

Chapter 11 - Parallel Temples

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The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.

– Hebrews 8:1,2

Introduction

The above text indicates that Jesus serves in the *true* tabernacle which is located in Heaven. The author of Hebrews used the word “true tabernacle” to contrast the sanctuary in Heaven with the “pseudo tabernacle” that Moses erected on Earth. (Hebrews 8:5)

Did you know that certain processes or ceremonies in the heavenly tabernacle have direct parallels with the earthly tabernacle? I like to describe these parallels as the “Heaven-Earth-Linkage-Law.” Activity in the temples of Heaven and Earth are linked together by law!

For example, did you know that more than fourteen end-time events are synchronized with special ceremonies in Heaven’s temple? The books of Daniel and Revelation are based on ceremonies in Heaven’s temple; therefore, it helps to understand the ceremonies in Heaven’s temple to correctly understand Bible prophecy.

The only way to properly understand the ceremonies that take place in Heaven’s temple is to examine the services that were conducted as a parallel on Earth. **“This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: ‘See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’ ”** (Hebrews 8:5)

Dual Purpose Palace

The ways of God are revealed in ceremonies that take place in His temples. Because we cannot attend the services in Heaven, God commanded Moses to create a parallel temple system on Earth. God’s temple in Heaven is a dual purpose palace. It is like a courthouse and a church. On Earth, church is a place where God’s will is studied and examined, and people are encouraged to obey God’s will.

The courthouse is a place where social needs are codified and implemented through the force of law. To a great extent, the balance of power between the church and the courthouse defines the unique culture of every nation on Earth. The same is true in Heaven. Heaven’s temple functions as a courthouse and a church.

In Jesus, there is a perfect balance of church and state, He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Revealer of God’s will and He is the Executor of the justice of God. These are the privileges and the responsibilities of man’s Creator, Jesus Christ – the Alpha and the Omega.

God has unilaterally imposed the rule of His law throughout the universe. If there was no law, chaos would rule. The decisions and declarations of Jesus in Heaven's temple are subject to law. God is not arbitrary. God's rule of law does not have a political bias, nor is it temperamental in nature.

Nothing less than "the whole truth" is accepted in Heaven's court, so justice and fairness are always present. Because the truth is more important than winning an argument, God is open to the closest scrutiny. God has nothing to hide. In fact, each issue and investigation only magnifies the righteousness of God!

Malice and mischief are not found in Heaven's temple. During the temporal presence of sin in the universe, justice and fairness are faithfully maintained in Heaven's temple. Highly intelligent angels observe God and they are delighted to serve Him. They never stop singing His praise because He is flawless and magnificent in everything He does.

A Working Model

Of all the concepts taught in the Bible, the services in God's temple are among the most profound, intricate and beautiful. A proper understanding of these services ties all Bible themes together and they provide a backdrop against which all conclusions about God's will and ways can be tested and verified.

This is a crucial point. The truth about the ways of God may appear to be abstract (that is, not tangible or verifiable), but this is not the case. God remedied this problem a long time ago by commanding Moses to set up a careful parallel or shadow of Heaven's *process* so that human beings could study, test and validate their understanding of His marvelous ways.

Moses was warned to follow the pattern that God gave him. This makes sense for if the model was flawed, our study of Heaven's temple would also be flawed.

Rituals Were Shadows

Few people know anything about the temple services God gave to Moses.

I suspect there are two reasons for this:

- a. "because they are Jewish," or
- b. "they were nailed to the cross."

In my opinion, both reasons have contributed to the hopelessly confused state of Christianity today! Just because the Mosaic covenant with its shadows and parallels was nailed to the cross, this does not mean the significance of the shadows and parallels became useless after the cross.

The first five books of the Bible are very valuable in helping us understand Jesus because He

does not change. He is the same forever. Therefore, the temple services taking place right now in Heaven's true tabernacle are still parallels of temple services that took place 3,000 years ago on Earth. The Old Testament sanctuary rituals had no divine efficacy or potent powers within themselves. (Isaiah 1:11-17; Hebrews 10:1-4)

Contrary to what many religions teach today, religious rituals do not have value in themselves. Instead, God wants man to understand the object lessons that He illustrates through temple ceremonies or rituals. The temple rituals which God commanded the children of Israel to observe were shadows or parallels of actual processes that take place in Heaven.

Consider this illustration. A \$5.00 bill (U.S. Federal Reserve Note) has no value within itself. It is merely a small piece of paper with writing on both sides. However, it is a symbol of value and most people think of it, use it and treat it as though it had value, even though it does not. As long as the United States government will exchange something of value for a \$5.00 bill, it will have value.

My point is that the \$5.00 bill is a *symbol* of value, even though it is only a piece of paper. But if the U.S. government ever decides to terminate the use of the \$5.00 bill, then all of the U.S. \$5.00 bills in the world will be worthless. Some currencies are worthless pieces of paper because the government who initially printed the currency is unable to back it with anything of value.

For those worthless currencies, the old saying is true, "it is not worth the paper it is printed on." In like manner, temple rituals have no value within themselves. They are symbolic of real things that God has done, is doing and will do for the salvation of the human race. In terms of a working model on Earth, God required the Old Testament rituals to function until the reality appeared. So, when Jesus came to Earth and died on the cross, the rituals came to an end, even though the processes they represent are still ongoing.

Even though the rituals are now null and void as far as God is concerned, they contain the keys that explain the ways of God in Heaven's temple. Therefore, a basic understanding of the earthly temple rituals remains vitally important today.

The Tabernacle

The earthly temple built by Moses primarily consisted of seven items: the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of the Presence (also called the Table of Shewbread), the Altar of Incense, the Altar of Burnt Offering, the Lampstand, the Laver and the Tent of Meeting (the tent building was about 18 wide by 55 feet long). God designed each piece of furniture and gave the pattern to Moses.

The purpose and function of each item offers insight into the ways of God. For example, the Bible teaches that even though God forgives sinners, He does not blot out the sin. Instead, He transfers the guilt of the sinner to the Altar of Burnt Offering. This may sound confusing at first, but here is how it works: The wages of sin or penalty for sin is death *by execution* and there are

no exceptions.

God's law is not subject to change (an omniscient God is quite capable of declaring an everlasting law). If the sins of Adam and Eve could have been forgiven (blotted out, ignored or overlooked), Jesus would not have had to die. Think about it. If there had been any other means to save Adam and Eve from the penalty of sin, the Father would not have allowed Jesus to die.

But within the Plan of Salvation, God allows the *penalty* for sin (which is death by execution) to be *transferred* away from the sinner through the death of a perfect substitute. This transfer occurs under specific conditions (faith). So, sinners who put their faith in Jesus can be set free of the condemnation of death (Romans 8:1-5) even though their specific sins are *never* forgiven! (Please do not throw any stones at me just yet. Hear me out!)

To understand this point a little better, consider the sin offering ceremony that took place in the earthly temple. Sinners were required to bring a perfect lamb to the Altar of Burnt Offering at appointed times. The innocent lamb on the altar served as a perfect substitute for the penalty of sin which requires death by execution. (Keep in mind that the wrongdoer should only seek God's forgiveness at the temple *after* he has voluntarily made restitution to the victim of his wrong actions. Exodus 22; Leviticus 6; Matthew 5:24)

When the sinner presented his lamb at the Altar of Burnt Offering, it was firmly secured so that it could not escape (certain death). Then, the sinner placed his hands on the head of the lamb and stated his sin. Then, the sinner executed the lamb by cutting its jugular vein with a knife.

As blood spilled from the throat of the dying lamb, an attending priest captured some blood in a small bowl. The priest dipped a small branch of hyssop into the bowl and applied the warm blood to the four horns of the altar – one horn on each corner on the altar. The priest also sprinkled some blood on the altar. This ritual confirms a truth that most Christians do not understand; sin is not forgiven. Instead, the sinner's guilt was *transferred* by the death and blood of the lamb to the horns of the altar.

This transfer made the Altar of Burnt Offering unclean and it remained defiled all year long until the Day of Atonement took place. On the Day of Atonement, the altar was restored to a pure state by the shedding of blood (the Lord's goat) and the guilt that had accumulated upon the horns of the altar all year long was transferred once again, this time to the head of the scapegoat.

The scapegoat was then taken out into the desert to die a very slow and painful death.

The death of Jesus proves that sin cannot be forgiven (overlooked, erased or forgotten). If Jesus could have excused Adam and Eve from the penalty of sin, He would not have had to die.

The stain of animal blood on the horns of the Altar of Burnt Offering confirms that sin is not forgiven, but instead is transferred. This is very good news. God allows the penalty for my sins to be transferred *from* me to the horns of the Altar of Burnt Offering through the death of Jesus,

the flawless Lamb of God.

The blood of animals symbolizes the actual price of God's grace (the blood of His own Son). Keep in mind, the blood of animals did not provide salvation. The execution and blood of animals did not actually transfer the guilt of sin. The sin offering is a parallel of how God deals with sin.

The reality to which the sin offering pointed occurred at Calvary. Jesus, the Lamb of God, died for our sins and if we put faith in Him, our guilt is transferred to the Altar of Burnt Offering in Heaven's temple. (Hebrews 8:1-5; 10:1-4; Romans 8:1-8)

Two Altars

There were two altars in the earthly temple because there are two altars in Heaven's temple. The Altar of Burnt Offering was located near the entrance of the courtyard that surrounded the Tent of Meeting and the Altar of Incense was located in the front room of the tent, or the Holy Place.

There are two altars for atonement because God is concerned with two levels of sin: individual sin and corporate sin. The Altar of Burnt Offering was covered with bronze and the Altar of Incense was covered with gold. This difference in metals indicates there is a difference in processing these two types of sin.

The bronze Altar of Burnt Offering served the needs of individuals, and the golden Altar of Incense served a higher purpose, the needs of the whole community. Both altars had four horns jutting from their four corners. Throughout the Bible, horns symbolize an entity of power. (Psalm 75:10; 112:9; Jeremiah 48:25; Luke 1:69; Revelation 17:12)

Within the context of these altars, the four horns represent the omnipresent work of the Holy Spirit throughout the four corners of Earth: North, East, South, and West. (Zechariah 1:18-21; 4:6; John 16:7-11)

He is everywhere at once!

Do Not Sin Against the Holy Spirit

Since the beginning of sin, the Holy Spirit has had an indispensable role in God's administration of grace. The human heart must be softened by the Spirit before repentance can occur. The Holy Spirit does much more than impress the conscience. The Holy Spirit is God and He has all of the prerogatives of God. In fact, the only sin that cannot be forgiven is rejection of the Holy Spirit! (Matthew 12:31)

Carefully consider this point: A sinner could present his offering at the Altar of Burnt Offering because the law of Moses *required* it, or a sinner could present his offering at the altar because he was very *sorry* for his sin and wanted to be free of the condemnation that was upon his

head.

The motive makes a big difference. In the latter case, if the sinner was sincerely repentant, he proved his sorrow for sin by *voluntarily* making restitution for his sin *before* he came to present his sacrifice to God. Again, the essential point so many people overlook on this topic is that killing animals never atoned for sin. (Hebrews 10:1-4)

In other words, presenting a sacrificial lamb at the altar did not guarantee that God would accept the sacrifice and allow the transfer of sin even though the external requirements of the sin offering were met. **“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”** (Psalm 51:17)

God is not impressed or moved with religious rituals. Not until the Holy Spirit produces a heartfelt sorrow for sin is the guilt of sin actually transferred. (1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:1-6) When people conclude that atonement with God is possible through some religious ritual, you can be sure that apostasy has taken place!

Sinners are Forgiven

Many Bible writers speak about our sins being forgiven (Leviticus 5:13; Romans 4:7), but it is the *sinner* who is forgiven, not the sin. This distinction is so important because we need to understand that God has a process to deal with the disposal of sin. The disposal of sin involves a legal concept called *vengeance*.

God's vengeance is a twofold process that will finally culminate at the end of the 1,000 years of Revelation 20. God's vengeance involves the extraction of restitution from those people unwilling to provide appropriate restitution (judicial equilibrium), and His vengeance also involves destroying everyone who refused the indwelling authority of the Holy Spirit.

Judicial equilibrium is the balance between our behavior toward others and our accountability for the welfare of others. Judicial equilibrium is found in the golden rule: **“As you do unto others, the same shall be done unto you”** and **“For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged”** (See Matthew 7:2,12)

God's kingdom is not a republic nor a democracy. It is a monarchy.

Sin Is Not Forgiven

Sinners can be freed from the penalty of their sins even though their sins are not forgotten. At first, this statement may appear contradictory. Many Christians believe that Jesus died for us and that somehow all of our sins have been forgiven! But there is much more to the disposal of the toxic waste of sin than is commonly known.

All sinners are under the curse of eternal death unless our guilt is removed. The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23) Sin is the transgression of God's law. (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28; 1

John 3:4) However, if a person is ignorant of a specific sin, God does not hold the sinner *accountable* for that sin until the sinner becomes properly informed. (Leviticus 4; 1 Timothy 1:13; James 4:17)

When a person commits any sin, he or she violates the whole law. (James 2:10) Sinful acts cannot be recalled or erased because they are a matter of record. The unrelenting claim of God's law is this: "Once a sinner, always a sinner." This is why God evicted Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:22-24)

The consequences for violating God's moral law occur whether we are knowledgeable or ignorant of the offense. This is why the Bible says, ". . . **Be sure your sin will find you out.**" (Numbers 32:23) Do not let this discourage you because the Plan of Salvation offers a way out of condemnation.

The Father has provided a perfect substitute to receive the guilt of our sins and through the blood of Jesus, our guilt can be *transferred* to the horns of Heaven's Altar of Burnt Offering! The result is that repentant believers who put their faith in Jesus are no longer under condemnation. (See Romans 5 and 8:1-12.)

The Sin Offering

When God gave Moses the earthly temple pattern, God defined categories of offerings for different categories of sin. Different offenses required different methods for atonement or resolution. Each offering helps us understand how God deals with various issues involving sin. Because there are different types and variations of sacrificial offerings, the following examples demonstrate a typical process.

Although every temple service is not explained in the Old Testament, we can be sure that God has preserved the essential details so we can understand the larger process in Heaven's temple. Likewise, while the New Testament does not contain everything that Jesus said while He was on Earth, we can be sure that God preserved what was essential. (John 21:25.)

Do not become overwhelmed by the sheer number of rules and offerings used in the earthly temple services. Concentrate instead on God's orderly and consistent ways in dealing with sin. I have found that diligent study on this topic brings great rewards. As you study the system surrounding the earthly temple services, you will begin to see the beauty of the Plan of Salvation unfold. God's ways are truly marvelous to behold!

Unintentional Sin

The sin offering covers two types of personal sin: willful and unintentional sin.

Notice what the law says about unintentional sin: "**If a member of the community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands, he is guilty. When he is made aware of the sin he committed, he must bring as his offering for the sin**

he committed a female goat without defect. He is to lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering. Then the priest is to take some of the blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood [into a small basin] at the base of the altar.” (Leviticus 4:27-30, insertion mine.)

If a person is aware that he had committed an unintentional sin, he had to appear at the Altar of Burnt Offering with the required sacrifice. If he could not afford to offer the required animal, items of lesser value, such as birds or even flour, were acceptable to the Lord. (Leviticus 5:7)

A priest, ever present and willing to serve, received the sinner's substitute. The priest examined the sacrificial animal very closely. He was concerned about the condition of the animal as well as the sinner's restitution and heartfelt confession. The sacrificial offering had to be perfect, without defect or blemish for it represented God's Son.

After the sinner killed the animal, the priest placed the animal's blood on the horns of the altar as a record of sin. (Leviticus 4:7) Although the sinner could not escape the guilt of sin, he was at least free of condemnation until he sinned again. (Leviticus 4:26)

Willful Sin

The process of atonement for willful sin is more serious than that of unintentional sin. Before an individual could seek atonement at the tabernacle, he or she had to make a generous restitution to the victim.

Notice what God said: **“Say to the Israelites: ‘When a man or woman wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the Lord, that person is guilty and must confess the sin he has committed. He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged. But if that person has no close relative to whom restitution can be made for the wrong, the restitution belongs to the Lord and must be given to the priest, along with the ram with which atonement is made for him.’ ”** (Numbers 5:6-8)

Defiance Not Tolerated

Obviously, a person cannot continue very long in a pattern of willful sin and be able to meet the financial demands for restitution required by law. This is why Paul wrote: **“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left.”** (Hebrews 10:26)

It is interesting that God does not see willful sin in the same light as defiant sin, although the penalty is the same in both cases. Notice that defiant sin demands immediate action. **“But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or alien, blasphemes the Lord, and that person must be cut off from his people.”** (Numbers 15:30)

The term “cut off” meant exile, total banishment from the camp. In the wilderness, banishment meant starvation. So, it is important to understand the meaning of defiant sin. According to Webster, defiance means open and bold rebellion. God declares that there is no other God besides Himself. (Isaiah 45:5)

God is King, the owner/master of man and naturally, He would interpret defiance as a willful act of insubordination.

Therefore, He told Moses, **“Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the Lord must be destroyed.”** (Exodus 22:20) God is a jealous God! (Exodus 20:5) In His great wisdom, He knows that defiance is rebellion and defiant rebellion is unforgivable. (1 Samuel 3:14; Matthew 12:31) God did not offer a plan of salvation for Lucifer and his angels because of their open defiance.

One Sin Contains Two Violations

Temple services reveal that one sin can contain two violations. When a person sins against his neighbor, he or she sins against God as well! Therefore, the sanctuary service demonstrates that God requires a two-step process when we sin against a neighbor.

First, the Lord required that a sinner make restitution to the victim, and then, the sinner could make atonement for the sin committed against God at the tabernacle. The amount of restitution varied. In minor cases, restitution was 20%. (See Numbers 5:6-8.)

In more severe cases, the amount of restitution could be as high as 500%. (See Exodus 22.) When Zacchaeus became a “born again” believer in Christ, he gave 50% of his wealth to the poor, and then he restored 400% to anyone that he had wronged! (Luke 19:8) The purpose of restitution is very important in God’s government.

In fact, the earthly tabernacle teaches that at a future appointed time, God will ensure that every wicked person suffers appropriately for every wrongful deed, plus an added penalty. The golden rule is an iron clad rule of God’s kingdom and universe. At the end, God will ensure that everyone is treated just like they treated others. (Matthew 7:12)

This is the larger meaning of vengeance or judicial equilibrium.

For personal injuries, notice the following decree: **“But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.”** (Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:19-21; Deuteronomy 19:18-21)

The basic idea of punitive law in the Old Testament is judicial equilibrium. In other words, if someone plans to maliciously harm another person, the law demands complete restitution before he or she can make atonement before God. For personal injury, the offender must experience the same pain he or she willfully inflicted!

Restitution retards the growth of sin, so God placed man under the operation of the golden rule. The rule states: "It will be done to you as you intentionally did to your victim, plus interest and penalty." When Jesus was on Earth, the Jews had twisted the golden rule for self-serving purposes. They used it as legal justification for personal revenge, especially against their hated enemy, the Romans.

Jesus rebuked them for not understanding the *intent* of the law when He said, "**You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.**" (Matthew 5:38-39)

Jesus was affirming an important truth, revenge belongs to God and He will extract every ounce of the restitution that His law demands, plus interest. Paul wrote, "**Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord.**" (Romans 12:19)

This verse should be especially meaningful for people who have been victims of a painful injustice. God ensures that judicial equilibrium will be extracted from the wicked before He creates a new Heaven and a new Earth.

Reviewing the Sin Offering

The service at the Altar of Burnt Offering lays a conceptual foundation for other temple services, so keep the following seven points in mind as we progress through this study:

1. The bronze Altar of Burnt Offering served the needs of individuals.
2. The sinner was required to make restitution before presenting a sacrificial offering.
3. The guilt of the sinner was transferred to the lamb by confession and the death of the lamb transferred the guilt to the horns of the altar.
4. The blood on the horns of the altar was as a record of sin. Until the altar was cleansed on the Day of Atonement, the temple was in a state of desecration.
5. Excess blood from the sacrifice was poured into a small basin at the base of the altar. (Leviticus 4:25)
6. Sin, whether unintentional or intentional, requires atonement.
7. Defiant sin cannot be forgiven (atoned for).

The Altar of Incense

The golden Altar of Incense was physically located in the first room of the earthly temple called

the Holy Place. Like the Altar of Burnt Offering, this altar also had four horns, one on each corner of the altar. However, there are several significant differences between these two altars.

For example, it was the *priests'* responsibility to keep the fire on the Altar of Burnt Offering burning around the clock (Leviticus 6:12,13), but it is believed the Altar of Incense burned perpetually.

Miraculously, *God Himself* ignited and sustained the fire on the golden Altar of Incense and it never went out. (Note: This conclusion is reached by harmonizing the following two points: Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, carried "foreign" or man-made fire into the Holy Place and God struck them dead for it. (Leviticus 10:1-3) Further, the Bible does not indicate that the priests maintained the fire on this altar as it does for the other altar. These two points suggest the fire on the Altar of Incense was sustained by divine power.)

Evening and morning, the priests burned a special formula of incense on the Altar of Incense. God forbade anyone from duplicating this incense. (Exodus 30:34-38) In the wilderness, the Israelites could smell the distinctive aroma of this incense, depending upon the wind, at the limits of the camp. (Exodus 30:7,8)

Like the Altar of Burnt Offering, the Altar of Incense was named according to its primary purpose which was the continual burning of incense.

Corporate Atonement

The services at the golden Altar of Incense represent a higher level of atonement than those at the bronze altar in the courtyard. These services are a little more difficult to understand at first because they are shadows of a larger process that takes place in Heaven. The Altar of Incense was reserved for *corporate* atonement, that is, intercession on behalf of the whole community.

Priests conducted services at the Altar of Incense, evening and morning, every day of the year. God required *continual* atonement, night and day. This was done so that Israel could dwell in His continual presence. In other words, atonement for sin was ongoing, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If an individual or a group of individuals sinned, the continual sacrifice on the Altar of Incense provided atonement for everyone until they could present their necessary sacrifices at the Altar of Burnt Offering. The *daily* atonement made on the Altar of Incense allowed the Israelites to dwell in God's continual presence without being destroyed. (Exodus 25:8)

The object lesson found within this service is stunning. We know that sinners cannot approach God or live in His presence without mediation or atonement. (Numbers 8:19) But through the sacrifice of Jesus, God extends much grace to us, hoping that we will eventually show up at the Altar of Burnt Offering for the purpose of reconciliation with Him and be saved.

The beauty of grace can be observed here since we are not consumed while wandering about

in foolish rebellion! **“For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”** (Romans 5:10)

Called the Daily or the Continual

The evening and morning services presented on the Altar of Incense were called “the daily” or “the continual” because they were administered evening and morning – every day of the year – continually. The services included the sacrifice of a perfect one-year-old lamb each evening at twilight and each morning just after sunrise. After the priest killed the “daily” lamb on the Altar of Burnt Offering (in the courtyard), he carried some of its blood to the Altar of Incense and applied it to the horns and sides of the altar.

Then the priest placed a scoop of the special incense (using God’s specifications) on the glowing coals of the altar. Then the fragrant incense flowed freely throughout the tabernacle. In addition to the blood and incense, priests also placed small servings of wheat or barley flour, oil and wine before the Lord as offerings. (Exodus 29:40,41; 30:9)

The reality in Heaven which is represented by the *daily services* at the golden altar on Earth is very meaningful. Whereas the sin offering on the Altar of Burnt Offering pointed *forward* to the death of Jesus as the Lamb of God at Calvary, the service on the Altar of Incense pointed *backwards* to the day sin began.

On that day, the Father and Son established a mutual covenant to save the whole world! (Psalms 2)

Psalm 2

When Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus entered into a covenant with the Father agreeing to die as man’s substitute. (Psalm 2; Genesis 3:15; Romans 5:19; Matthew 26:28; John 17:4) When Jesus submitted to the terms and conditions required in the Plan of Salvation, He agreed to overcome the power of sin by living a perfect life and dying the death of a condemned sinner. (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

In fact, from the very day that Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus was called the “Son” of God. **“I will proclaim the decree of the Lord [the Father]: He said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.’ ”** (Psalms 2:7-9, insertion mine.)

The word *son* means “one subject to” or “one in submission to someone like himself.” Consequently, Adam is called the “son of God” and so are all believers because we are created in God’s image. (Luke 3:38; Matthew 5:9; 1 John 3:1 [KJV]) The covenant between the Father and Jesus to save man stopped the destroying angel who was about to execute Adam and Eve. On the basis of an agreement between the Father and Jesus, Jesus became man’s

intercessor the day sin began and He remains in this position even on this very day. (Hebrews 7:25)

The law given to Adam in Genesis 2:17 is clear – any violation would result in a swift penalty. However, Jesus stepped *in the way* by offering His life, and every day since that moment, His covenant with the Father has stood between guilty man and the righteous demands of God's law. This is why Jesus is called man's Intercessor. (Hebrews 7:25)

The *daily* intercession of Jesus in Heaven's temple is reflected in the daily ministry of the priests on Earth. **"The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man."** (Hebrews 8:1,2)

The Father allowed Adam and Eve and their offspring to live because of the daily intercession of Jesus. The corporate benefits of Christ's atonement for the whole world became effective immediately, the day sin began. The covenant to save man is called the Plan of Salvation and it remains intact to this very day.

The corporate intercession of Jesus on behalf of the whole world will continue until the *beginning* of the Great Tribulation.

The Great Tribulation begins when Jesus declares the end of His corporate intercession. (Revelation 10:6) When this happens, the censer at Heaven's golden Altar of Incense (Revelation 8:2-5) will be cast down indicating the services required at that altar are finished. A few days after the censer in Heaven is cast down, the long-delayed wrath of God for the whole world will begin.

God's wrath will come in two phases, seven first plagues and seven last plagues. Although the corporate intercession of Jesus comes to an end at the *beginning* of the Great Tribulation, the door of salvation remains open for individuals because Jesus continues to intercede on behalf of individuals for 1,260 days – until the time of the seventh trumpet.

Corporate Process

The idea of corporate atonement is new to many Christians, so a short study may be helpful.

Notice this text: **"If the whole Israelite community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands, even though the community is unaware of the matter, they are guilty. When they become aware of the sin they committed, the assembly must bring a young bull as a sin offering and present it before the Tent of Meeting. The elders of the community are to lay their hands on the bull's head before the Lord, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the Lord. Then the anointed priest is to take some of the bull's blood into the Tent of Meeting. He shall dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it before the Lord seven times in front of the curtain. He is to put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the Lord in the Tent of Meeting. The rest of**

the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.” (Leviticus 4:13-18)

Two points regarding corporate sacrifice stand out: First, it was possible for the *whole community* to sin against God unintentionally! Again, ignorance does not mean innocence. God's universal laws have no boundaries.

When the community becomes aware of its sin, God requires the whole community to make atonement and this atonement is presented at the corporate Altar of Incense, not the Altar of Burnt Offering. Second, a sacrificial bull is required for corporate atonement for the sin of an entire community.

A bull was the most valuable animal in the herd. This points to the fact that the Father gave His most valuable gift, the blood of His only Son, to redeem the whole world!

Many Christians believe John 3:16 is the most beautiful text in the Bible, but notice what the text really says: **“For God so loved the *world* that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** (John 3:16, italics mine.)

Did you notice that this text is actually a “corporate” text? **“For God so loved the *world*”** To appreciate the entire scope of the Plan of Salvation, we must understand that it is much larger than an individual matter.

The plan involves all of the descendants of Adam and Eve, and in order to include all the nations of the world, the plan has to include the entire human race over a period of 6,000 years.

When the community sinned, the bull's blood was sprinkled seven times on the front of the veil (or curtain) that separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place in the temple.

This action signified that as a community, Israel had violated the law which was written on tablets that were behind the veil in the Ark of the Covenant. (The high priest could not enter the Most Holy Place except on the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16:2)

In order to provide atonement for the community, the priest sprinkled the blood as close to the law as possible. Then, he placed blood on the four horns of the Altar of Incense and the crimson record of sin defiled the Altar of Incense until the cleansing that occurred on the Day of Atonement. (Leviticus 4:7,18)

If the High Priest Sins

If the high priest sinned, his atonement had to be presented on the Altar of Incense rather than the Altar of Burnt Offering because his sin was considered a corporate offense. As a living parallel of Jesus, God held the office of high priest to a higher standard of accountability than that of ordinary people.

If the high priest sinned, his actions were considered more denigrating in God's sight than anything a political leader of a country may have done! Therefore any sin committed by a high priest was a sin against God and Israel (a corporate offense) and atonement was required on the Altar of Incense. (Leviticus 4:3-7)

Incense Pleasing to God

The Altar of Incense derives its name from its most obvious function; namely, the continual burning of incense. The object lesson for burning incense before God is this: Approach God with reverence. The sweet smell of incense predisposed God for grace and favor. If we want God to hear us and receive us, then we must approach Him with the sweet fragrance of humility and reverence.

Although it has been more than 25 years now, each evening after her bath, our daughter would come running from the bathroom and jump into my lap, ready for a bedtime story. I still remember the scent of freshly shampooed hair that was neatly tied in a pony tail. How could I refuse such a sweet-smelling bundle of love and curiosity?

Of course, there were moments throughout the day when she did not smell so good, but all that was forgotten at bedtime

An offering of sweet-smelling incense is pleasing to the God who made the roses and the fresh smell of spring. The fragrance of incense invites Him to hear our prayers and petitions. Of course, the need for incense says much about man's true condition as a sinner. In our cleanest state, we stink! I am not talking about body odor, but rather the stench of sin. Even the pagans burned incense to predispose their gods for favor. (1 Kings 11:8)

In other words, God uses the burning of incense as an object lesson to demonstrate our degenerate and offensive condition to Him. We are sinners and we live in the pig sty of sin. Therefore, it is not possible for us to comprehend our sinful, degenerate state as God sees it.

A bath or shower does not remove the guilt of sin. The ever-burning Altar of Incense confirms man's hopeless condition before God, but it also confirms God's faithful promise. Daily, He masks our offensiveness with the fragrance of our prayers so that we can draw near Him with our requests.

The burning of incense on this altar is directly associated with the prayers (petitions) of the saints. (Revelation 8:4) He hears our prayers. Few things move the arm of Almighty God like the sweet prayers of humble and contrite believers. (Luke 18:10-14; Hebrews 11:6)

It has been said that if you wish to receive God's favor, call Him by the name that He likes most, "Father."

Altar of Incense Summary

Here are six summary points about the Altar of Incense:

1. The Altar of Incense was dedicated to corporate services for the whole community.
2. The daily services on this altar provided continual or daily around-the-clock atonement.
3. The services conducted on the Altar of Incense point backwards to the covenant that was established between the Father and the Son the day man sinned.
4. The daily intercession of Jesus in Heaven will terminate at a point in the near future and the Great Tribulation will begin.
5. Twice a day, evening and morning, atonement was placed on this altar.
6. The Altar of Incense was cleansed of defilement or reconsecrated on the Day of Atonement.

No Veil in Heaven's Temple

The earthly tabernacle had a veil that divided the tiny building into two rooms. The first room was called the Holy Place and the room in the back was called the Most Holy Place. It appears that the heavenly Temple does not have or need a veil. Even if there had been a veil in Heaven's temple, just like the earthly veil, its function would have terminated at the time of Jesus' death.

The veil in the earthly temple is important for three reasons:

1. First, as a practical matter, the veil was a wall of protection for the priests who ministered before the presence of the Lord in the tabernacle. The veil protected them from the consuming Shekinah Glory of God. (Exodus 40:3; Leviticus 16:2) Of course our High Priest, Jesus, would not need such a veil in Heaven. He sits at the right hand of the Father and is not threatened by the glory of the Father. In fact, Jesus shares in that glory! (John 17:5)
2. The presence of two rooms in the earthly temple confirms that in Heaven's temple there are two distinct phases in the Plan of Salvation. Just as there were two altars that had unique roles in the earthly process of atonement, there are two rooms representing two unique phases of service. The first room shadows the *daily* services of Jesus as our High Priest in the heavenly temple. The backroom, the Most Holy Place, shadows the services of Jesus as He concludes the Plan of Salvation.

In other words, the earthly temple's Holy Place and its *daily* routine parallels the "daily intercessory routines" of Jesus as He intercedes on behalf of the whole world in Heaven's temple. The backroom or Most Holy Place and its annual service on the Day of Atonement parallels the final phase of Christ's work at the end of the world in Heaven's Temple. (Hebrews 9:25,26) So, the veil creates two rooms in the earthly tabernacle because there are two distinct phases in Jesus' ministry in Heaven's temple.

3. Paul uses the veil as an illustration explaining how prior to Jesus' ministry and death, man could only go so far in comprehending the salvation of God. The sanctuary service and its shadows are wonderful, but they are only shadows of the reality found in Jesus.

However, when Jesus died, the temple veil was ripped open because temple services were no longer necessary. Paul emphasizes that everyone can see behind the curtain now and watch the ministry of Jesus our High Priest sitting at the right hand of the Father. Paul's point is that we now have a much better revelation of God's plan to save man. (Romans 16:25; Colossians 1:26; Hebrews 6:19,20)

The tiny, earthly sanctuary does not physically compare to the glorious temple in Heaven (Isaiah 66:1), but there are distinctive parallels between them. The Heaven-Earth-Linkage-Law connects the two temples so that the earthly temple reveals the *services and processes of the heavenly*.

God's response to sin can be compared to turning a lemon into lemonade. God took the bitterness of sin and used it as an opportunity to reveal certain characteristics about Himself and His government that were previously unknown. Because of sin, the whole universe has seen a drama and a dimension of God's love that could not have been seen in any other way. Angels have a clear understanding of the properties of law, sin, penalty and grace.

They understand the reasons why Lucifer was expelled much more clearly now. They also understand why God allowed Lucifer to live. The sin drama has revealed to the angels that there is no justification for rebellion against any of the laws of God, for God's laws have their origin in Infinite Wisdom.

The Ark of the Covenant

Physically, the Ark of the Covenant was a small box of acacia wood, overlaid with gold, about 3 feet wide by 5 feet long and 3 feet tall. (Exodus 25:10) It had two rings on each side through which poles could be inserted. (Exodus 25:12) The poles enabled priests to carry the ark from place to place without touching it.

The lid or top of the ark was called the atonement cover or "mercy seat." (Compare KJV Exodus 25:17; 26:34; 30:6 with later translations.)

Two golden angel figures (cherubim) stood on top of the box. (Exodus 25:20) The Israelites considered the ark to be the most holy piece of furniture in the earthly temple because the Shekinah glory hovered between the two cherubim on the ark. (Exodus 25:22)

We know that a few items were kept *inside* the ark. These items included the Ten Commandments which were written by God's own finger on two tablets of stone, a bowl of manna and Aaron's rod that budded. (Exodus 31:18, 40:20; Exodus 16:33; Numbers 17:10)

The ceremonial laws which God dictated to Moses were kept in a "pocket" attached to the

outside of the ark. (Deuteronomy 31:26)

A Hidden Ark

The ark was located in the backroom of the earthly tabernacle, inside the Most Holy Place.

The High Priest was the only person allowed to see the ark and he could see it for just a few minutes each year on the Day of Atonement when he entered the Most Holy Place. When preparing the ark for travel, the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was used as the first layer of protection around the ark. Then, the ark was completely hidden from view by a blue covering. (Numbers 4:5,6) When traveling, the Israelites kept a radius of about a thousand yards (seven-tenths of a mile) between them and the Ark. (Joshua 3:4)

As the priests prepared the ark for travel, Jewish tradition says they always approached it by walking backwards because to look upon *The Presence* was certain death.

God designed the ark and He hid it from the view of everyone but the high priest. The hidden ark reveals a profound truth about God and sin. Before sin defiled the human race, God's law was written in the hearts of Adam and Eve.

They instinctively knew the Ten Commandments and Jesus often communed with Adam and Eve face-to-face in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:8) But when sin separated man from God, the presence of God's law evaporated from their heart.

The nature of man changed. Instead of having a proclivity for righteousness, man had a propensity toward rebellion. Furthermore, sinners could not survive the glorious presence of God. (Exodus 19:21) So, God hid Himself from man because He desires to be close to man. At Mt. Sinai it was necessary for God to cover Himself with dense darkness so He could be close to His children without His glorious Presence consuming them. (Exodus 19:18; 20:21)

The darkness at Calvary covered the Father's presence. (Matthew 27:45) No doubt the Father wept as He bowed near the cross. God is always near, but we cannot physically see Him because His glory would consume us in a split second. When Moses wanted to see Jesus, Jesus would not allow it. (Exodus 33:20)

Consider this paradox: The natural eye cannot see God and live, but the eye of *faith* can behold His presence and rejoice! (2 Kings 6:17)

The Ark of the Covenant was hidden from view in the earthly tabernacle because God's ways are hidden and mysterious to sinners. The carnal eye cannot see the beauty and wisdom of God's laws. (1 Kings 3:7-9,14; Psalm 95:10; Isaiah 55:8; 1 Corinthians 2:14)

God understands the tendency of fallen man to make an icon out of religious things. God did not want His people worshiping the Ten Commandments or the ark. Instead, He wanted His people to understand and absorb the intent of His law through love, and worship Him with thanksgiving

and obedience.

The imprint of the law of God within the human heart is something entirely different from the adoration of a stone relic.

Ark to be Exposed

Some scholars believe that the earthly Ark of the Covenant was hidden away by priests in Jeremiah's day just before Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem. Some people believe it will be found before Jesus comes, while others claim the ark has been found – although no one has yet produced any evidence to verify the claim.

Nevertheless, the Bible predicts the true Ark of the Covenant in Heaven will one day be visible to all people on Earth. The book of Revelation describes this dazzling wonder at the conclusion of the seventh trumpet (1,260 days into the Great Tribulation). **“Then God's Temple in Heaven was opened, and within His Temple was seen the Ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.”** (Revelation 11:19)

At that time, God will demonstrate the supreme authority of His holy law which the wicked have trampled upon. God will reveal the ark and its contents, the Ten Commandments, with a dazzling display of power and glory because the Ten Commandments are the legal basis to condemn of the wicked.

God's vengeance is always fair, just and legal. Before He inflicts the seven last plagues upon the wicked of the world, God will reveal the basis of His justice. (Revelation 15:1; Revelation 16)

The Mercy Seat

The golden lid on the ark was also called the atonement cover or mercy seat (KJV). When the high priest entered the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement, he sprinkled blood on this part of the ark to illustrate atonement for a broken law. (Leviticus 16:14) **“The wages of sin is death.”** (Romans 6:23)

Notice that Paul also writes: **“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”** (Hebrews 9:22) So, blood was sprinkled on the broken law because the law had been defiled by sin. (Romans 3:23)

Divine Love

The Ark of the Covenant represents the character of God in an interesting way. The Ten Commandments represent justice and the atonement cover or “mercy seat” *above* the law represents grace. The *balance* between God's justice and God's mercy is defined as divine

love. This is why John says, **“God is love.”** (1 John 4:8)

God placed the Ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy Place because His character and government are the most important things He owns. (Leviticus 11:44,45) He will not allow anyone to bring reproach upon His holy name without a response. (Exodus 20:7)

“ . . . For I am a great king,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and my name is to be feared among the nations. ’ ” (Malachi 1:14)

The Laver

“Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it. Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting an offering made to the Lord by fire, they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come.” (Exodus 30:18-21)

The bronze basin (NIV) or laver (KJV) has practical and spiritual lessons associated with it. In practice, the previous text reveals that God required a state of physical purity, orderliness and cleanliness among those that served in the temple.

The ever-present “desert dust” soiled the hands and feet of the priests who served in the temple and God required them to wash before entering the tabernacle (tent of meeting) so they were clean. Spiritually speaking, the application of water on the hands and feet reveal man’s perpetual need to be “made clean” of sin from time to time.

Sin (like desert dust) defiles our hands and feet and we, like the priests in the desert, need to be made clean!

Notice the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, **“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.’ ”** (John 3:5) Some people misinterpret this verse to make it say that a person must be baptized in order to be saved. This is not the case. The thief on the cross was not baptized, nor does salvation come through rites, rituals, sacraments or works. (Ephesians 2:8,9)

Instead, a *willing* baptism confirms submission to the purifying experience of God’s sanctification. Christians need to be “cleansed” from time to time as they travel along the road of life. Baptism marks the beginning of a purifying experience. At the Jordan River, John baptized people into the kingdom of Heaven after they repented from their sins. (Acts 19:4)

Washing one another’s feet as our Lord commanded serves as a “miniature baptism,” representing the fact that we need our sins to be washed away from time to time. The ordinance of foot-washing reminds us who we are, servants – not masters. (See John 13:6-8.)

It is so easy to forget that our righteousness is as “filthy rags” in God’s sight. (Isaiah 64:6)

God requires physical and spiritual cleanliness. The laver teaches God does accept sinners for what we are, but He requires, as a minimum, that we clean up before we approach Him. If this is true in the physical realm, what can be said of the spiritual? The Psalmist wrote, **“Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.”** (Psalms 24:3,4)

No doubt this text is the basis for the adage: “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” Before we leave the matter of priests cleansing their hands and feet at the laver, consider the implication of this verse concerning those who will occupy mansions in the New Jerusalem: **“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”** (Revelation 21:27)

The Golden Lampstand

“Make a lampstand of pure gold and hammer it out, base and shaft; its flower-like cups, buds and blossoms shall be of one piece with it. . . . See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” (Exodus 25:31,40)

The golden lampstand was made of one talent of pure gold (about 66 pounds) and it had seven lamps on top of it. It was placed next to the south wall of the Holy Place, directly across the room from the Table of the Presence. (Exodus 25:37,39; 26:35) The golden lampstand represents God’s agent of light or truth on Earth.

Jesus reminded the Jews, **“You are the light of the world.”** (Matthew 5:14; Acts 13:47) God wanted a special relationship with the trustees of His covenant (Exodus 19:1-6) and the golden lampstand represented the union of the human with the divine.

The lampstand was made of pure gold. Gold is often used to represent faith after it has been purified by trial and tribulation. (Revelation 3:18) The purpose of a lampstand is light and this was the spiritual purpose for Israel. Israel was chosen to be a “light to the world,” to represent God’s love for man. God required the priests to refuel the seven lamps daily with pure olive oil so the seven lights on the lampstand would burn continually through the night. (Leviticus 24:3)

The oil represents the power of the Holy Spirit which enables the light of God’s truth to burn continually until the darkness of sin has been finally removed. The responsibility for keeping the lights burning rested on the priests of Israel. If they became negligent or careless, darkness would overtake God’s people.

Just as God held the priests accountable for keeping the “lights on” in the temple, they were also responsible for carrying the “light of truth” to His people. The priests were “the keepers of the flame.” Unfortunately, Israel’s priests failed and Israel apostatized many times. History also confirms that, “As priests go, so go the people.”

In fact, much of today's social rot continues to escalate because of the poor leadership of pastors, priests and rabbis.

The Table of the Presence

“Make a table of acacia wood – two cubits long [44 inches], a cubit wide [22 inches] and a cubit and a half high [33 inches]. Overlay it with pure gold and make a gold molding around it . . . And make its plates and dishes of pure gold, as well as its pitchers and bowls for the pouring out of offerings. Put the bread of the Presence on this table to be before me at all times.” (See Exodus 25:23-30, insertions mine.)

This table represents the throne of God. All blessings flow from His throne. The idea that the Table of the Presence represents God's throne may surprise you, since in the earthly tabernacle, the focus is always directed toward the “hidden” Ark of the Covenant located in the Most Holy Place.

The Shekinah glory lived within the Most Holy Place, so the second room in the Earthly tabernacle was holier than the first room. The veil obscured the Most Holy Place from the view of everyone but the high priest, indicating its extreme sacredness. These physical facts have led many people to conclude that the Ark of the Covenant must represent the throne of God.

Here are three reasons why I believe the Table of the Presence represents the throne of God:

Reason # 1 – Name

“Put the bread of the Presence [shewbread, KJV] on this table to be before me at all times.” (Exodus 25:30)

The table received its name from the twelve loaves of bread that were placed on it each Sabbath morning. (Leviticus 24:8) The priests baked the loaves early on Sabbath morning and placed them on the table while they were still hot. (1 Samuel 21:3-6) At first, this practice seems contradictory to the instructions God gave Israel in regards to appropriate Sabbath behavior when He forbade them to cook and bake on the Sabbath. (Exodus 16:23) However, this bread was “special.”

The twelve loaves represent “a serving of the bread of life” for each tribe. Jesus is the bread of life. (John 6:48) The fresh bread represented a spiritual meal *for* the twelve tribes from God rather than an offering *from* the twelve tribes to God. Putting “hot fresh bread” on the table each Sabbath morning was a shadow of the responsibility given to the priests. They were to offer “freshly prepared” spiritual food from God's Word every Sabbath morning. (Matthew 12:5; Luke 4:16)

The Hebrew words *lechem* (Strong's: #3899) and *paneh* (Strong's: #6440), mean visible food, having presence, within sight or showing. KJV translators indicate the bread was clearly visible – as in “the bread is showing.” Thus they gave it the name, “The Table of Showbread” (

Exodus 25:30).

The presentation of spiritual food on Sabbath morning through “freshly prepared” words of life is the primary meaning of the twelve loaves of fresh “showbread.” It is interesting to me that Jesus fed great multitudes twice with loaves and fishes. When the first multitude of over 5,000 people were fed, Jesus used five loaves. (Matthew 14:19)

When the second multitude of over 4,000 people were fed, Jesus used seven loaves. (Matthew 15:36) In all, Jesus fed Israel with twelve loaves of bread.

Twelve loaves of bread (along with other items), one loaf for each of the twelve tribes, were placed on the Table of the Presence for the priests to consume at regular intervals. The Table also had cups, bowls and pitchers. (Exodus 37:16) When a person looks at the Table of Showbread in terms of the utensils and the food placed on it, it becomes obvious that this Table represents “a King’s table.”

The priests were invited to eat from the King’s table because they were highly honored to serve in His earthly temple. Eating from the King’s table was not only a great honor, but it also showed intimacy with the King. It was common for kings in ancient times to honor special friends by inviting them to eat at their table for as long as they lived! (2 Samuel 9:7)

Even the wicked Jezebel knew the value of good cooking! She controlled Baal’s prophets by feeding them well at her table. (1 Kings 18:19) It would not surprise me to learn that Jezebel coined the phrase, “A way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.”

Jesus told His disciples, **“And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”** (Luke 22:29,30)

So, the Table of the Presence in the earthly temple is associated with special privileges granted to priests. It is associated with Jesus as the Bread of Life (John 6:35) who has come down from Heaven. The Table of the Presence reflects the *source* of these blessings because the Bread of Life was served to the people each Sabbath from this table.

Reason # 2 – Location

The Table of the Presence was located on the north side of the tabernacle. In ancient times, the direction of “north” was regarded as the direction of divine residence, divine judgment or divine authority. Divine destruction and/or judgments always came from the north. Notice these five examples (*Italics mine.*):

Isaiah 41:25 **I have stirred up one from *the north*, and he comes – one from the rising sun who calls on my name. He treads on rulers as if they were mortar, as if he were a potter treading the clay.**

Jeremiah 1:14 **The Lord said to me, “From *the north* disaster will be poured out on**

all who live in the land.”

Jeremiah 4:6 **Raise the signal to go to Zion! Flee for safety without delay! For I am bringing disaster from *the north*, even terrible destruction.**

Jeremiah 46:20 **Egypt is a beautiful heifer, but a gadfly is coming against her from *the north*.**

Jeremiah 50:9 **For I will stir up and bring against Babylon an alliance of great nations from the land of *the north*. They will take up their positions against her, and from *the north* she will be captured. Their arrows will be like skilled warriors who do not return empty-handed.**

Now, notice the location of the Table of the Presence: **“Place the table outside the curtain on the *north* side of the tabernacle and put the lampstand opposite it on the south side.”** (Exodus 26:35) No matter where Israel moved the earthly tabernacle, the Table of the Presence always sat on the north side.

Look closely at the following text to see what the north side of the temple suggests: **“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of *the north*: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.”** (Isaiah 14:12-14, KJV)

Lucifer conspired to place his throne “in the sides of the north” because this is the location of God’s throne. He wants the adoration that God alone deserves. The following text underscores the importance of the “north side” of Jerusalem: **“Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole Earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of *the north*, the city of the great King.”** (Psalms 48:2, KJV) The Psalmist describes the location of God’s throne as being “on the sides of the north.”

These verses suggest the north side of the temple is where the throne of God is located. Since the Table of *the Presence* was located on the north side of the temple, it is reasonable to say the Table of *the Presence* represents the throne of God. But, there is one final reason that brings the question to a close.

Reason # 3 – The Seat of Christ

Remember that the Ark of the Covenant represents the character of God. The ark symbolizes the divine balance between justice and mercy. Because God is consistent and reasonable, it is possible that He can be understood to some extent by finite minds. God is thoughtful and purposeful in everything He does. God designed the earthly tabernacle to teach men and women about Himself without resorting to an overpowering spectacle.

The vastness of God’s beauty is always below the surface. The Tent of Meeting was covered with common black seal skins. (Exodus 36:19) In other words, God could have “wowed” the

Israelites with a Sinai cathedral dwarfing the tombs and pyramids of Egypt. He could have ensconced Himself in some lofty and glorious grandeur that would have utterly embarrassed Pharaoh and the Philistines. He could have intimidated the Israelites into submission each week by showing great displays of power, miracles, signs and wonders from the mountain.

On several occasions, God did perform marvelous miracles on behalf of Israel, but He does not want to be worshiped because He happens to be the greatest King in all the universe who has great authority and owns everything. (Psalm 95:3; Malachi 1:14)

No, God desires His children to worship for different reasons. He desires our worship because He gave us life and showed us love. He desires our worship because a loving relationship between the Creator and the created is the only way to the fullness of life which He designed for us.

Last, God desires our worship because the more we exalt Him the more we become like Him. The more we understand His character, the more we can appreciate His ways and government.

God seeks our worship, but it is for our good, not His. God will not force Himself on one creature because He is love. Jesus' life is an excellent example of this point. He could have chosen any high-ranking, wealthy parents on Earth, but He chose to live and look like a common person.

To God, our understanding of His character, ways and government are of greater value than beholding His glory. The Bible says of Jesus, **“He grew up before him [the Father] like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”** (Isaiah 53:2,3, insertion mine.)

When Jesus returned to Heaven, He was seated at the right hand of the Father. (Hebrews 8:1-5) If the Table of the Presence represents God's throne, then the physical location of Jesus (at the right hand of the Father) puts Him *between* the Ark of the Covenant and the Father – the perfect place for an intercessor!

Consider the work of Jesus: He sits on His throne upholding the righteousness of God's government (to His right); He sits on His throne exonerating the righteousness of the Father (to His left) and while in this middle position He is man's representative before Heaven's watching host!

What a High Priest!

During the days of the earthly tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place was the *focus* of worship. The Shekinah glory hid behind the veil in the Most Holy Place because God wanted mankind to *focus* on the principles of His government of love and His righteous ways more than His veiled glory.

Still, the evidence indicates that the banquet Table of *the Presence* was the source of the Bread of Life. In addition, the Table of *the Presence* was always physically located on the north side of the temple. The Table of *the Presence* symbolizes the throne where His presence is located.

If these conclusions are true, then the physical location of Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, makes a great deal of sense. Jesus sits where you would expect a mediator to sit, *between* God the Father and the Ark of the Covenant.

Summary – Temple Furniture

We have briefly examined the purpose of each item in the earthly temple and how it parallels a corresponding item in Heaven's temple. Much more could be written on this topic, so much so, that it could fill many books. We know that God is thoughtful and deliberate in all that He does and the parallels between the earthly and heavenly temple are no exception.

The essential purpose for understanding the earthly tabernacle today is twofold. First, the services of the earthly temple provide a backdrop against which we can test our ideas and understanding of the Plan of Salvation. Second, parallel operations between the earthly temple and the heavenly temple explain a number of processes and events which take place in the book of Revelation.

The ways of God in redeeming man are revealed in His temple. We have covered a lot of information, so perhaps a brief summary about temple furniture will be helpful.

1. Services at the Altar of Burnt Offering pointed forward to the death of Jesus as man's perfect substitute.
2. Daily services at the Altar of Incense pointed backward to the day intercession by Jesus began for sinful man. The covenant Jesus made with the Father to save man currently stands between the wrath of God and a condemned world.
3. The Ark of the Covenant represents the government of God. The wonderful balance between justice and mercy is called divine love.
4. The Laver illustrates the spiritual cleansing that man regularly needs.
5. The Lampstand represents the agents or trustees of God's salvation who are to let their light shine before others for the glory of God.
6. The Table of the Presence, on the north side of the temple, represents the throne of God.
7. The Heaven-Earth-Linkage-Law indicates that earthly tabernacle services and processes are parallels of heavenly tabernacle services and processes.