

**Lesson 24**  
**The Tabernacle Furniture**  
**Hebrews 9:1-5**

Have you ever wondered why God gave Moses such explicit instructions on the erecting of the Tabernacle? There are two basic reasons. The first reason is that the Tabernacle was where God had fellowship with Israel. ***“And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them”*** (Ex. 25:8). God dwelt in the Tabernacle. There the Shekinah glory or the dwelling-glory-presence of God was with Israel. This was God’s house and the building of it would be by His direction. The second reason is that the whole of the Tabernacle was a type or shadow, pointing forward to the reality of Jesus Christ.

***“Who serve a copy and shadow of heavenly things just as Moses is warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, ‘See,’ He says, ‘That you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain’”*** (Heb. 8:5).

The Tabernacle pointed to Christ. For instance, the Tabernacle was the presence of the Shekinah glory in Israel’s midst but this merely prefigured Christ who would come to dwell among men. ***“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt (tabernacled) among us ...”*** (John 1:14). Christ literally “tabernacled among us” because God’s presence was in the person of Jesus Christ dwelling among men.

Every aspect of the Tabernacle somehow pointed forward to Christ. The author of the Book of Hebrews mentions only a few of the articles of furniture in the Tabernacle. The reason for mentioning only a few articles is that these articles deal with the present ministry of Christ. The author said he did not have time to elaborate on these pieces of furniture, but we do! This morning I plan to take the six pieces of furniture in the Tabernacle and show how they point forward to Christ in His person and work.

It is my personal conviction that each article of furniture is designed to teach some major lesson about Christ. While it is possible to take all the details of the furniture (horns, knobs, grates, etc.) and see how they point to Christ, this often degenerates into typological confusion and endless subjectivity.

#### THE PLAN OF THE TABERNACLE

***Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. And behind the second veil, there 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 side with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron’s rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant. And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.”***

The Tabernacle was surrounded by a fenced outer court which was 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. Any Jew could come into the outer court and had to do so if he was to offer an animal sacrifice for sins. Notice, however, that there is only one door into the Tabernacle and if the Jew was to have fellowship with God he had to go through the gate.

Jesus Christ is the only door of salvation.

***“Jesus therefore said to them again, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep ... I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture’”*** (John 10:7, 9).

***“Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me”*** (John 14:6).

In the outer court, there were two pieces of furniture - the Brazen Altar and the Laver.

The actual Tabernacle itself was 45 feet long and 16 feet wide and it was divided into two parts - the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Only one who was a priest could enter the Holy Place and in the Holy Place were three articles of furniture. On the right was the Table of Showbread, on the left was the Lampstand and directly in front of the entrance into the Holy of Holies was the Altar of Incense. There was also a veil that divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies could only be entered into once a year by the high priest on the Day of Atonement where atonement was made for the sins of the people. In the Holy of Holies, there was the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat upon it, and the Mercy Seat had two golden cherubim (angels) overlooking the Mercy Seat.

#### THE BRAZEN ALTAR (Altar of Burnt Offering)

A Jew would enter the outer court through the gate to make a sacrifice for his sins. Any Israelite could come to the Brazen Altar but no further. An animal sacrifice, usually a lamb, was put to death and sacrificed, and this was done as an object lesson to the Jew that no one could approach God without the shedding of blood of a perfect sacrifice. Every sacrifice had to be without blemish or it was rejected. The Jew understood that this sacrifice was only temporary substitution or covering until the Messiah should come and suffer for sins.

The Brazen Altar typifies or foreshadows Christ's death for sin and for sinners. Christ's blood was shed to deliver a person from the guilt and penalty of sin. Christ died as a sinner's substitute and His death did not merely cover sin but took it away forever.

***“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*** (John 1:29).

***“So Christ, also having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time...”*** (Heb. 9:28).

The fire on the Brazen Altar, which never went out, speaks of the fires of judgment which Christ

bore for all who trust Him. Christ's blood was shed and His sinless body given as a human sacrifice that sinners should have the forgiveness of sins.

***"... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness"*** (Heb. 9:22).

***"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace"*** (Eph. 1:7).

The death of Christ makes it possible for a person to be justified before a holy God.

***"Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus"*** (Rom. 3:24).

***"For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins"*** (Col. 1:13-14).

A Jew could only go to the Brazen Altar and no further and this is typical of Christ our Salvation who takes away our sins. The outer court and the Brazen Altar speak of salvation. Only a priest could go into the Holy Place and this speaks of service.

A sinner has to be saved and become a priest before He can serve God. Today, each Christian is a priest and can serve God. ***"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood ..."*** (1 Pet. 1:9). Christ, in His sacrificial death and through His high priesthood, has made it possible to serve God.

## THE LAVER

Only a priest could go to the Laver, which was made of brass in the shape of a bowl (like a huge birdbath). This bowl was filled with water and a priest could never go into the Holy Place to do service for God unless he had first cleansed himself at the Laver. The priest only washed His hands and feet, indicating this is dealing with daily sanctification in holiness and not salvation.

The Laver speaks of Christ our Sanctification. ***"...just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water by the word"*** (Eph. 5:25-26). Only one who is a believer could come to the Laver for cleansing and he has to be cleansed by Christ if he is going to have vital fellowship with God and dynamic service for God. The Laver shows the great need of Christ's death to deliver the Christian from the power of sin in his life. We need cleansing to serve God. ***"... and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"*** (1 John 1:7, 9). We Christians are a royal priesthood and we must be constantly bringing our sins to Christ for cleansing if we want power for service. We cannot live in this world without some dirt and defilements of this world. If we do not daily go to Christ for cleansing, we lose our testimony to the world.

## THE LAMPSTAND

The priests would enter into the Holy Place cleansed and ready to do service for God. On the left was the Lampstand, which had seven branches with the middle shaft taller than the others. This was the only light in the whole tabernacle and without this light a priest could never serve God in the Tabernacle, for he could not see. Priests needed the Lampstand to guide them in their service for God.

The Lampstand prefigures Christ who is our light.

***“Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life’”*** (John 8:12).

***“For you (Christians) were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light”*** (Eph. 5:8).

Here we see Christ our Shining. Christ gives light to every believer-priest in that He leads and guides in his service for God. God expects all true believers in Christ to serve Him and to do it in dependence upon Christ who is the Light. We cannot serve Christ by our own wisdom, ingenuity and strength but we must be dependent upon Him to be our light and this light is found in the Bible. If true Christians are to be lights, they must be resting upon the Light, Jesus Christ.

***“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven”*** (Matt. 5:16).

***“That you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you appear as lights in the world”*** (Phil. 2:15).

All the light that men need to live spiritually is found in Christ. A person cannot know the guiding of Christ unless he has gone first to the Brazen Altar (salvation) and the Laver (cleansing). Then we begin to experience Christ as a guiding light.

## THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD

The Table of Showbread was on the right of the Holy Place. On this table were 12 loaves arranged in two rows. This bread was eaten by the priest who served in the Tabernacle. The twelve loaves of bread were a constant reminder to Israel of the covenant relationship in which God would be totally faithful to sustain His people.

The Table of Showbread speaks of Christ our Sustainer. Christ is the bread of life who sustains His people. ***“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst’”*** (John 6:35). Christ satisfies the deepest longings of the human heart so that men will not spiritually hunger. Christ is the spiritual food of God’s covenanted people and He alone brings satisfying communion and fellowship. Just as the Old Testament priests nibbled on the bread all day long and the bread was replaced on each sabbath, so Christians are to be walking all day long with Christ and His presence must be ever fresh.

Christ can only fulfill the innermost longings of the human heart if a person has first gone to the Brazen Altar (salvation) and the Laver (cleansing). We will not feed upon Christ until our attitudes are straight, and any and all bad attitudes must be cleansed by Christ. We hunger for Christ when we are right with Christ.

## THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

Right in front of the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place was the golden Altar of Incense. On this altar incense was burned both morning and evening, which represented the sweet fragrance of prayers offered up to God.

The Altar of Incense typifies Christ our Intercessor. Christ is forever praying for His people before the Father in heaven.

***“Now the main point in what has been said is this; we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”*** (Heb. 8:1).

***“Hence also He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them”*** (Heb. 7:25).

Christ is praying for His people and because of His prayer each true believer will persevere to the end and be saved.

Each believer-priest, in his service for Christ, can rest assured that Christ is praying for him. This should be a great encouragement to keep us from despondency in persecution and failure.

The author of Hebrews seems to put the Altar of Incense in the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:4), but the explanation given is that when the veil was pulled back it appeared as though the Altar of Incense was in the Holy of Holies. Also, the author wants to connect Christ's atoning work at the cross and his intercessory work in heaven.

## THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

The only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant. In the Ark were three things: 1) tables of the Mosaic Law; 2) a pot of manna, and 3) Aaron's rod that budded. These all had great significance to Israel. On the Ark was the Mercy Seat which had two golden cherubim on each side looking down on the Mercy Seat. It was at the Ark and the Mercy Seat that the Shekinah glory dwelled.

Only once a year the high priest went into the Holy of Holies with a bowl of blood from an animal sacrifice. The blood was to be poured on the Mercy Seat in order to appease or satisfy the wrath of God for sins of ignorance committed by Israel.

The Day of Atonement was a dramatic moment for Israel. The people would watch an animal killed and the blood taken by the high priest into the Tabernacle. The high priest would move

through the Holy Place and stand before the veil into the Holy of Holies. Then he would push back the veil. Surely he would be frightened, anxious, nervous for he would not know what he would meet behind the veil. Slowly he would move towards the Mercy Seat, having a cord tied to one leg in case he should make a mistake and God would strike him dead. The other priests could then pull him out of the Holy of Holies without entering it themselves. Then the high priest would pour the blood on the Mercy Seat, knowing that the sins of Israel were covered for another year. He would then move out of the Holy of Holies and through the Holy Place and out into the court where multitudes of Jews were anxiously waiting to see if their sins had been covered for another year.

Christ is the fulfillment of the Ark of the Covenant. God dwelled in the Tabernacle but now God dwells in Christ. The Tables of the Law were fulfilled perfectly by Christ. The pot of manna tells us that Christ came down from heaven and fulfills the needs of His people. Aaron's rod that budded speaks of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The Mercy Seat, however, speaks of Christ our Satisfaction. Christ, through His death on the cross, satisfied once and for all and forever God's holy wrath against sin. His blood atoned for the sins of God's people.

***“Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation (mercy seat) in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:24-26).***

Christ is our Mercy Seat. Christ and His death is the only meeting place between God and man. God only forgives sins and holds back wrath from those who are covered by the blood of Christ.

A true believer in Christ needs never to fear God's wrath because Christ propitiated or satisfied that wrath in His death. With God's wrath appeased, Christians can now commune with, fellowship with and worship the one, true and living God through Christ Jesus. The end of the salvation process is that we might worship God!

## CONCLUSION

The symbolism in the teaching of the Tabernacle is marvelous. The outer court was the place of salvation; the Holy Place the place of service as believers, and the Holy of Holies the place of fellowship and worship. All this is possible only through Jesus Christ who is the fulfillment of everything in the Tabernacle.

Christ's work for the sinner is wonderful and the steps to salvation are clearly symbolized in the Tabernacle furniture. A decision was made to take a sacrifice through the gate, so a person must decide to trust Christ as the only Savior from sin. Acceptance was found at the Brazen Altar and acceptance is only through the substitutionary work of Christ of sin. Cleansing is found at the Laver and only Christ can cleanse His people daily through His blood. Fellowship with Christ is

found at the Table of Showbread and our testimony is related to the Lampstand. The Altar of Incense is Christ's continual prayer for believers in service for Him. The Ark and the Mercy Seat satisfy God and Christ's death satisfied God's wrath, and now we can have complete fellowship with God and worship Him.

Where are you? Are you on the outside of the gate or inside? Have you decided to come through the gate or not? Have you come to the Brazen Altar and received Christ as the only substitute for your sins? You cannot be saved until you come to Christ and accept Him as your all-sufficient Savior for sin. Without Christ, you shall perish in your sins and face a wrathful God in eternity. With Christ, you shall have substitution and satisfaction for your sins. You must first come to Christ as a sinner accepting His sacrifice for you before you can ever serve Christ, fellowship with Christ or worship Christ.