood behind the veil and sprinkled it on the mercy seat as he had done with the bull's blood (Leviticus 16:15). Then he cleansed the Holy Place and the altar outside with the blood (Leviticus 16:16-19).
7. **He sent the other goat away.** He laid both hands on the head of the live goat, confessed over it all the sins of Israel, and sent it into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:20-22).

8. **He changed back.** He took off the linen, washed, put on his regular high priestly garments, and offered burnt offerings for himself and the people (Leviticus 16:23-24).

And the result:

> *For on this day he shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins before the LORD you shall be clean.* (Leviticus 16:30)

Two Goats, One Atonement

The two goats belong together. Leviticus 16:5 calls them two male goats for a sin offering, one offering in two parts. Each shows half of what atonement means.

The first goat died, and its blood went onto the mercy seat. That shows the price of sin: a life given, blood shed, God's justice satisfied. The second goat lived, and carried the sins away.

> *And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the living goat, and he shall confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions, for all their sins; and he shall put them on the head of the goat and send **it** away into the wilderness by the hand of a man **who is** ready. And the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a land cut off; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness.* (Leviticus 16:21-22)

That shows the result: sin removed, carried off to a land cut off, never to come back. The old English word "scapegoat," coined by William Tyndale, came from this goat. The Hebrew word is *Azazel*, and scholars do not agree on exactly what it means. Some think it means the goat that goes away, some think it names a desolate place, and some think it is the name of a desert demon, the goat being sent back to the realm of evil with the sins on its head. The meaning of the word is uncertain, but the meaning of the ceremony is not. The sins of Israel were carried away.

Jesus fulfilled both goats. He died, and His blood was offered to God. And He carried our sins away. The psalmist said, "As the east is far from the west, He has removed our transgressions far from us" (Psalm 103:12). Micah said God will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). John the Baptist said He is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Not just covers it. Takes it away.

Christ Our High Priest Entered Once for All

Hebrews 9 is the New Testament's commentary on the Day of Atonement, and you should read the whole chapter. Here is the heart of it.

> *But Christ, having appeared **as** high priest of the coming good things, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not of this creation, nor through blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered once for all into the holy places, having obtained eternal redemption.* (Hebrews 9:11-12)

Look at the contrasts. Aaron went into a tent made by hands. Jesus went into heaven itself (Hebrews 9:24). Aaron brought the blood of goats and calves. Jesus brought His own blood. Aaron had to

go in every year. Jesus went in once for all. Aaron obtained a cleansing that lasted until the next year. Jesus obtained eternal redemption.

And Aaron had to offer a bull for his own sins first. Jesus had none.

He Will Appear a Second Time

On the Day of Atonement, the people stood outside the tabernacle and waited. The high priest disappeared behind the veil. They could not see what was happening. They could only wait and trust. And then, when the work was done, he came back out, and they knew God had accepted the sacrifice.

Hebrews draws exactly that picture.

> *nor that He should offer Himself repeatedly, just as the high priest enters into the holy places every year with blood of another; otherwise it would have been necessary for Him to suffer repeatedly since **the** foundation of **the** world; but now once, at **the** consummation of the ages, He has been revealed for **the** putting away of sin through the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed to men to die once, and after this judgment, so the Christ also, having been offered once to bear **the** sins of many, will appear a second time, apart from sin, to those who eagerly await Him for salvation.* (Hebrews 9:25-28)

Hebrews says He "will appear a second time." Jesus has gone into the true Holy Place. He offered His blood. Right now He is in God's presence for us. And one day He will come back out.

That is why I believe the Day of Atonement has a future fulfillment as well as a past one. The sacrifice was offered once for all at the cross. Nothing needs to be added to it. But the full picture of the day, the high priest coming back out to a waiting people, is still ahead.

A Nation Mourning and Cleansed

The Old Testament prophets saw a day when Israel as a nation would turn to the Messiah. Zechariah gives one of the most striking pictures.

> *And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplications; and they will look to Me, **to Him** whom they have pierced; and they will mourn over Him like a mourning over the only **son**, and **they will** show bitterness over Him as **one** shows bitterness over the firstborn.* (Zechariah 12:10)

Notice who is speaking. God says, "they will look to Me, to Him whom they have pierced." The One who was pierced is the LORD Himself. John quotes this verse at the cross (John 19:37) and again when he describes Jesus' return in glory: every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him (Revelation 1:7).

Zechariah goes on:

> *On that day there will be a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.* (Zechariah 13:1)

A day of mourning, a day of afflicting the soul, followed by cleansing from sin. That is the Day of Atonement written on a whole nation. Paul says the same in Romans.

> *For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of this mystery, so that you may not be wise in yourselves, that a hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved, just as it has been written, "The One who delivers will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and this **is** the covenant from Me to them, when I take away their sins."* (Romans 11:25-27)

Here is how I understand it, along with most who hold the pre-tribulation, premillennial view. Right now, Israel as a nation has been hardened in part, though many Jewish people have trusted Christ and still do. That partial hardening lasts until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. After the church is taken up and the tribulation runs its course, Jesus will return in glory. The surviving people of Israel will see Him, recognize the One they pierced, mourn, and turn to Him in faith. On that day a fountain will open for their sin, and all Israel will be saved. The Day of Atonement will be fulfilled for the nation the way it was fulfilled for each believer at the cross.

Other believers understand "all Israel" in Romans 11 to mean the church, or the total number of Jewish believers through all of history. I respect those views, but I believe Paul is speaking of the nation of Israel, because all through Romans 9 to 11 he uses "Israel" to mean the Jewish people as distinct from the Gentiles. And God's promises to Israel have not been canceled. Paul says the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29).

Afflict Your Soul

One last word. The Day of Atonement was not only about what the high priest did. It was also about what the people did. They humbled themselves. They fasted. They stopped all work. They came before God with sorrow for their sins.

We do not need a yearly Day of Atonement. Jesus' blood has already done what that day could only picture. But we still need humble hearts. Godly sorrow, Paul says, produces repentance leading to salvation without regret (2 Corinthians 7:10). The people who receive the atonement are the people who know they need it.

The Picture

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest went behind the veil with blood, one goat died, and the other carried Israel's sins away. Jesus entered heaven once for all with His own blood and took our sins away. He will appear a second time, and on that day Israel will look on Him whom they pierced and be cleansed.

Study Questions

1. Read Leviticus 16. Walk through the steps of the day. Which step shows most clearly why we need Jesus?
2. Why do you think God used two goats for one sin offering? What does each one show?
3. Read Hebrews 9:11-28. List the ways Jesus' work is better than the high priest's.
4. Read Zechariah 12:10-13:1. Who is the One who was pierced, and what will happen when Israel looks on Him?

5. The people afflicted their souls on this day. What place does humility and sorrow for sin have in your walk with God?

Chapter 22: Tabernacles: God Dwelling With His People

> *Seven days you shall hold a festival to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD will choose, for the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, and you shall be altogether joyful.*
>
> Deuteronomy 16:15 (SLB)

The last feast of the year was the happiest. Five days after the Day of Atonement, when the whole nation had been cleansed of its sins, Israel moved out of their houses and lived in huts made of branches for a week. They feasted, they sang, they waved palm branches, and they rejoiced before the LORD. Leviticus calls it the Festival of Booths. Older Bibles call it the Feast of Tabernacles. In Hebrew it is *Sukkot*.

The Feast

> *Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth day of this seventh month **is** the Festival of Booths, seven days to the LORD. On the first day **is** a convocation of holiness; you shall not do any work of labor. Seven days you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD; on the eighth day a convocation of holiness shall be for you, and you shall bring near a fire offering to the LORD; it **is** a solemn assembly; you shall not do any work of labor.* (Leviticus 23:34-36)

Seven days, plus an eighth day of solemn assembly. It came after the last harvest of the year, the grapes and olives, which is why Exodus 23:16 calls it the Festival of Ingathering.

> *'Surely on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the festival of the LORD seven days; on the first day **is** a Sabbath rest, and on the eighth day **is** a Sabbath rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of trees of splendor, fronds of palm trees, and branches of leafy trees, and poplars of the wadi; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.* (Leviticus 23:39-40)

God commanded them to rejoice. Deuteronomy says it even more strongly: you shall be altogether joyful (Deuteronomy 16:15). And everyone was included: sons and daughters, servants, Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows (Deuteronomy 16:14).

Then came the booths.

> *In booths you shall dwell seven days; every native in Israel shall dwell in booths, so that your generations may know that in booths I made the sons of Israel dwell when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I **am** the LORD your God.'* (Leviticus 23:42-43)

For a week every year, Israel left their solid homes and lived in shelters of branches, so every generation would remember that their fathers lived in tents in the wilderness, and that God had cared for them there. He gave them manna every morning and water from the rock, and their clothes did not wear out for forty years (Deuteronomy 8:4). And in the middle of their tents, God Himself lived in a tent too.

A Feast Often Forgotten

Here is something sad. After Israel entered the land, they seem to have let this feast slip. When the exiles came back from Babylon, Ezra read the law to the people, and they discovered the command to live in booths.

> *And all the assembly who had returned from the captivity made booths and dwelt in the booths, for the sons of Israel had not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day. And there was very great joy.* (Nehemiah 8:17)

From the days of Joshua until that day. That does not mean nobody kept the feast at all in those centuries. Solomon dedicated the temple at this feast (1 Kings 8:2, 65). It means they had not kept it this way, with the whole nation living in booths, since Joshua. And when they finally did it right, there was very great joy. Obedience and joy usually go together.

Jesus at the Feast

John's Gospel takes us to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jesus' day, and what happened there is one of the clearest pictures in the Bible of Jesus fulfilling a feast in His own words.

> *Now the feast of the Jews, the **Feast of** Booths, was near.* (John 7:2)

Jesus went up to Jerusalem quietly, and in the middle of the feast He began teaching openly in the temple. Then, on the last and greatest day:

> *Now on the last day, the great **day** of the feast, Jesus was standing, and He cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. The **one** believing in Me, even as the Scripture said, 'Rivers of living water will flow out of his belly.'" Now He said this concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him were about to receive; for **the** Holy Spirit was not yet **given**, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* (John 7:37-39)

Why water? Partly because of the wilderness. The booths reminded Israel of the years when God gave them water from the rock. Paul says that rock was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4). And partly because of a ceremony at the temple.

Outside the Bible: The Water Ceremony at the Feast (*Background*)

Later Jewish writings, especially the Mishnah (tractate *Sukkah*, chapters 4 and 5), describe how during the Feast of Tabernacles in the time of the temple, a priest drew water from the Pool of Siloam in a golden pitcher each morning and poured it out at the altar, while the people sang. The same writings describe great golden lamps lit in the Court of the Women at night, so bright that all of Jerusalem was lit up. The Mishnah was written down around A.D. 200, after the temple was destroyed, so scholars debate how much of it reflects Jesus' day, though many accept that these ceremonies were practiced then. I was not able to open and check the Mishnah text myself for this book, so I give it here as background only, not as a quotation. The Old Testament itself never commands a water ceremony at this feast.

If those ceremonies were going on, picture the scene. Day after day, the priest pours water at the altar, and the people sing of drawing water with joy from the springs of salvation (Isaiah 12:3). On the last day

of the feast, Jesus stands up and shouts, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." He was saying that the water they were celebrating pointed to Him, and to the Holy Spirit He would give.

And the very next thing John records is Jesus in the temple saying, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). If great lamps had just burned over the temple courts all week, the people would have understood. Even without the Mishnah, the point is clear from John alone. At the feast that remembered God's care in the wilderness, Jesus said He is the water and the light.

The Word Who Tabernacled

Remember John 1:14 from Chapter 2.

> *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from **the** Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

The Word pitched His tent among us. Some teachers suggest that Jesus was actually born during the Feast of Tabernacles, in the fall rather than in December. It is an interesting idea, and there are arguments for a fall birth based on the timing of Zechariah's service in the temple (Luke 1:5, 8). But the Bible does not give Jesus' birthday, and those calculations depend on a lot of assumptions. I don't think we can know. What we do know is that John chose the language of the tabernacle to describe His coming. Whether He was born in the fall or not, the feast of God dwelling in tents with His people is about Him.

At the Transfiguration, when Peter saw Jesus shining in glory with Moses and Elijah, he offered to build three tents (Matthew 17:4). The word Matthew uses is the word for booths or tabernacles. Peter had the right idea about what he was seeing, God's glory dwelling with men, but the wrong timing. The kingdom had not come yet.

The Kingdom Feast

The Feast of Tabernacles is the one feast the Bible says will be kept by all nations in the future. Zechariah 14 describes the day the LORD comes back, stands on the Mount of Olives, and becomes King over all the earth (Zechariah 14:4, 9). Then:

> *And it will be **that** everyone who is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to bow down to the King, the LORD of armies, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths.* (Zechariah 14:16)

I understand this as describing the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth after His return, what Revelation 20 calls the time when believers live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4). Isaiah saw nations streaming to Jerusalem to learn God's ways, and swords beaten into plowshares (Isaiah 2:2-4). That is the kingdom the Feast of Tabernacles points to: a time when the King lives among His people, the harvest is in, and the whole world rejoices.

That is the order of the fall feasts as I understand them. Trumpets: the church is gathered to the Lord. Atonement: Israel looks on Him whom they pierced and is cleansed. Tabernacles: the King reigns and dwells with His people. The order of the calendar matches the order of the prophecies.

Some believers understand Zechariah 14 and Revelation 20 differently. They see the kingdom as spiritual, fulfilled in the church now, or in the new heavens and new earth. I respect them, but I believe the plain reading of these passages points to a real, earthly kingdom with Jesus reigning in Jerusalem, and the Feast of Tabernacles is one more reason I believe it.

The Eighth Day

There is one more detail. The feast lasted seven days, but God added an eighth day, a solemn assembly (Leviticus 23:36). Seven is the number of completion in the Bible. An eighth day is a new beginning, the first day of a new week.

I offer this as a suggestion only, but many teachers see the eighth day as a picture of what comes after the thousand-year kingdom: the new heaven and new earth, when time as we know it gives way to eternity. Revelation 21 describes it. And the very first thing the voice from heaven announces is that God will tabernacle with His people.

> *And I heard a loud voice out of heaven, saying, "Look, the tabernacle of God **is** with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them, their God."* (Revelation 21:3)

From the booths in the wilderness, to the Word made flesh, to the kingdom, to the new creation. God dwelling with His people. That is the last feast, and it never ends.

Living in Booths Now

Here is what I take from this feast for today. Israel lived in booths to remember that this world is not their permanent home. Peter called his body a tent that he would soon put off (2 Peter 1:13-14). Paul said our earthly house is a tent, and we have a building from God, eternal in the heavens (2 Corinthians 5:1). Abraham lived in tents because he was looking for the city whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:9-10).

We are tent people. We should enjoy the good things God gives us, and the Feast of Tabernacles commands joy. But we should hold them loosely, because we are on the way somewhere better. The booths are temporary. The city is forever.

The Picture

The Feast of Tabernacles was the joyful harvest feast when Israel lived in booths to remember God's care in the wilderness. At this feast Jesus called the thirsty to Himself and said He is the light of the world. The feast points ahead to the kingdom, when all nations will keep it, and to the day God will tabernacle with His people forever.

Study Questions

1. Read Leviticus 23:33-43. Why do you think God commanded Israel to rejoice at this feast?
2. Why would God want His people to leave their houses and live in booths for a week each year?

3. Read John 7:37-39. What did Jesus offer, and what did John say He meant by it?

4. Read Zechariah 14:9-16. What does this passage say about the future? How does the order of the fall feasts fit the order of future events?

5. What does it mean to you to be a tent person, living for a city God is building?

Part Five: The Tent and You

Chapter 23: From Tent to Temple to You

> *But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father also seeks such **people** worshiping Him.*
>
> John 4:23 (SLB)

We have walked through the tabernacle and the feasts, and we have seen Jesus in every part. Now I want to step back and follow the story of God's dwelling place through the rest of the Bible, because it does not stop at the tent in the wilderness. It ends with you.

The Tent Moves On

The tabernacle traveled with Israel for forty years in the wilderness. When they crossed into the promised land, it was set up at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1), and it stayed there for a long time. Samuel grew up serving there as a boy (1 Samuel 1 to 3). Later the tabernacle was at Nob, where David ate the holy bread (1 Samuel 21), and then at Gibeon (1 Chronicles 16:39; 21:29). David brought the ark to Jerusalem and placed it in a tent he had pitched for it (2 Samuel 6:17).

David wanted to build God a house. God told him no, his son would build it (2 Samuel 7:12-13). But God also made David an amazing promise, that He would build David a house, a dynasty, and establish his throne forever. That promise is fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of David.

The Temple of Solomon

Solomon built the temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 3:1), the same mountain where Abraham had offered Isaac. Its layout followed the tabernacle, but twice as large, with the Most Holy Place a cube of twenty cubits (1 Kings 6:20). When Solomon dedicated it, at the Feast of Tabernacles, the same thing happened that happened in the wilderness.

> *And it was, when the priests came out from the holy place, and the cloud filled the house of the LORD, and the priests were not able to stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.* (1 Kings 8:10-11)

The glory came down again. But Solomon knew that no building could hold God. In his dedication prayer he said, "Look, the heavens and the heavens of the heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27).

The Glory Departs

Over the centuries, Israel turned away. They brought idols into the very temple of God. The prophet Ezekiel, in exile in Babylon, was shown a vision of the abominations inside the temple, and then he watched something terrible happen.

> *And the glory of the LORD went out from on the threshold of the house and stood over the cherubim.* (Ezekiel 10:18)

The glory moved to the threshold, then to the east gate, then to the mountain on the east of the city, which most understand to be the Mount of Olives, and was gone (Ezekiel 10:19; 11:23). In 586 B.C. the Babylonians burned the temple.

When the exiles came home, they built a second temple, much smaller. The old men who remembered Solomon's temple wept when they saw it (Ezra 3:12). But God gave the prophet Haggai a promise:

> *Great will be the glory of this house, the latter more than the former, says the LORD of armies; and in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of armies.'* (Haggai 2:9)

How could the glory of that little temple be greater than Solomon's? Because one day the Lord Himself would walk into it. Herod the Great later rebuilt and enlarged that second temple, and it was in that temple that Jesus was presented as a baby, taught as a boy, and drove out the money changers as a man. The glory that left over the Mount of Olives came back, as a Man, riding down the Mount of Olives on a donkey.

Something Greater Than the Temple

Jesus said, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). He was speaking about His body. He told the Pharisees that something greater than the temple was there (Matthew 12:6). He told the Samaritan woman that a time was coming when people would worship the Father neither on her mountain nor in Jerusalem, but in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24).

The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, about forty years after Jesus said it would be (Matthew 24:1-2). By then the true temple had already been raised from the dead, and a new temple was being built.

You Are the Temple

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to live in believers. The glory that once filled a tent of goats' hair and a house of stone now lives in people. Paul says it plainly to the church as a whole:

> *Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and **that** the Spirit of God dwells in you?* (1 Corinthians 3:16)

And to each believer:

> *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit **who is** in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Think about that. Everything we have studied in this book, the holiness of God, the need for cleansing, the blood, the light, the bread, the incense of prayer, the presence of God, applies to your body and your life. You are where God lives now.

That is why Paul says to glorify God in your body. Israel was not allowed to bring anything unclean into the tabernacle. We should not be careless about what we bring into the temple God lives in now. It is also

why Paul tells believers not to be joined with unbelievers in ways that compromise their faith: "what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are a temple of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

And together, the church is one building.

> *So then you are no longer strangers and resident aliens, but fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.* (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Remember the boards of the tabernacle, each standing on its own silver base, all joined together by the bars into one house. That is the church. Each of us stands on the same ransom, and God is fitting us together into a dwelling place for Himself.

What Hebrews Says It All Means

The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish believers who were tempted to go back to the old system: the priests, the sacrifices, the temple. The writer's answer runs through almost the whole book. Jesus is better. Better than angels, better than Moses, a better High Priest, a better covenant, a better sanctuary, a better sacrifice, and a better hope. Near the end, he describes where we have come to as believers.

> *But you have come to Mount Zion and to **the** city of **the** living God, **the** heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to **the** festal gathering and church of **the** firstborn who are enrolled in **the** heavens, and to God, **the** judge of all, and to **the** spirits of righteous **men** made perfect, and to Jesus, **the** mediator of a new covenant, and to **the** blood of sprinkling that speaks better **things** than **that of** Abel.* (Hebrews 12:22-24)

Israel came to Mount Sinai with fire and darkness and a terrifying sound, and the people begged not to hear more (Hebrews 12:18-21). We have come to the heavenly Jerusalem, to Jesus, and to His sprinkled blood. The shadow has given way to the real thing.

And then the writer says something that cost his first readers dearly.

> *Therefore let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have an abiding city, but we are seeking the one to come.* (Hebrews 13:13-14)

Like the sin offering burned outside the camp, Jesus died outside the city. To follow Him, those Jewish believers had to leave behind the temple, the priesthood, and the approval of their own people. Following Jesus may cost you something too. But we are not looking for a city here. We are looking for the one to come.

The Picture

God's dwelling place moved from the tabernacle to Solomon's temple, then left because of sin, then returned in the person of Jesus, the true temple. Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit lives in every believer, and the church is being built into a holy temple. You are where God lives now.

Study Questions

1. Trace the story of God's dwelling place from Exodus 40 to 1 Kings 8 to Ezekiel 10 to John 1:14. What do you notice?
2. Why do you think God let the glory leave the temple in Ezekiel's day?
3. Read Haggai 2:6-9. How was the glory of the second temple greater than the first?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. If your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, what needs to change in the way you treat it?
5. Read Ephesians 2:19-22. How does it change the way you see your church to know that God is building it into His dwelling place?

Chapter 24: God With Us Forever

> *And the One sitting on the throne said, "Look, I make all things new." And He says to me, "Write, because these words are true and faithful."*
>
> Revelation 21:5 (SLB)

We began this book in the Garden of Eden, with Adam and Eve hiding among the trees and cherubim guarding the way back to God. We end it at the other end of the Bible, in a city with no temple, where God's people see His face.

Every ritual in Exodus and Leviticus pointed to the day God lives with His people face to face (Revelation 21:3). This world is not all there is. The whole story of Scripture ends with God dwelling with us forever.

No Temple in the City

John saw the new heaven and the new earth, and the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. He measured it, he described its walls and gates, and then he noticed something missing.

> *And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb.*
> (Revelation 21:22)

No temple. No tabernacle. No courtyard, no altar, no veil. Why not? Because everything the tabernacle pictured has been fulfilled. There is no more need for a building where God lives among people, because God and the Lamb fill the whole city. There is no need for a lampstand, because the glory of God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb (Revelation 21:23).

Here is something interesting. John says the city is a cube, as long as it is wide and as high as it is long (Revelation 21:16). The only other perfect cube in the Bible is the Most Holy Place, in the tabernacle and in Solomon's temple. I believe that is no accident. In the tabernacle, the Most Holy Place was one small room behind a veil where only one man could go, once a year. In the new creation, the whole city is the Most Holy Place, and every one of God's people lives there.

They Will See His Face

> *And **there** will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him. And they will see His face, and His name **will be** on their foreheads.*
> (Revelation 22:3-4)

The high priest wore a gold plate on his forehead engraved with Holiness to the LORD. In the New Jerusalem, every one of God's servants has His name on their foreheads. Aaron saw the mercy seat once a year through a cloud of incense. We will see His face.

The curse that began in Genesis 3 is gone. The tree of life, guarded by cherubim since Eden, stands in the middle of the city, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2). The way back is open, and it will never close again.

> *And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will not be any longer, nor mourning nor crying nor pain will be any longer, because the first things passed away.* (Revelation 21:4)

That is where the whole story of the tabernacle leads. God dwelling with His people, and no more tears, no more death, no more pain. Everything the gate, the altar, the basin, the lampstand, the table, the incense, the veil, and the mercy seat were pointing toward, fulfilled forever.

The Path Again

Before we close, let me walk you one last time from the gate to the mercy seat, and this time, let me talk to you directly.

The gate. There is one way to God, and it is open to you. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). It doesn't matter where you have been or what you have done. The gate is wide enough for you.

The altar. You can't skip it. The Bible says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). You and I deserve to die for our sins. But Jesus, the Lamb of God, died in our place. He took the judgment we deserved.

The basin. When you trust Him, He washes you completely. He gives you a new heart and makes you a new person. And when you fall, which you will, He keeps you clean as you confess your sins to Him.

The lampstand, the table, and the incense. He gives you light to walk by, bread to live on, and access to God in prayer, with Jesus Himself praying for you.

The veil. It is torn. You don't have to stand outside. Through His body, broken for you, you can come right into the presence of God.

The mercy seat. God's justice and His love meet at the cross. His blood covers your sin. When God looks at you, He sees the blood.

Coming In

Maybe you have read this whole book and you have never actually walked through the gate. You know a lot about the tabernacle, but you have never come to God through Jesus. I want to tell you how simple it is.

> *that if you confess with your mouth Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him out of **the** dead, you will be saved; for with **the** heart it is believed for righteousness, and with **the** mouth it is confessed for salvation.* (Romans 10:9-10)

It is not about cleaning up your life first. Remember, the altar comes before the basin. It is not about earning your way in. Paul says we are saved by grace through faith, not from works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is about trusting Jesus, the Lamb who died for you and rose again, and telling Him so.

If you are ready, you can pray something like this. The words are not magic. What matters is that you mean them.

> *Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner, and I know I can't come to God on my own. I believe You are the Lamb of God who died in my place, and that God raised You from the dead. I trust You now to forgive my sins and to make me clean. Come and live in me by Your Spirit. I want to follow You for the rest of my life. Thank You for opening the way. Amen.*

If you prayed that and meant it, tell someone. Find a church that teaches the Bible, and get baptized. Start reading your Bible, maybe beginning with the Gospel of John. You have just walked through the gate, and the God who once lived in a tent in the desert now lives in you.

For Those Already Inside

And if you have known Jesus for years, I hope this book has done for you what studying the tabernacle has done for me. I hope it has made you more grateful. Every time I read Exodus and Leviticus now, I see Jesus on every page. The boring chapters aren't boring anymore. They are love letters, written in wood and gold and blood, from a God who planned for thousands of years how to bring me home.

Keep your hand on the Lamb. Stop at the basin every day. Walk in the light. Feed on the bread. Pray boldly. Live like a tent person. And listen for the trumpet.

He is coming soon, and then we will see His face.

The Picture

The Bible ends where the tabernacle pointed: in a city with no temple, because God and the Lamb are its temple, and His people see His face. The way to the tree of life is open forever, and the whole city is the Most Holy Place.

Study Questions

1. Read Revelation 21:1-22:5. What details remind you of the tabernacle? What is missing, and why?
2. Why do you think the New Jerusalem is shaped like a cube?
3. Compare Genesis 3:22-24 with Revelation 22:1-5. What has changed?
4. Walk back through the path from the gate to the mercy seat. Where are you on that path today?
5. What is one thing from this study you want to remember and live out this week?

Appendix A: The Tabernacle at a Glance

This table lists each part of the tabernacle in the order you would meet it walking in from the gate, with where Exodus describes it, what it was made of, and where the New Testament connects it to Jesus.

Part	Where it stood	Made of	Exodus	Points to Jesus
The gate	East side of the courtyard	Blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen on four posts	27:16	The door and the way (John 10:9; 14:6)
The fence	Around the courtyard	Fine linen on sixty posts in bronze bases	27:9-18	God's perfect righteousness (Romans 3:20-23)
Bronze altar	Just inside the gate	Acacia wood overlaid with bronze	27:1-8	The Lamb of God, our substitute (John 1:29; Hebrews 10:10-12)
Bronze basin	Between the altar and the tent	Bronze, from the women's mirrors	30:17-21; 38:8	Washing and cleansing (Titus 3:5; John 13:10; 1 John 1:9)
Boards and silver bases	Walls of the tent	Acacia overlaid with gold, set in silver	26:15-30; 38:25-27	Standing on the ransom (1 Peter 1:18-19)
Golden lampstand	Holy Place, south side	One talent of pure hammered gold	25:31-40	The light of the world (John 8:12)
Table and bread	Holy Place, north side	Acacia overlaid with gold; twelve loaves	25:23-30	The bread of life (John 6:35)
Altar of incense	Holy Place, before the veil	Acacia overlaid with gold	30:1-10	Our intercessor (Hebrews 7:25)
The veil	Between the two rooms	Blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, with cherubim	26:31-33	His flesh, torn for us (Hebrews 10:19-20)
Ark of the covenant	Most Holy Place	Acacia overlaid with gold	25:10-16	God's throne and covenant (Hebrews 9:4)
Mercy seat	On top of the ark	Pure gold with two cherubim	25:17-22	Our propitiation (Romans 3:25)
High priest	Served in all three areas	Garments for glory and beauty	28	Our great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Appendix B: The Feasts at a Glance

The four spring feasts were fulfilled at Jesus' first coming, on the very days of the feasts. The three fall feasts, as I understand them from the pre-tribulation view, point to events still ahead. Other Bible teachers see some of the fall fulfillments differently (see Chapters 20 to 22).

Feast	Date	Scripture	Fulfillment	Status
Sabbath	Every seventh day	Leviticus 23:3	Rest in Christ's finished work (Hebrews 4:9-10)	Fulfilled in Christ
Passover	1st month, 14th day	Leviticus 23:5; Exodus 12	Jesus our Passover, sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7)	Fulfilled
Unleavened Bread	1st month, 15th to 21st	Leviticus 23:6-8	The sinless One in the tomb; a holy people (1 Corinthians 5:8)	Fulfilled
Firstfruits	The day after the Sabbath	Leviticus 23:9-14	Jesus raised, the firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:20)	Fulfilled
Weeks (Pentecost)	Fifty days after Firstfruits	Leviticus 23:15-22	The Holy Spirit poured out; the church born (Acts 2)	Fulfilled
Trumpets	7th month, 1st day	Leviticus 23:23-25	The rapture of the church at the trumpet of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)	Still ahead
Day of Atonement	7th month, 10th day	Leviticus 16; 23:26-32	Israel looks on Him whom they pierced and is cleansed (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:26)	Atonement made once for all; national fulfillment ahead
Tabernacles	7th month, 15th to 22nd	Leviticus 23:33-43	Christ reigning and dwelling with His people (Zechariah 14:16; Revelation 21:3)	Still ahead

Appendix C: The Offerings at a Glance

Offering	Leviticus	Required or voluntary	Points to Jesus
Burnt offering	1; 6:8-13	Voluntary	His complete devotion to the Father (Ephesians 5:2)
Grain offering	2; 6:14-23	Voluntary	His perfect, sinless life (John 12:24)
Peace offering	3; 7:11-36	Voluntary	Peace with God through His blood (Colossians 1:20)
Sin offering	4:1 to 5:13; 6:24-30	Required	Made sin for us, suffering outside the gate (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 13:11-12)
Guilt offering	5:14 to 6:7; 7:1-10	Required	His soul made a guilt offering (Isaiah 53:10)

Appendix D: Measurements

The Bible gives the tabernacle's sizes in cubits. A cubit was about 18 inches, the length from the elbow to the fingertip. The feet and inches below are close estimates. Where a size is worked out from other numbers rather than stated in the text, I say so.

Item	In cubits	About	Scripture
Courtyard	100 by 50, 5 high	150 by 75 feet, 7.5 feet high	Exodus 27:18
Gate	20 wide	30 feet	Exodus 27:16
Each board of the tent	10 by 1.5	15 feet by 27 inches	Exodus 26:16
Tent	30 by 10, 10 high (worked out from the boards)	45 by 15 feet, 15 feet high	Exodus 26:15-25
Most Holy Place	10 by 10 by 10 (worked out)	15-foot cube	Exodus 26:33
Bronze altar	5 by 5, 3 high	7.5 feet square, 4.5 feet high	Exodus 27:1
Bronze basin	Not given	Not given	Exodus 30:18
Lampstand	Not given; one talent of gold	About 75 pounds of gold	Exodus 25:39
Table	2 by 1, 1.5 high	3 feet by 18 inches, 27 inches high	Exodus 25:23
Altar of incense	1 by 1, 2 high	18 inches square, 3 feet high	Exodus 30:2
Ark	2.5 by 1.5, 1.5 high	45 by 27 inches, 27 inches high	Exodus 25:10
Breastpiece	A span square, folded double	About 9 inches square	Exodus 28:16

Exodus 38:24-29 records the metals given for the work: about twenty-nine talents of gold, a hundred talents of silver, and seventy talents of bronze. The SLB gives these as roughly 2,200 pounds of gold, 7,500 pounds of silver, and 5,250 pounds of bronze.

Appendix E: Words to Know

Antitype. The greater reality a type points to, its fulfillment in Christ.

Ark of the covenant. The gold-covered chest in the Most Holy Place that held the tablets of the law (Chapter 11).

Atonement. Making things right between God and sinners by dealing with sin, through a sacrifice.

Azazel. The Hebrew word for the goat sent into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement. Its exact meaning is uncertain (Chapter 21).

Cherubim. Powerful angelic beings who guard God's holiness. The singular is cherub.

Convocation. A holy gathering called by God.

Cubit. A measure of length, about 18 inches.

Ephod. The high priest's apron-like vest of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen.

Firstfruits. The first part of a harvest, given to God as a promise of the rest.

Hilasterion. The Greek word for the mercy seat, used of Jesus in Romans 3:25.

Holy Place. The first room of the tent, with the lampstand, table, and altar of incense.

Kapporet. The Hebrew word for the mercy seat, the cover of the ark.

Leaven. Yeast, or a piece of old dough that makes new dough rise. Often a picture of sin.

Mercy seat. The gold cover of the ark, where the blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement.

Mishkan. The Hebrew word for tabernacle, meaning a dwelling place.

Moedim. The Hebrew word for appointed times, used for the feasts of the LORD.

Most Holy Place. The inner room of the tent, also called the Holy of Holies, where the ark stood.

Pentecost. The Greek name for the Festival of Weeks, from the word for fiftieth.

Pre-tribulation. The view that Jesus will take His church to Himself in the rapture before the seven years of tribulation begin.

Propitiation. A sacrifice that satisfies God's just anger against sin, so that He can show mercy.

Rapture. The moment Jesus calls His church up to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Restitution. Paying back what was taken, as required in the guilt offering.

Shadow. The New Testament's word for the Old Testament pictures that pointed to Christ (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1).

Shekel. A unit of weight, later a coin. The half shekel was the ransom money of Exodus 30.

Shofar. A trumpet made from a ram's horn.

SLB. Steadfast Literal Bible, the translation quoted throughout this book.

Substitution. One dying in the place of another.

Tabernacle. The portable tent where God dwelt among Israel. Also the name of the fall feast, also called Booths.

Tribulation. The seven-year period of judgment on the earth before Christ returns to reign.

Type. A real Old Testament person, thing, event, or ceremony God designed to point ahead to Christ.

Urim and Thummim. Objects kept in the high priest's breastpiece and used to seek God's decision. Their exact form is unknown.

Appendix F: Sources and Credits

All Scripture quotations are from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). Words the translators supplied to make the English read smoothly are printed in bold italics.

The quotations from Flavius Josephus come from *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 3, chapters 7 and 10, in the public domain translation by William Whiston (1737). I checked each quotation against that text.

The Mishnah, tractate *Sukkah*, is described in Chapter 22 and the Talmud tradition about the temple veil in Chapter 10 only as background. I was not able to open and check those texts myself while writing this book, so I summarize them without quoting them, and I do not rest any teaching on them.

Hebrew and Greek words are given in simple English letters. Their meanings come from the standard Hebrew and Greek dictionaries and are explained in plain words where they first appear.

Where I share a meaning for a detail of the tabernacle that the Bible does not state, such as the meaning of the colors or the metals, I say in the text that it is a suggestion.

About This Book

The Tabernacle and the Feasts walks through the tent God told Moses to build, its furniture, its priests, its offerings, and the seven feasts of Leviticus 23, and shows how each one points to Jesus.

It starts at the one gate on the east side of the courtyard and moves step by step past the bronze altar and the basin, into the Holy Place with its lampstand, table, and incense, through the veil, and to the ark and the mercy seat. It explains the high priest and his garments, the five offerings of Leviticus, and each of the feasts, showing how Jesus fulfilled the four spring feasts on their very days and how the three fall feasts point to the rapture, the return of Christ, and His kingdom.

Every chapter ends with a short summary and study questions for personal reading or small groups. The back of the book has quick reference tables for the tabernacle, the feasts, and the offerings, a list of measurements, words to know, and a Scripture index.

All Scripture quotations come from the Steadfast Literal Bible, which is free to read at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb.

Scripture Index

This index lists every Bible passage that is named with its book somewhere in the text, with the pages where it appears.

Genesis 1:14 (63); 2:2-3 (63); 3:8 (9); 3:22-24 (42, 102); 3:24 (9, 12, 40); 8:20 (57); 14:18-20 (51); 22:2 (57); 22:7-8 (24)

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Deuteronomy 8:3 (33); 8:4 (90); 16:3 (71); 16:5-6 (68); 16:10-12 (77); 16:14 (90); 16:15 (90); 16:16 (65)

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