

Lesson 2. THE HOLY OF HOLIES

READING: Exodus 25:10-22, 26:31-34, 40:17-38; Hebrews 9:1-10.

AIM: To continue our study of the Tabernacle and note how it pointed forward to Christ.

1. BACKGROUND

Each part of the Tabernacle and its contents, services and sacrifices, was a "shadow of heavenly things" and "figures of the true". God-given rules and conditions, that were holy and meaningful, formed the basis of the Tabernacle arrangements. Moreover, they were designed so that supreme holiness prevailed at the sacred place appointed for the High Priest to draw near to the Lord's presence in the Most Holy Place or "Holy of Holies".

Outside, and visible to the people, the cloud by day and the appearance of fire by night rested over the Tabernacle when it was set up. The children of Israel stayed in that place and did not move on until the cloud was taken up from over the Tabernacle; then they went forward and followed where it led.

2. THE VEIL Exod. 26:31-33

Between the Holy Place and Most Holy Place hung the Veil, which was a curtain of needlework woven with blue, purple and scarlet threads and gold cherubim. It was suspended from four wooden pillars overlaid with gold (Exod. 26:31-32) and was parted only when the High Priest made the offerings on the Day of Atonement.

A similar veil in the Temple of Jerusalem was miraculously torn from top to bottom when Jesus, our great High Priest, offered his blood for the pardon of our sins (Matt. 28:50-51; Heb. 10:19-20, 9:14). This rending of the veil showed that Jesus had opened the way into the true Holy of Holies for all believers.

3. THE MOST HOLY PLACE Exod. 25:10-22, 26:34, 37:1-9

The Most Holy Place was a cube, being 4.6 m. long, 4.6 m. high and 4.6 m ft. wide. It contained only the Ark, which was a small wooden box completely covered inside and outside with gold. The Mercy Seat was the golden lid of the ark, on top of which rested two golden cherubim with outstretched wings that covered the seat (Exod. 25:18-21). "Of one piece with the mercy seat he made the cherubim on its two ends" (Exod. 37:8, R.S.V.) signifying to us unity in Christ who is our Mercy Seat.

Through Christ we ask for forgiveness of our sins. The faces of the cherubim were turned towards the Mercy Seat, just as the faces of true believers should always be towards their Lord and be one with him (Exod. 37:6-9; John 17:20-23).

Once a year the High Priest entered and sprinkled the blood on the Mercy Seat for the forgiveness of the nation's sins. If he presumed to go into the Most Holy Place without doing this he would die (Lev. 16:2-3). This once-yearly entrance of the High Priest pointed forward to Christ, whose appointment as High Priest after the order of Melchisedec - not by fleshly descent but by divine appointment, was confirmed by his resurrection (Heb. 7:25).

The contents of the ark consisted of the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded and the tables of the covenant (Heb. 9:4).

1. The golden pot of manna typifies Christ, because he is the Bread of Life (John 6:31-35) even a supply of "hidden manna" to "him that overcometh" (Rev. 2: 17).
2. Aaron's rod that budded (Num. 17:1-8) pointed forward to the resurrection of Christ. God in His mercy will glorify us and make us blossom in eternal life through Christ our Redeemer if we are faithful and obey the Word of God.
3. The two tables of stone engraved with the Law of God show us that the Word of God should be inscribed on our hearts (Exod. 9:17; Deut. 31:24-26; Jer. 31:31; II Cor. 3:3; Heb. 8:10).

4. GOD'S GLORY IN THE MOST HOLY PLACE Exod. 40:17-38

God's glory in a pillar of cloud rested on the Mercy Seat between the cherubim (Exod. 40:38; Lev. 16:2; Psalm 80:1) and no other light was needed in the Most Holy Place. Without God's presence the Most Holy Place was completely

dark, for even the light of the seven-branched lampstand was cut off by the dividing curtain. From the Mercy Seat God communed with the High Priest:

"And there will I meet with thee and I will commune with thee from above the Mercy Seat....of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel" (Exod. 25:22). As the High Priest saw the glory of God above the Mercy Seat, we can visualize it manifested in the Lord Jesus. John says that the disciples beheld in him "the glory of the Father" (John 1:14). He was likened to the LIGHT or GLORY of God, SHINING IN A DARK PLACE (John 1:5). He revealed the glory of the Father to men. In all he said and did, there was a reflection of divine glory. This was made even brighter when he was raised from the dead and made immortal. All the world will see this at his second advent. "As truly as I live all the EARTH shall be filled with the glory of the Lord".

5. GENERAL LESSONS FROM THE TABERNACLE

Preparation:

- All must enter the doorway (through Christ) (John 10:9; 14:6).
- They must make contact with the altar of sacrifice through baptism (Rom. 6:4).
- They must wash at the laver by heeding the instructions of the Word of God (Eph. 5:26).
- Only then are they permitted to enter the holy place.

Walking in the Light:

- A person does this when he accepts Christ in the way appointed. He must walk in the light (lampstand) John 3:21.
- He must partake of the bread of life (shewbread) (John 6:51).
- He must engage constantly in prayer (incense) (Rev. 5:8, 8:3-4).

Sharing the Glory:

- The apostle says that the veil symbolised the flesh (Heb.10:19). So to go beyond the veil is to put on immortality. That is the final glory of one who has accepted Christ and walked consistently in the light of his truth.

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As we consider the wonderful design of the Tabernacle and its different features so full of meaning, we can appreciate God's greatness and goodness. There within the Tabernacle, the very centre of Israel's life, God's glory was concentrated so that the people were continually reminded to praise and honour Him. God wishes to dwell with us also and radiate His glory through us in His Kingdom (Eph. 2: 19-22).

REFERENCE LIBRARY

"The Visible Hand of God", chapter 17

"The Law of Moses", chapters 13-15

"Law and Grace", chapter 5.

"The Letter to the Hebrews", section 4 "The Tabernacle"

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the features of the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle.
2. Explain the significance to us of the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place.
3. Describe how the Tabernacle is an illustration of our walk to the glory to which we are called.