

Lesson for November 2, 2008

Old Testament Survey

The Book of Leviticus Part III

The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was a portable tent with a framework made of wood, built in approximately 1490 B.C. It was designed to be mobile as the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness in search of the Promised Land. The Tabernacle consisted of three areas: an outer court, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The Tabernacle area was 150 feet long by 75 feet wide, the Tabernacle “building” being 45 feet by 15 feet. The Holy Place was 30 feet by 15 feet and the Holy of Holies was 15 feet by 15 feet. God gave Moses and the nation specific instructions on how the Tabernacle was to be built and what materials were to be used. (Exodus 25)

The Tabernacle and the articles of furniture that stood in it were all symbolic of either the Person of Christ, the Work of Christ or fellowship with God. Eternal life or eternal fellowship with God was pictured at the Brazen Altar and temporal fellowship with God was pictured at the Laver. In the inner courtyard, called the Holy Place, stood the Golden Candlestick, the Table of Shewbread and the Altar of Incense. In the Holy of Holies, behind the Veil, were the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat that covered it. The Ark contained the tables of the Ten Commandments, Aaron’s Rod and a Pot of Manna. All the furniture and articles had symbolic meaning and were used by God to teach the Jews about salvation and fellowship with God.

Why did God institute the Tabernacle? The reason was Israel’s lack of faith and rejection of God’s desire to make of them a nation of priests (Exodus 19:6). Simply put, “they were scared”. Instead of trusting God, Who they could not see, they elected Moses, who they could see, as their permanent spokesman so they would not have to stand in the presence of God. God in His grace instituted ritual worship, complete with a place to worship, a priesthood to administer the rituals, holy days and feasts upon which to practice these rituals, specific foods to use in the rituals and many other ceremonies and laws related to these rituals. Also within the Tabernacle was the place for God’s glory to dwell. Now, instead of the people assembling before God, they were not allowed to be in His presence (though He was with them) with the exception of the High Priest (a representative of the people). God has always desired to dwell among His people and it is only the lack of faith and rejection of God by His people that prevent Him from doing so.

Since Israel rejected God's desire to make them priests, He gave them so much typology appealing to their five senses that they could not possibly fail to understand God's plan and purpose, nor could they miss the Messiah when He came. But guess what? They *never* understood God's plan and purpose (as a nation) and they *did* miss the Messiah and *instead* rejected and crucified Him. They were so caught up in their traditions that they failed to receive the instructions from God regarding their spiritual lives and their coming Messiah. These lessons were all clearly taught in the rituals and ceremonies.

Symbolism of the Furniture and Furnishings

The Brazen Altar (Exodus 27:1-8; 38:1-7) – Made of wood and brass, it symbolized the Hypostatic Union (the deity and humanity of Christ in one Person). The sacrifice upon this altar represented Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross. There are four doctrines illustrated here:

- 1) *Atonement* (Hebrews 9:22)
- 2) *Redemption* (Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Titus 2:14)
- 3) *Justification* (Romans 3:24-26; 5:1-2)
- 4) *Positional Sanctification* (Hebrews 10:10,14; I Corinthians 1:30)

The Laver (Exodus 30:17) – This was a wooden basin, overlaid with polished brass "mirrors" donated by the women of Israel. Its purpose was for the priests to wash their hands and feet before attending the Altar or entering the Holy Place. Paul relates the Laver to the Word of God in Ephesians 5:26, "by the washing of water by the Word," a picture of experiential sanctification. It is interesting that a mirror was used in the making of the Laver, which illustrates the concept of looking into the mirror of the Word of God. Looking into a mirror shows us any "flaws," but it also shows how to correct them. (Exodus 38:8; II Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 5:25-27; II Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:22-25)

The Golden Candlestick (Exodus 25:31-39; 37:17-24) – The candlestick was located in the Holy Place and was the only source of light in the Tabernacle. Light, of course, was essential for the priests to see to perform their duties. The candlestick (lamp stand) was made of a solid piece of gold and consisted of seven branches. The solid piece of gold and the seven branches speak of Christ's perfection. The candlestick pictures Christ as the Light of the World, indwelt and filled with the Holy Spirit. Olive oil (a type of the Holy Spirit) was burned in the candlestick. In the new Tabernacle or Temple in Revelation 21 there will be no need of light, since Christ will be dwelling in it. (John 1: 9; 3:19-20; 12:35-36)

The Table of Shewbread (Exodus 25:23-29; 37:10-16) – This table was wood overlaid with brass to picture the Hypostatic Union of Christ. The table held twelve loaves of bread to symbolize the tribes of Israel. The eating of the bread pictures fellowship, as the priests would be allowed to eat the leftover bread together. The loaves were to be made of fine flour without leaven, typifying the sinless nature of Christ. Christ calls Himself the Bread of Life and tells us to eat this bread that we might live forever. This, of course is symbolic, as is the shewbread. When we eat the Bread of Life (trust Christ as our Savior) we have permanent fellowship with God, positionally, and the potential for fellowship with Him in time. (John 6:35, 51-58)

The Altar of Incense (Exodus 30:1-10, 34-38) – This altar was made of wood overlaid with pure gold, with four gold rings through which poles were inserted in order to carry it. This altar was used to burn incense, which was to be made of certain spices. Like the candlestick, the incense altar was to burn continually and was checked twice a day by the high priest. The sweet aroma, which ascended upward and filled the room with its fragrance, pictured the prayers of the priest on behalf of the people of Israel. In the same manner, Christ who is our High Priest prays for us and makes intercession for us as our mediator. (John 17:9; Hebrew 7:25; I John 1:2; Romans 8:34; Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4)

The Veil (Exodus 26:31-37) – There were two veils in the Tabernacle, the first one called the Door was the entrance to the Holy Place and the second was the Veil leading into the Holy of Holies. The priest entered daily into the Holy Place, but only once a year into the Holy of Holies. Before the priest could enter the Holy Place he was required to make a sacrifice for his sins and wash his hands and feet. This typifies I John 1:9 (Rebound). Christ is said to be the Door to eternal life and a person enters this door by faith in Christ's payment for sin. No one, except the high priest, was allowed into the Holy of Holies until the Veil was torn in half when Christ died on the Cross. The removal of the Veil symbolizes the fact that the sin barrier between God and man had been removed once and for all. (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 6:19-20; 10:19-22; John 10:7-10)

The Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:10-22) – The ark was a wooden box overlaid with pure gold, which measured about three and three-fourths feet long by two and one-fourth feet wide, containing three items that were sacred to the nation of Israel: 1) The tablets of the Ten Commandments 2) A pot of manna 3) Aaron's rod. All of these items were pictures of Christ and His future Work on behalf of mankind. The tablets represented the entire Law of God, the pot of manna represented God's daily provision and Aaron's rod represented God's protection. Christ fulfilled the Law perfectly, He is God's provision for each of us and upon faith in Him we are secure forever.

The Ark of the Covenant was always carried ahead of the Israelites as they traveled, just as Christ went before us to pioneer the Christian Way of Life through the power of the Holy Spirit. (John 10:4; 15:1-27; Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 4:14-16)

The Mercy Seat (Exodus 25:17-22) – The Mercy Seat, made of solid gold, was the lid (covering) for the Ark of the Covenant. Two cherubim (angels) with wings guarded either end of the Mercy Seat symbolizing God's presence and judgment against any sinful approach to God. This was God's throne upon which He sat symbolically and it pictured His grace and mercy toward His people. The one time a year that the high priest was allowed into the Holy of Holies where the Mercy Seat was located, he was to sprinkle blood on it to signify that atonement had been made for the nation of Israel. It was above the Mercy Seat that the Shekinah Glory of God resided. Christ is our "Mercy Seat" having satisfied the justice of God by His substitutionary spiritual death upon the Cross (Doctrine of Propitiation). The Greek word for Mercy Seat and propitiation are the same, "hilasterion" and according to Romans 3:25, Christ is our Mercy Seat. In the same manner that an animal as a type of Christ was judged for sin, Christ Himself was the reality of that type. (Numbers 7:89; Hebrews 9:1-28)

Conclusion

God's grace has always been operational, in every dispensation, as we can clearly see in His dealings with the nation of Israel. The study of types in the Old Testament certainly helps us to have a better understanding of the Dispensation of Israel and should cause us to appreciate the Age of Grace in which we live. As a nation, Israel was a failure for the most part, but there was always a "remnant according to grace" that understood the typology and responded to God and His Word in a positive way. How much more should we, as Church Age believers, respond in a positive way to God and His Word with all the benefits that we enjoy. We are blessed to live in the most unique age in all of history. We have a permanent supernatural power within us, the Holy Spirit, to guide and teach us. We have the completed canon of Scripture, the mind of Christ, to study and apply. We have the indwelling of God the Father and Jesus Christ. We have pastor-teachers to assist us in learning and applying God's Word.