

The Temple of God

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Topic Introduction

Have you ever considered that the events which mark the end of the world synchronize with special services in God's Heavenly Temple? The end of this world is not a random sequence of calamities caused by man. On the contrary, the Bible declares that God strategically controls the events leading to the end of the world. (Isaiah 45:7-12)

The apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation outline a very clear, orderly progression of divine commands originating in Heaven's Temple. Angels dispatched to Earth implement the commands which culminate in Earth's complete, fiery destruction. Therefore, understanding the process which will soon conclude in Heaven's Temple should be of utmost importance for those who are waiting and watching for God's salvation.

Of all the concepts taught in the Bible, God's Temple is the most profound, intricate, sublime and beautiful. It ties all Bible themes together as nothing else can. Yet, today, most Christians have never considered this topic, nor have they enjoyed the vast insights it reveals regarding God's ways. No doubt, this was the topic that captured the heart and mind of the 12 year-old boy, Jesus, many years ago as He stood in the temple in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:43-47) His understanding of the temple services was so comprehensive that He astonished the priests who served there.

The Heaven Earth Linkage Law

There is a direct correlation between events in Heaven and events on Earth. These events are described in apocalyptic prophecy. The concept is simple: Since the human race cannot see the Heavenly Temple, the Father has linked events in Heaven with events on Earth so that His people may know His timely movements in Heaven. This principle is summarized by the acronym, H.E.L.L., the Heaven Earth Linkage Law. (This is one acronym that should be easy to remember.) For example, when each of the seven trumpets sound in Heaven, a corresponding event occurs on Earth.

The same principle applies to the seven bowls (plagues). When the angels receive each of the seven bowls in Heaven's Temple, a corresponding event occurs on Earth. This synchronism will help us determine our chronological position within God's strategic plan by simply observing Earthly events. In days to come, a great number of meteoric showers of burning hail will ignite thousands of forest fires all around the world. When we see this, we will know the first trumpet has sounded in Heaven! (Revelation 8:7)

Event in Heaven — Event on Earth

The Bible clearly demonstrates that Earthly events are linked with Heavenly events. Notice this text: "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool.

His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened . . . As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom... He [the horn] will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time." (Daniel 7:8-10,21,22,25)

Daniel 7 describes four beasts that rise out of the sea: A lion, bear, leopard and a terrible monster. Daniel was told: "The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth." (Daniel 7:17) The lion represents the ancient kingdom of Babylon, the bear represents the kingdom that followed which was MedoPersia, the leopard represents the third world empire of Grecia and the terrible monster represents Rome.

According to this prophecy, the homogenous empire of Rome would eventually be divided into ten smaller kingdoms, the ten horns of Daniel 7:24. Then, a new horn, little at first, would rise up and become powerful, uprooting three of the original ten horns. Daniel predicted this last horn would gain dominion over the seven remaining horns. Further, this same little horn would wage war against the saints for a time, times and half a time. These and other specifications can only point to one organization that grew out of ancient Rome.

That organization was known as the Roman Christian Church and today is called the Roman Catholic Church. (For a comprehensive discussion on this matter, please read Chapter 7 in my book, *The Revelation of Jesus*.)

According to Daniel 7:21, the little horn would wage war against the saints until the Ancient of Days took His seat and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints. This means the Ancient of Days issued a restraining order (a judgment) against the actions of the little horn on Earth.

Then the war against the saints ended. This sequence of events helps to demonstrate the importance of the Heaven/Earth Linkage Law. Since no human can observe this Heavenly courtroom scene taking place, we must watch for predicted events on Earth to know where we are in Heaven's order of events! Let s see what happened on Earth that coincided with this Heavenly courtroom scene.

In February 1798, Napoleon sent his generals, Berthier and Waller, into the Vatican City and took the pope prisoner. Napoleon's "official" action broke the dominion of the Roman Church. Historical records may cite various "human" reasons for Napoleon s triumph over the Church of

Rome, but the papacy's fall was not a matter of human prowess.

God allowed the Roman Church to have its authority for 1,260 years, and at the right moment, that power was removed. Napoleon's ability to inflict a deadly wound upon the papacy came from "On High." Thus, because a definite link exists between events in Heaven with events on Earth, we know that the Father took His seat and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints in 1798.

The Temple of God

The term, "The Temple of God" generally refers to the dwelling place or throne of God. King David indicated the throne of God is in His Temple. "The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them." (Psalms 11:4)

David also says: "Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne." (Psalms 97:2) Isaiah also saw the throne of God in His Temple: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple." (Isaiah 6:1)

It is interesting to note that God's throne is moveable. Ezekiel saw four living creatures transporting the throne. (See Ezekiel 1 and 10.) Daniel saw a great courtroom scene in Heaven in which the thrones were arranged in a special order. The Ancient of Days (the Father) came and took His seat to oversee a special event. (Daniel 7:9,10)

This point illustrates that God's Temple is not a building per se, for what pavilion can contain the Almighty? The Temple of God could be considered a "campsite" setting rather than a "building" located at one street address. The Bible describes the absence of a temple "address" in the Earth made new: "I did not see a temple in the city [New Jerusalem], because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." (Revelation 21:22)

No doubt, John considered it strange that there was no Temple in New Jerusalem, for in his day the Earthly temple and its activities were the locus of Judaism, both geographically and intellectually.

The absence of a Heavenly Temple throughout eternity indicates that even though the purpose of the Heavenly court scene described in Daniel 7:9,10 is highly important, it is nevertheless, temporary. However, the throne of God will endure forever. Remember, God's Temple is not a building, it is a temporary site He establishes by His Presence. Consider this: The Earthly tabernacle that Moses built was not intended to be a physical description of what Heaven or God's throne is like. Instead, Moses Earthly tabernacle reveals the issues and processes that God addresses for man's redemption.

Linkage Between the Temples

Notice the linkage between the Earthly tabernacle and the Heavenly Temple in Hebrews 8:15

“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.

Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. If he were on Earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. 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.”

These five verses confirm that (1) the Earthly sanctuary Moses built was a copy or shadow of what occurs in Heaven, (2) Jesus serves in the true (real) tabernacle in Heaven, and (3) Moses was warned to carefully follow the pattern God gave him.

The Earthly sanctuary was to be an important teaching tool, revealing the parallels between the copy (the Earthly temple) and the true (the Heavenly Temple). This text describes the relationship between the two temples: “For Christ did not enter a man made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered Heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.” (Heb. 9:24)

The essential purpose for a parallel between the Earthly and Heavenly temples is to reveal the issues involved with law, sin, penalty and grace, as well as God's orderly process to redeem man. In 1798, God convened a special court session in Heaven to deal with man's salvation and several Earthly tabernacle services point to this special court. This special court setting and this segment in the PLAN of salvation being implemented there, are both temporary.

Also remember, the PLAN of salvation has a beginning point in time and an ending point in time. Even though God prepared the PLAN before any creatures were made, the PLAN is only effectual during the existence of sin – and this PLAN will be studied and reviewed throughout eternity.

What does John say about Heaven's Temple?

For reasons beyond the scope of this article, the prophet John was zoomed forward in time to view the “campsite” as it would appear around 1798. (Revelation 46) John saw the brilliant glory of God's throne and saw the same four living creatures that Ezekiel did. John, like Daniel, saw myriads of angels gathered around God's throne. John, however, mentions that he saw 24 elders, each sitting on a throne, arranged around God's throne. John also mentions several pieces of temple furniture.

This is very important because descriptions of the Earthly tabernacle include similar furniture! If we understand the function of the Earthly furniture, we should be able to learn the purpose of the Heavenly furniture. John saw seven golden Lampstands (Revelation 1:12-20; Exodus 25:31-37), the Altar of Incense (Revelation 8:3; Exodus 30:16), the Altar of Burnt Offering

(Revelation 6:9; Exodus 29:12) and the Ark of the Covenant (Revelation 11:19). John does not directly mention the Table of the Presence (Shewbread) or the Laver.

Even though there are many similarities, there are also important differences between the Earthly and the Heavenly tabernacles (a direct parallel does not exist for every aspect). For example, animal blood was routinely placed on the horns of Earthly altars. Obviously, this does not occur in Heaven.

The annual feasts associated with the Earthly tabernacle services have never been celebrated in Heaven. Rather, annual feasts and the animal sacrifices that accompany them reveal certain elements about God's process to save man. Obviously, the scale and structure of the Earthly temple is different from the Heavenly Temple since the Earthly wilderness tabernacle was a tiny tent structure, only 18 by 55 feet in length. Moses did not build a tabernacle in the likeness of Heaven's Temple. Rather, Moses followed the pattern that was given to him, and the resulting construction reflects the details of the pattern that Moses was shown. (Exodus 25:9)

The Earthly tabernacle was a temporary teaching device, a shadow of reality. Contrary to what many people believe, the Earthly temple and its services held no efficacy then nor now. The sacrifices of animals and/or accompanying rituals did not/cannot provide atonement for sin. (Hebrews 10:4)

Instead, these services reveal the properties of law, sin, penalty, grace and the orderly process God follows to restore man. The ceremonial system of laws God gave to Moses pointed toward the issues God has to resolve. Sin's presence in God's Universe introduced three problems for Him. These problems will be resolved to every creature's satisfaction even though the process takes thousands of years.

First, God must demonstrate the righteousness of His government to all His creatures. It is not sufficient for God to declare His government righteous, He must demonstrate that it is righteous. (This is one reason why God allowed Lucifer and his angels to live after their expulsion from Heaven.)

Second, God must demonstrate that He is a God of love and that He really does offer each of His creatures the power of choice. He must prove He does not manipulate His creatures through omnipotence or omniscience. Last, God has to reveal the lawful (fair) process which determines that some creatures will be eternally destroyed and other creatures restored and granted life eternal. These three issues will be resolved when sin is removed from God's Universe.

Practical and Informative

The functions of the Earthly tabernacle consisted of three levels of operation. First, there was the administration of some of the practical aspects of the tabernacle which included the livelihood of the ministers – the Levites. Not only did the Levites eat much of the meat that was roasted as sacrifices, they also received produce from offerings people gave to the Lord.

In addition, they received wages from the contributions of gold and silver. Second, the tabernacle was the center of Israel's economy. Issues like public health, civil and social governance all centered in the tabernacle. Originally, under God's direct leadership, Israel was to be a "church/state," but God modified that plan when they rejected Him as their King. (1 Samuel 8:7)

Last, the highest function for the Earthly tabernacle was to reveal divine law, sin, penalty, grace and salvation. This third level of operation explains why God established a linkage between the Earthly and Heavenly Temples. He wants us to understand the properties, even the price of our salvation.

The subject of God's temple is expansive (as the wonders of God always are). It is not difficult to grasp the essential lessons of the Earthly tabernacle and its services. Wonderfully, God has placed the basic issues of life and death just beneath the surface of the Bible. Why does God put such important information beneath the surface? He does it simply to separate "surface readers" from "Bible students." There is a significant difference between Bible reading and Bible study.

Six thousand years of recorded history proves that God is very cautious about revealing Himself. If He revealed too much at one time, the truth would be more than we could bear. (John 16:12; Daniel 10:7) If God were too aggressive, His created beings would regard Him as a cosmic bully. Instead, God chooses either to cloak Himself in brilliant, unapproachable light or dense darkness.

Truth can be obtained if a person sincerely wants to see the wisdom of God (John 16:13) and God only reveals His wonders to people who seek diligently. God told Jeremiah, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13)

Heaven and Earth Parallel is Necessary

Before we examine the contents of the Earthly tabernacle – en route to understanding the actual processes of the Heavenly Temple – there are a few points that need to be clarified so you can quickly grasp why certain things are the way they are. When studying this subject, it is important to remember that a Heavenly Temple/Earthly temple parallel is necessary because sin entered into and affected both realms. The following series of ten statements are basic concepts that will help you see the perspective of salvation from God's point of view:

When God created Lucifer, he was perfect in every way. In time, Lucifer became jealous of the archangel, Michael (Jesus). Lucifer wanted to take Michael's place on the throne as the Archangel. The more Lucifer brooded, the more determined he became. To gather followers, he mounted a very intelligent assault against God.

The assault was so effective that one third of the angels rebelled against God. Here are some issues that Lucifer distorted to mislead the angels:

God is purposeful and deliberate in all that He does, however, sometimes it takes His creatures

several thousand years to understand His actions. So, during the interval between creation and understanding, God's creatures must choose to "blindly" trust that God's actions are righteous (not evil or harmful to existing creatures).

God is the Sovereign King of His universe. Heaven is not a democracy. God declares that He is righteous. God claims that He does not use His great powers of omnipresence (being everywhere simultaneously), omnipotence (having power to do anything) or omniscience (knowing everything about everything) to manipulate His creatures. God claims that all creatures have the power of choice. They can choose to serve Him or they can choose to rebel. God claims to always act in the best interest of His subjects.

God's ways are not the ways of His creatures. He is infinite, but they are finite.

Lucifer distorted the truth and cleverly misrepresented God's character and government, causing doubt to fill the hearts of influential angels. Lucifer preyed upon other angels in Heaven, asking questions which seemed to have no solid answers at the time. (Sometimes, God's plans require 7,000 or more years to clearly understand – as in the PLAN of salvation.)

Using the leverage of doubt against Michael, Lucifer eventually led one third of the angels to believe he was more deserving of the position of archangel than Michael. When the Father informed Lucifer that Michael was a member of the Godhead, in the form of an angel (Jesus), Lucifer and his angels defiantly rebelled against God. This resulted in Lucifer and his angels being cast out of Heaven. (See the August 1995 Day Star for further explanation.)

God foreknew the actions of Lucifer even before Lucifer was created. Foreknowing the rise of sin and the allegations Lucifer would make against His character and principles governing the universe, God prerecorded the whole story of sin before Lucifer or any angel was created. He wrote a book called the Book of Life and perfectly sealed it with seven seals so no creature could know the contents until a specific, future moment in time arrived.

Then Jesus created Earth. He gave Adam and Eve access to the Tree of Life which would keep them alive indefinitely. They could stay in the Garden as long as they believed and obeyed God. (Genesis 3:22-24) Jesus placed them under the obligation of law on their first day of life. Jesus commanded them not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil or they would die. (Genesis 2:16,17)

Lucifer entered the Garden and lied about God's command. Eve believed the devil's lie and followed him in rebelling against God. Before they rebelled, Adam and Eve were naturally predisposed to live righteously, believe and obey God. After they sinned, they became prone, by nature, to disbelieve and disobey God. Today, human beings are born with a sinful nature in rebellion against God. (Romans 8:7) The devil's greatest deception is to make people believe they are in a "born again" state when in reality, they remain in their "natural state" of rebellion. (John 8:39) The devil remains the Father of lies. (John 8:44)

Jesus warned Adam and Eve they would be executed the day they ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. However, Adam and Eve's execution was stayed because

Jesus immediately implemented a covenant with the Father. Jesus agreed to be executed in their place. The covenant between the Son and the Father (the PLAN of salvation) offers release from execution for those who put their faith in Christ as their substitute. However, the stay of execution for those in rebellion is not indefinite. It will take place at the end of the 1,000 year millennium. (Revelation 20:14)

God implemented the PLAN of salvation for Adam and Eve and their offspring because their sin was not in open defiance of God. When Lucifer deceived Eve, Adam's love for Eve proved to be stronger than his love for his Maker which prompted his willful disobedience. Lucifer's rebellion, on the other hand, defiantly challenged God and His principles of government.

The PLAN of salvation stipulates the following:

- The penalty for sin is death by execution.
- The result of sin is death through degeneration.
- Atonement requires restitution.
- Any violation of law is sin.
- A sinner's execution can be transferred to a perfect substitute provided the guilty party submits to a life of faith in the perfect substitute.
- The essence of living by faith in Christ is a GOBEDO attitude. This means a person is willing to go, be and do all that God requires.
- The actions of every creature are accurately recorded in Heaven's books of deeds.

The judgment of mankind requires three prerequisites:

1. First, the judge must be worthy to judge man.
2. Second, the substitute for man must be perfect, otherwise the substitute is condemned for his own sins.
3. Last, man is saved on the basis of whether or not he submitted to the authority of Christ in faith.

The character of God must be fully exonerated from having any selfish or evil trait.

At the end of the 1,000 year millennium, God will resurrect wicked people for three reasons: First, God will reveal to each rebellious person why he or she cannot be saved. Second, He will review the PLAN of salvation with each person and show them everything He did to help them obtain eternal life. At that moment, every knee will bow before God admitting that He is fair and His judgment righteous. (Isaiah 45:23-25)

Last, God's law requires people to provide restitution for any wrongs committed and any unconfessed or unforgiven sins. The saints will determine the amount of restitution justice required while they reign with Christ during the 1,000 years. The restitution will be accomplished through suffering by fire. Some wicked people will vanish quickly, while others will suffer for days. Lucifer and his angels will perhaps, burn for years.

Just before God destroys the wicked with fire from Heaven, Jesus breaks open the last seal on

the Book of Life. This final act will clear God's Holy Name of any wrong doing. Of course, by the time this book is opened, everyone (including Lucifer and His angels) will have admitted that God is fair and His judgment righteous. The opened Book of Life will reveal and confirm to all created beings what God knew from the beginning, even before sin originated.

The truth about three things will be confirmed: First, God did not use His foreknowledge to prevent sin. Thus, His creatures do have the power of choice. Second, God did not use His powers to manipulate the choices of any creature. Every creature is in the eternal condition that he chooses to be in. Third, every creature, including Lucifer and the angels who followed him, voluntarily agrees that there is no evil in God.

After the wicked are destroyed, this knowledge will keep all living creatures from ever doubting the purity of God's heart again. Through this whole process God has shown that He does not destroy those who rebel merely because they rebelled against Him. Instead, He has shown the horrendous outcome of sin. Sin must be destroyed. Complete annihilation of sin and sinners is the only way through the endless corridors of eternal life that insures a happy, holy and harmonious universe.

The concept of God's Temple is an expansive subject and this is true because so much is involved with the sin problem. All of God's ways, His government, His character, His judgment, have been scrutinized because of sin. The sin problem began in Heaven, not on Earth. Therefore, the concept of God's Temple includes a number of issues that concern both Heaven and Earth.

This is why there must be an Earthly/Heavenly parallel. Many Christians today think the PLAN of salvation is a onedimensional subject in terms of their own salvation. There is far more at stake in the PLAN of salvation than human beings receiving eternal life. In fact, it never ceases to amaze me that God even included human beings in the PLAN.

Earthly Function

The Earthly temple consisted of seven items: the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of the Presence (Shewbread), the Altar of Incense, the Altar of Burnt Offering, the Lampstand, the Laver and the tabernacle building itself. God purposely designed each Earthly item and gave it to Moses as a pattern. The function of each item provides details which contribute to the overall teaching objective of the temple.

For example, the bloody stains on the horns of the altars and the veil between the Holy and Most Holy Place show how God transfers the guilt of sin from the sinner to the temple. The death of the innocent lamb demonstrates the price of grace. The sevenmonth religious calendar confirms that God has a linear process moving toward the full elimination and termination of sin.

Remember, the teaching purpose of the tabernacle services reveals law, sin, penalty, grace and the orderly process that God follows to redeem sinful man. Let us examine each item in the Earthly temple and its related Heavenly parallel.

Two Altars

The presence of two altars, the Altar of Burnt Offering and the Altar of Incense, indicates that God is concerned with two types of sin: individual and corporate. This demonstrates that God considers the nature of the sin and the circumstances of sinners in different ways. The deliberate slaughter of animal sacrifices confirms that there is an inescapable penalty for sin: death by execution.

The priests placed the blood of sacrificial animals on the horns of an altar to indicate that the guilt of sin is not forgiven or forgotten until a future time when the record of sin is cleansed. God provided a way for sinners to be relieved of their guilt, but He did not make any provision to forgive sin itself.

Contrary to what most Christians believe, sin cannot be forgiven. While sin cannot be forgiven, sinners can be forgiven. At first, this statement appears contradictory. The death of Jesus, as man's perfect substitute, proves that sin cannot be forgiven. Sin is the transgression of God's law. (1 John 3:4) The penalty for sin is death by execution and ignorance of God's law does not mean innocence.

However, if a person is ignorant regarding sin, God does not apply the guilt for sin to the sinner unless/until the sinner becomes properly informed. (Leviticus 4; 1 Timothy 1:13; James 4:17) But, once a sin is committed, the whole law has been violated. (James 2:10) The sinful act that causes the violation cannot be recalled and it is a matter of record. The unrelenting claim of the law is "once a sinner, always a sinner." God's creatures cannot bypass the moral law of God. The effects of 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) But, God has provided a way for the guilt of sin to be transferred away from the repentant sinner – Jesus Christ and His death paid the sinner's penalty. The end result is that we are no longer under condemnation. (See Romans 5 and 8:12.) From this perspective, many Bible references speak of sins being forgiven.

The implication, however, is that sinners are forgiven. The distinction between forgiveness of sinners and transference of sin is highly important! This concept uniquely explains why Christ had to die so that sinners could be saved. As this study continues, it will demonstrate how this process was taught through the Earthly temple.

The Sin Offering

God established a number of rules in the Earthly temple that determined which offering was appropriate for each sin. Different offenses required different methods for atonement or resolution. Each specification helps us understand the orderly manner that God follows in dealing with the sin issue. Because there are types and variations of sacrificial offerings, the following examples demonstrate a typical process.

Remember, even though the subject of the temple is broad and encompassing, the focus remains the same: the revelation of law, sin, penalty, grace and the orderly process that God follows to save man. Keep the following two points in mind: The Bible record of Earthly temple services is not complete, however, you can be sure that God has preserved the essential details needed for our generation. (This also holds true regarding the ministry of Jesus. See John 21:25.)

Second, the sheer number of laws and offerings are initially overwhelming to any Bible student. The Bible includes all that is essential, so you are encouraged to carefully study the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.

The sin offering dealt with two classes of personal sin: willful sin 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 at the base of the altar." (Leviticus 4:27-30)

If a man learned he had committed an unintentional sin, he (or the head of the house) had to appear at the Earthly sanctuary's Altar of Burnt Offering with the required sacrifice. If he could not afford to produce the required animal, items of lesser value, such as birds or even flour, were acceptable to the Lord. (Leviticus 5:7) The priest, ever present and ready to serve, received the sinner's substitute.

The priest examined the offering very closely. He was more concerned with the sacrifice than he was with the sinner. The offering had to be perfect, without defect or blemish. Follow this process: A man, under the obligation of law, unintentionally violates the law (commits sin). Later, he learns of his guilt and becomes convicted that he must make atonement or the wrath (penalty) of the law will be upon his own head. (Obadiah 1:15)

He believes the Word of God which says the penalty for sin is death by execution. He is sorrowful for his sin, after all, it was unintentional. The sinner obtains a perfect animal and takes it to the appointed place. (Leviticus 17:4) He lays his hands on the head of his substitute and confesses his sin to God. (Leviticus 1:4) Then he personally slaughters the substitute by cutting the jugular vein. (Leviticus 1:5)

The priest captured some of the bright, red blood and sprinkled some of it on the four horns of the altar. (On other occasions, the priest sprinkled blood on the sides of the altar. Exodus 29:16) In this fashion, the guilt of sin was transferred from the sinner to the goat (or lamb) by the laying on of hands.

The blood on the horns is a crimson record of his sin. Notice that the demands of the law have

been met – death occurred by execution. A perfect substitute fulfilled the demand. The record of his sin remains on the altar. Even though the sinner cannot escape the obligation of law, for the moment, he is free of its condemnation. (Leviticus 3:16; Deuteronomy 12:17)

But, this was not the final step in resolving the sin problem. Now that the Altar of Burnt Offering was defiled by the record of sin (the blood) which had stained its horns, the temple itself was in a state of desecration. To resolve this, God appointed a special day for cleansing the temple called the Day of Atonement.

The process of atonement for a willful sin is slightly different. Before an individual could obtain atonement at the tabernacle, he or she had to make restitution to the victim. (Matthew 5:24) Notice what the law says: “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 5:68)

Penalty and Restitution

So far, this study of the Earthly tabernacle has revealed that God views the sins of individuals from two perspectives: willful and unintentional. Obviously, a person cannot continue in a pattern of committing the same willful sin and still be able to meet the demands of the 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) Further, God does not see willful sin in the same light as defiant sin, even though the penalty remains the same.

Notice, “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 a person would be banished from the camp and have no inheritance. In the wilderness, banishment meant being cut off from every means of survival. So, what is defiant sin? According to Webster, defiance means to openly and boldly reject the authority or claims of another.

God says there is no other God besides Himself. (Isaiah 45:5) God is King, the owner/master of man and He would naturally interpret defiance as an act of insubordination. Therefore, He told Moses, “Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the Lord must be destroyed.” (Exodus 22:20) Defiant sins cannot be atoned for and are unforgivable. (1 Samuel 3:14; Matthew 12:31)

God's law defines a two step process to resolve a sin that was committed. The guilt of sinning against God is atoned for at the tabernacle, but the guilt of sinning against man was atoned for by making restitution. The Lord required that restitution be made first to the victim, then the sinner could proceed to make atonement for the sin committed against God at the tabernacle.

The amount of restitution varied. In minor cases, the restitution was 20%. (See Numbers 5:68.) In other cases, the amount of restitution could reach up to 500%. (See Exodus 22.) When Zacchaeus became a “born again” believer in Christ, he gave 50% of his wealth to the poor, and then restored 400% to anyone that he had wronged! (Luke 19:8) The matter of restitution is very important in God's government. In fact, the Earthly tabernacle teaches that at an appointed time, God will require the offender to repay every wrongful deed done to the victim.

In the case of personal injury, 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 is equilibrium.

In other words, if someone maliciously, with aforethought, harms another person, the law demands complete restitution before he or she can make atonement before God. In the case of personal injury, the offender must experience the pain he or she willfully inflicted! To retard the growth of sin, God placed man under the operation of the golden rule. The rule states: “It will be done to you as you intentionally do to your victim, plus interest and penalty.” When Jesus was on Earth, the Jews had twisted the corporate intent of the golden rule.

They used it to serve as legal justification for personal revenge, especially against their hated enemy, the Romans. Jesus rebuked them for not understanding the corporate 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, that revenge belongs to God. If man fails to secure Christ's righteousness to fulfill the law, God will make sure at the appointed time that everyone is paid in full, plus interest and penalty. “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 to painful injustice. God will ensure that lawful equilibrium is restored before He creates a new Heaven and a new Earth.

Summary – Sin Offering

Many people may already understand how the ceremonial services at the Altar of Burnt Offering pointed forward to the death of the Lamb of God. However, for individuals who are “plowing new ground,” here is a review of the seven essential points regarding the Altar of Burnt Offering which should be remembered:

1. The Altar of Burnt Offering served the needs of individuals.
2. The priest placed the record of sin (the blood) on the horns of the altar. Until the altar was cleansed, the temple remained in a state of desecration.
3. The sacrificial animal had to be perfect.
4. The sinner killed his sacrificial animal after confessing his sin.

5. The blood of sacrifices was poured into a container at the base of the altar.
6. Sin, whether unintentional or intentional requires atonement. If a person committed a wrong against another person, he or she had to make restitution before he or she could present an atonement before the Lord.
7. Defiant sin cannot be forgiven (atoned for).

The Altar of Incense

The golden Altar of Incense was located in the first room of the temple, the Holy Place. Like the Altar of Burnt Offering, this altar had four horns, one on each corner of the altar. There was one significant difference between these altars. On the Altar of Burnt Offering, the priests had the responsibility of keeping the fires burning around the clock. (Leviticus 6:12,13)

In the Altar of Incense, God Himself ignited and sustained the fire so it never went out. (This understanding is reached by considering the following two points: Aaron's two sons carelessly used "strange" or man made fire in the Holy Place (Leviticus 10:13) and the Bible never states that the priests maintained the fire on this altar.) Evening and morning, the priests burned a special formula of incense on the Altar of Incense.

The Israelites could smell the aroma of that incense, depending upon the wind, throughout the camp (up to six miles away). (Exodus 30:7,8) Like the Altar of Burnt Offering, the Altar of Incense is named according to its purpose: the burning of incense. God told the Israelites not to duplicate or burn this special incense for any other purpose. The only time this incense was to be used was at the Altar of Incense. (Exodus 30:34-38)

The services at this altar represented a different level of atonement from the bronze Altar of Burnt Offering located in the courtyard. This altar was special in the sense that it was reserved for corporate sacrificial services. The high priest conducted evening and morning services at this altar which benefited the whole community. However, there was one exception. If the high priest sinned, his atonement had to be presented on the Altar of Incense since his sin was considered a much more serious offense to God than sins of people who were not "close" to the Living God. (Leviticus 4:37) God held the high priest to a higher standard of accountability than ordinary people.

To appreciate the significance of a corporate representation on this altar, 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)

Notice two elements regarding the corporate sacrifice: First, it was possible for the whole community to sin against God unintentionally! Again, ignorance does not mean innocence. When the community became aware of its ignorant sin, God required atonement for the whole community. (Sin is never forgiven, instead sin is transferred.) Second, the sacrificial bull's blood (the record of sin) was sprinkled seven times on the front of the veil (or curtain) that separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place. This signified that as a community, Israel had broken the law whose tablets were in the Ark.

In order to provide temporary atonement for the community, the priest sprinkled the blood as close to the mercy seat (presence of God) as a sinful being could approach on a day other than the Day of Atonement. Then, blood was placed on the four horns of the altar. (Leviticus 4:7,18)

We also need to consider the continual or perpetual round of evening and morning offerings. The corporate sacrifice gives us a pattern for the process of the continual offerings, since both offerings were for unintentional sin committed in the camp. God required a perfect, one-year-old lamb to be sacrificed each evening at twilight and each morning just after sunrise.

After the priest killed the lamb on the Altar of Burnt Offering, he carried some of its blood to the Altar of Incense and applied it to the horns of the altar. The high priest then placed a scoop of the special incense on the glowing coals of the altar and the fragrance flowed generously from the temple. In addition to the blood and incense, the priests placed small servings of wheat or barley flour, oil and wine before the Lord as offerings. (Exodus 29:40,41; 30:9)

The services at this altar were for the benefit of the whole community. This stands in stark contrast to the Altar of Burnt Offering which operated for the benefit of individuals. Why did Israel need a “community service” offered at the Altar of Incense every evening and every morning? The camp of Israel needed continual atonement night and day so they could dwell in God's presence.

In other words, this “around-the-clock” atonement meant that if an individual sinned, the community sacrifice atoned for them until they could bring their personal sacrifice to the Altar of Burnt Offering. The daily transfer of blood to the Altar of Incense allowed the Israelites to dwell in God's presence without being destroyed. (Exodus 25:8) Understand that a sinner cannot approach God and live without atonement. (Num. 8:19)

The concept underlying the daily, as the evening and morning services were often called, is very meaningful. While the services on the Altar of Burnt Offering pointed forward to the death of Jesus as the Lamb of God, the services on the Altar of Incense pointed back to the day when the Father and Son established a covenant for man's salvation. (Psalms 2) On the day Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus entered into a covenant with the Father agreeing to die as man's substitute. (Exodus 24:8; Matthew 26:28)

Jesus immediately submitted to the terms and conditions required in the PLAN of salvation which called for death. In fact, from that day forward, Jesus is called the “Son” of God. In this

context, the word son means “one subject to” or “one in submission to a higher authority.” Consequently, Adam was called the “son of God.” (Luke 3:38) In effect, the covenant between the Father and Jesus stood in the way of the destroying angel who was prepared to execute Adam and Eve. Jesus became man’s intercessor at that very moment. (Hebrews 7:25) The Bible is clear – a violated law necessitates a swift penalty – which helps us understand the necessity of an intercessor in Heaven.

The daily intercession of Jesus in Heaven coincides with the daily ministry of the high priest in the sanctuary service on Earth. The human race (the human community) was “atoned for” on the basis of the covenant, until Jesus could come to Earth, die and actually pay the penalty. The PLAN of salvation calls for an allotted time period of grace (6,000 years or less of intercession) so that “whosoever will” can learn of Jesus and receive Him as his/her personal sacrifice!

This point is highly important because the services at the Earthly Altar of Incense parallel the services at the Heavenly Altar of Incense. In ancient Israel, there was a time each year when God would no longer receive the sacrifices of sinners. No further atonement could be made. If anyone was caught unprepared on that day, he or she was “cut off” from the camp. In the near future, the corporate services on behalf of humanity at the Heavenly Altar of Incense will terminate and the wrath of God will be released upon mankind. (Revelation 8:29:21)

Individuals who are unwilling to submit to the terms and conditions of salvation will be “cut off” from a Heavenly inheritance. (This point is enlarged upon in the section on the Feast of Trumpets.) Remember, the transfer of sin to the temple required an appointed time to cleanse the temple. Something had to be done with the record of sin (the blood) that was deposited on the horns of the altar. Notice this text: “Once a year Aaron shall make atonement on its horns [the Altar of Incense]. This annual atonement must be made with the blood of the atoning sin offering for the generations to come. It is most holy to the Lord.” (Exodus 30:10)

Most Christians think 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) Did you notice that this text is really a “corporate” text? “For God so loved the world...” To appreciate the PLAN of salvation, we must understand that it is much larger than an individual matter. The PLAN involves the offspring of Adam and Eve and in order to include us, the PLAN has to be a corporate plan for the entire human race.

One final issue needs to be considered regarding the Altar of Incense. Basically, burning incense represents God’s willingness to hear our prayers and petitions. As the fragrant odor was continually offered before God, it reflected man’s true condition as a sinner and the hope that this sweet smell might make Israel’s petitions for atonement more favorable. (Even the people who worshiped pagan gods burned incense to predispose their gods to favor them. 1 Kings 11:8)

In other words, God’s requirement of incense reveals our degenerate and offensive condition. We are sinners. Because we reek of sin, we cannot comprehend our sinful, degenerate state as God sees us. The Altar of Incense confirms man’s hopeless condition and God’s faithful

promise. Man stinks and cannot save himself. So, God masks our offensiveness with the fragrance of prayer that we might come near to Him with our requests.

The burning of incense on this altar is directly associated with the prayers (petitions) of the saints. (Revelation 8:4) As the sweet fragrance of incense rises from the fiery coals on the altar, God looks favorably on the petitions of His children. Few things affect Almighty God like the sweet prayers of humble and contrite believers. (Luke 18:10-14; Hebrews 11:6)

Summary

To review, here are five points about the Altar of Incense:

1. The Altar of Incense was dedicated to services for the community.
2. The evening and morning services on this altar provided continual or daily around-the-clock atonement.
3. The evening and morning services point backward to the covenant between the Father and the Son – the day Jesus became man's intercessor. The daily intercession of Jesus in Heaven will come to an end at a point in the near future.
4. Each day, the record of sin (the blood) was placed on the horns of the altar.
5. At an appointed time each year, the record of sin on the Altar of Incense was removed. Thus, atonement for the altar was an annual event.

No Veil in Heaven's Temple

The Earthly tabernacle had a veil that separated the holy place from the Most Holy Place. The Heavenly Temple does not have or need a veil. The Earthly tabernacle, however, had this thick curtain separating its two rooms for three reasons:

First, as a practical matter, the veil represented a shield of protection to the priests who ministered in the tabernacle from the consuming glory of God. (Exodus 40:3; Leviticus 16:2) In Heaven, Jesus does not need this veil. 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)

Second, the veil divided the Earthly tabernacle into two rooms. The outer room was called the Holy Place and its services parallel "standing issues" regarding man's salvation. (A standing issue continues to be in effect until a timely fulfillment terminates the matter.) The services involving the inmost room, the Most Holy Place, parallels the final phase of Christ's work in Heaven's Temple. God allowed the high priest to go behind the veil and enter the Most Holy Place only one day a year – on the Day of Atonement.

So, if we depend on a parallel as proof for a Heavenly veil, we fall short, for there is no record of annual services in the Heavenly tabernacle. (Hebrews 9:25,26) But, perhaps the strongest evidence against the Heavenly Temple having a veil is this: The veil on Earth was torn open from top to bottom at the death of Christ. Why then should a veil in Heaven's Temple (if one did exist) remain intact after Jesus' death, if the one on Earth was open? (Matthew 27:51)

Last, the Bible does not indicate that Heaven's Temple has two rooms. Yes, Paul discusses the ministry of Christ as taking place "in the inner sanctuary" or Most Holy Place, "in the presence of the Father." However, Paul is using an Earthly point of reference to describe the ministry of Christ in Heaven, not the physical location of Christ. Paul clearly states that Christ's location is "at the right hand of the Father". (Hebrews 1:3,13; 8:1; 10:12)

The Earthly sanctuary cannot and does not look like the Heavenly Temple. Instead, the Earthly temple services parallel Heaven's process. Think about this from a Heavenly perspective for a moment. God's response to sin was to seize the opportunity to reveal certain characteristics about Himself that were previously unknown. Because of sin, the whole universe is now aware of the properties of law, sin, penalty, grace and restoration. This is a topic that the hosts of Heaven barely understood before sin occurred. So, the study of the Earthly sanctuary is a shadow of the realities that are involved in the PLAN of salvation.

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 top surface 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 regarded the Ark to be the most holy piece of furniture because the Shekinah Glory hovered between the two cherubim. (Exodus 25:22) A few items were kept inside the Ark. These items were the Ten Commandments that God wrote 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 later dictated to Moses, were placed in a "pocket" attached to the outside of the Ark. (Deuteronomy 31:26)

A Hidden Ark

The Ark was located inside the Most Holy Place of the temple. The High Priest was the only person allowed to see the Ark and he could see it just once 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 had to keep 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, they always approached it by walking backwards.

The hidden Ark conveys a profound truth about God and sin. Before sin defiled the human race, God communed with Adam and Eve face-to-face in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:8) But when sin separated man from God, sin and sinners could not survive the glorious presence of God. (Exodus 19:21) So, God hid Himself from man. At Mt. Sinai He covered 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 the time of Christ's death was also a covering from the Presence of the Father. (Matthew 27:45)

God is very near, but we cannot physically see Him because of sin. When Moses wanted to see the One with whom he had spent so much time with, God would not allow it. (Exodus 33:20) Consider this paradox: The natural eye cannot see God, but the eye of faith can behold His Presence! (2 Kings 6:17)

The Ark was hidden in the Earthly tabernacle to illustrate how God's ways are hidden from the natural or carnal eye of man. (1 Kings 3:14; Psalm 95:10; Isaiah 55:8; 1 Corinthians 2:14) Just as man cannot see (or discern) the Heavenly Ark (and Heaven's order), so the children of Israel could not see the Earthly Ark. Why then, did God hide the Ten Commandments within the Ark? God understands man's tendency to worship something tangible. He did not want people worshipping the Ark or the stones of His law. Instead, He wanted His people to absorb the ways of His law into their hearts and worship Him, the benevolent Creator!

The Bible predicts a very sad time in the future when the Heavenly Ark of the Covenant will be displayed to the people on Earth! This marvelous wonder in the sky happens at the conclusion of the seventh trumpet. "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) Why does God display Heaven's Ark to the people of Earth at that time? By showing the Heavenly Ark, God confirms the reality and authority of His holy law to all people. He presents the legal basis of His forthcoming torment on the wicked, which comes in the form of the seven last plagues. (Revelation 15:1; Revelation 16)

Just as God reveals the Heavenly Ark of the Covenant to the people of Earth, I believe God will also reveal the secret hiding place of the Earthly Ark of the Covenant. In this manner, God will also display His covenant to Earth's inhabitants. It seems logical that God would reveal the Earthly Ark when the judgment of the living begins – right after the great earthquake marking the beginning of the seven trumpets. This would also verify the accuracy and legitimacy of Old Testament history.

The name "Ark of the Covenant" is used 33 times in the Bible. It is also called the "Ark of the Testimony" 13 times. The words "covenant" and "testimony" refer to the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 40:20; 16:34; Deuteronomy 4:13) God revealed the truth about His ways in the Ten Commandments. They give testimony to what God regards as righteous and unrighteous and He has offered life to all who submit to the terms of His covenant. (Ezekiel 18:9) The Ten Commandments are unchanging and eternal. God wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of enduring stone to illustrate two areas of responsibility for man: One tablet defines man's duty to God (commandments 1-4) and the other defines man's duty to man (commandments 5-10).

The Ten Commandments are a divine revelation which define the moral codes of life and all humanity is bound to them. The Ten Commandments separate people who are submissive to God from those who are not. The individuals who allow God to transform their rebellious (sinful)

hearts into willing submission (harmony) with the Ten Commandments will receive eternal life. This transformation happens through the indwelling power of Christ – it cannot be humanly produced. (John 3; 1 John 5:12,13; Hebrews 8:10-13) The Earthly tabernacle illustrates that God's biggest dilemma is not getting man to Heaven, but instead, putting the ways of Heaven within the heart of man.

When God created this planet, He built everything according to law. If God's ways were not in harmony with law, all Heaven would be moving toward destructive chaos (as this world demonstrates) and God's ways would never make sense. To identify Himself as the eternal "I AM" is no small claim. (Exodus 3:14) This title can only be everlasting if God's ways are without conflict, orderly, and according to law.

The Mercy Seat

The golden atonement cover (or mercy seat) formed the top of the Ark. On the Day of Atonement, when the high priest entered the Most Holy Place, he would eventually sprinkle blood on this part of the Ark to illustrate atonement for a broken law. (Leviticus 16:14) "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 3:23) Notice that Paul also says: "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 a broken law because all have sinned. (Romans 3:23)

The Ark of the Covenant represents the character of God. The Ten Commandments require uncompromising justice and the atonement cover offers grace beyond measure. 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 is the most important thing He owns. (Leviticus 11:44,45) He will not allow anyone to bring reproach upon His Holy Name without severe consequences. (Exodus 20:7)

God is King over the universe. He established a parallel schematic of the Earthly/Heavenly temples to inform man of the orderly process that He follows, not only for man's salvation, but also to clear His Holy Name of suspicion. Remember, through libelous and scurrilous charges, Lucifer caused onethird of the angels to harbor suspicion and malice toward God.

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. On the practical side, the text reveals how God required a state of physical purity, orderliness and

cleanliness among those that served in the temple. The everpresent “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 might be clean. On the spiritual side, the application of water to 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 of old, 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 true. The thief on the cross was not baptized, nor does salvation come through rites, sacraments or works. (Ephesians 2:8,9) Rather, the willing application of water (being born of water) reveals submission to the purifying experience of God’s sanctification.

In other words, Christians need to be “washed of sin” from time to time as they travel along the road of life. Baptism marks the first washing. Then, the periodic washing of one another’s feet as our Lord commanded, serves as a “miniature baptism” representing that we are made clean by water from a basin (laver). The ordinance of foot-washing reminds us who we are, servants – not masters. (See John 13:68.) It is so easy to forget that our righteousness is as “filthy rags” in God’s sight. (Isaiah 64:6) Yet, we often allow pride and selfishness to taint our attitudes toward others.

The function and presence of the laver in the Earthly temple indicates that God requires physical and spiritual cleanliness. Yes, He may accept mortals for what we are, but He requires, as a minimum, that we physically 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 of the adage: “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” Before we leave the matter of cleansing the 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 flowerlike 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 in front of the Table of the Presence. (Exodus 25:37,39; 26:35) The Golden Lampstand represents the agent of God’s light of truth. (Matthew 5:14; Acts 13:47)

God has a special relationship with the trustees of His covenant. Notice how God and His people are represented by the Golden Lampstand: First, the Lampstand was made of pure gold which represents God's agape love for mankind. (Agape love or divine love is pure, unlike human love.) The purpose of any lampstand is light and this was the practical and spiritual intent of the Golden Lampstand. 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 would burn continuously. (Leviticus 24:4)

In like manner, the priests were to continuously "refuel" the people with love and adoration for God. The light of God's truth must never go out and that responsibility uniquely rested upon the priests. If they became negligent or careless in teaching the ways of God to the people, darkness would eventually fill the hearts of the worshipers. Just as God held the priests accountable for keeping the "lamp lights on," they were also responsible for communicating the "light of truth" to His people. The priests were "keepers of the flame." Unfortunately, the priests failed and consequently, Israel apostatized. History proves that, "As priests (religious leaders) go, so go the people." In fact, much of the blame for today's social rot lies at the doorstep of religious leaders.

Carefully consider the consequence of priestly failure. When THE Light of Truth came into the world, the priests of Israel rejected Him. (John 1:1-11; 8:12) God intended for Israel to be a "city of light" to the world. (Isaiah 42:6) He even placed them geographically in the center of the nations for maximum exposure! (Ezekiel 5:5) In spite of all this, Israel's priests chose the ways of darkness instead of the way of light and the people of Israel followed their example by rejecting the Messiah. This is why God eventually abandoned Israel and raised up new trustees of the covenant – Christians. (Matthew 23:138; 28:1820)

The Golden Lampstand was intricately and wonderfully made, and the glorious light from Heaven is reflected in God's PLAN of salvation. God's PLAN for saving the human race shines like a beacon of light to reveal the ways, love and commitment of Jesus to die as man's substitute. Yes, this knowledge is the glorious light from Heaven!

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 25:2330.) 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 is surprising since in the Earthly tabernacle, the focus was always directed toward the "hidden" Ark of the Covenant located in the Most Holy Place.

The Shekinah Glory of God dwelt within the Most Holy Place. Therefore, 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, which indicated its extreme sacredness. These facts

have led many people to conclude that the Ark of the Covenant must represent the throne of God. However, 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 12 loaves of bread that were placed on it each Sabbath. (Leviticus 24:8) The priests baked the loaves on Sabbath and placed them on the table while still hot. (1 Samuel 21:36) At first, this practice seems contradictory to the instructions God gave to 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.” It represented a sacred offering to the twelve tribes rather than an offering from the twelve tribes. The presence of “fresh bread” on the Sabbath was to reveal God's intention to use His servants (the priests) to offer “freshly prepared” spiritual food to His people on the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:5) The Hebrew words involved (lechem Strongs: #3899 and paneh Strongs: #6440) mean visible food, having presence, within sight or showing. The idea being conveyed by KJV translators is that the bread was clearly visible – as in “show us the bread.” Thus the name, “showbread” (NKJV). The idea presented by the NIV and other recent translations is that the bread represented the presence of God. So, the teaching of God's presence on the Sabbath through “freshly prepared” words of life is the primary meaning behind the symbol of this bread.

Twelve loaves of bread (for the twelve tribes) and other items were placed on the Table of the Presence for the priests to consume at regular intervals. The Table also had cups, bowls and pitchers associated with it. (Exodus 37:16) When a person looks at the Table in terms of the utensils and the food placed on it, it becomes obvious this Table represents “a King's table.” The priests were invited to eat from the King's table because they were highly honored. Eating from the King's table was not only a great honor, but also showed intimacy with the King. It was common for generous kings in ancient times to honor special people by inviting them to eat at their table for as long as they lived! (2 Samuel 9:7) Even the wicked Jezebel captured the favor of Baal's prophets by feeding them at her table. (1 Kings 18:19)

Eating at the King's table means having access to the king and his throne. 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 reflected the special privileges of priests. Unfortunately, Israel's priests did not recognize this great privilege for what it was. They failed to commune with God and they misunderstood their great opportunity. However, Jesus' life, death and resurrection opened wide the door to all people and the privileges reserved for priests were granted to each believer. Jesus established what is called the “Priesthood of the Believer.” Revelation says, “. . . Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” And he [the angel] added, “These are the true words of God.” (Revelation 19:9; 3:20,21)

Since all that we receive comes from God, and Jesus is the Bread of Life (John 6:35) that has come down from Heaven, the Table of the Presence reflects the source of our blessings – God's throne. From this Table, the Bread of Life is served. So, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:16)

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 judgment or authority. Destruction and/or judgment always came from the north. Notice these five examples (italics provided):

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 emptyhanded."

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. What does this suggest?

Now, compare the location of God's throne in Heaven with the Table of the Presence: "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) Why did Lucifer conspire to place his throne "in the sides of the north?" Because this is where God's throne was located. To underscore the importance of the "north side" location for the Table of the Presence, notice this text: "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) Eventually, God intended to rule the world from Jerusalem (Jeremiah 3:17), and the Psalmist calls its global location, "on the sides of the north" even though the land of Israel is not regarded as located in the north. (Incidentally, because of Israel's failure, God will reign from the New Jerusalem. Hebrews 12:22; Rev. 3:12)

Reason # 3 – The Seat of Christ

Earlier, I wrote that the Ark of the Covenant represents the character, ways and government of

God. In effect, this is the essence of God. God designed the Earthly tabernacle to teach men and women about His essence without an overpowering spectacle. Even the tabernacle itself was covered with black seal skins. (Exodus 36:19) In other words, God could have “wowed” the Israelites with a Sinai cathedral dwarfing the alltoofamiliar pyramids of Egypt. He could have ensconced Himself in some lofty and glorious grandeur that would have embarrassed Pharaoh and the Philistines. He could have easily intimidated the Israelites into submission by showing great displays of power, miracles, signs and wonders. On several occasions, God did use marvelous miracles on behalf of Israel, but He does not want to be worshiped because He happens to be a great king, who has great authority and owns everything. (Psalm 95:3; Malachi 1:14)

Rather, God wants His children to worship Him because of the truth about His essence. (John 4:24) The more they understand about His character, the more they will appreciate His ways and government. God seeks our worship for our good, not His. God will not force the worship of one creature because He is love. Jesus' life is an excellent example of this point. He could have chosen any parents He wanted, but He chose to live and look like an ordinary person because the understanding of the character, ways and government of God are of greater value than glory.

So, here is why I believe why the Table of the Presence represents the throne of God: During the days of the Earthly tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant was the focus of worship. The Shekinah dwelt in the Most Holy Place because God's character, ways and government were to be the focus of God's instruction, for man and His glory rested on that aspect of temple service.

However, the evidence indicates that the Table of the Presence was a source of blessing, in addition to being physically located on the north side of the temple. Since God is more interested in our worship than His glory, the Ark of the Covenant was hidden from view. The Table of the Presence symbolized His presence and represented the throne of God. If this is true, then the physical location of Jesus makes a great deal of sense. The Bible says that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. (Hebrews 1:3) This places Jesus (the Shekinah) where you would expect a mediator to sit, between the throne of God and the Ark of the Covenant.

Summary – Temple Furniture

We have briefly examined the tabernacle furniture, learned the purpose of each item, and how it relates to the Heavenly Temple. Much more could be said, so much so, that it could fill many books. God is thoughtful and deliberate in all that He does and the Earthly/Heavenly temple parallel is no exception. Remember that the essential purpose for understanding the Earthly tabernacle today is its parallel operation with Heaven's Temple. The revelation of law, sin, penalty, grace and the orderly ways of God to redeem man is revealed in His Temple. Now, to summarize this section on the temple furniture:

Services at the Altar of Burnt Offering pointed forward to the death of man's perfect substitute, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

Daily services at the Altar of Incense pointed backward to the intercession of Jesus Christ on behalf of sinful man. Jesus daily stands between the demands of the law and guilty man.

The Ark of the Covenant represents the character, ways and government of God.
The Laver illustrates the daily spiritual cleansing that sinful man needs.
The Lampstand represents the agents of God who are to let their light shine for the glory of God.
The Table of the Presence represents the throne of God.

Temple Feasts

Temple services were augmented with six annual feasts. These feasts also reveal certain aspects of God's PLAN to save man. God required all males to attend three of the feasts: The Feast of Unleavened Bread, The Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Ingathering. (Exodus 23:14-17) Three of the annual feasts were in the Spring, and three were in the Fall. These annual feasts always occurred in the first, third and seventh months. The timing of appointed feasts introduces a problem to today's Bible student. What month was considered the first month?

When did the year begin? How did ancient people agree on dates and times with very limited long distance communication? God was very specific in regards to the timing of these annual feasts, so He gave the Hebrews a very clever calendar to solve the problem of determining time periods. God foreknew that the Hebrews would be scattered hundreds of miles apart, so He provided a calendar to be used by everyone so they could know current time without sending a runner to Jerusalem to determine the day and month.

Observable Calendar

Prior to the Exodus, the Egyptians (and consequently, the Hebrews) observed a Summer-to-Summer calendar of 365 days. But, two weeks before the Exodus, God initiated a new calendar. God established the first day, first month and first year by divine decree. (Exodus 12:112; 40:17) The importance and accuracy of this calendar are demonstrated by the fact that God, Himself, said: "This is day one, month one, year one." A year in God's calendar is a solar year. The fulfillment of the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel 9 proves this point. The decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. extends to A.D. 34 – a period of 490 solar years. (For more information on the dating and fulfillment of the 70 weeks, order the May 1996, Day Star.)

God's calendar reaches from Spring equinox to Spring equinox. The equinox offers precise astronomical positioning twice a year – once in the Spring and once in the Fall. The Fall equinox is exactly halfway through the solar year. (A solar year is 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds in length.) Further, each equinox is easy to observe because the sun crosses the celestial equator at the equinox and shadows begin to move in the opposite direction.

The Julian/Gregorian calendar (named after Julius Caesar who implemented it in 45 B.C. and Pope Gregory XIII who corrected Caesar's calendar in 1582) is still used today. It is also a solar calendar, but it reaches from Winter-to-Winter and a new year always begins every 365 (or 366) days with January 1, regardless of the phase of the moon. God's calendar, however, is a solar-lunar calendar. A new year begins with the first sight of the new moon after the Spring equinox.

For example, in 1994 the Spring equinox occurred on March 20.

The first new moon after March 20 was April 11. (A new moon is totally dark and a full moon is fully illuminated.) If a tiny crescent of the new moon could be seen during the night of April 12, then a new year began on April 12 and the timing of religious feasts (Passover, etc.) for that year would be established accordingly. Incidentally, this method of reckoning always places Passover (the first feast) and the Feast of Ingathering (the last feast of the year) on a full moon. The chart below shows how the new year began in 1994 according to God's calendar.

After reviewing the chart, you might ask, "How were the 22 days between the equinox on March 20 and the beginning of the new year on April 12 reckoned?" Answer: They were considered as part of the previous year. In other words, a new year does not begin at the Spring equinox unless the tiny crescent of the new moon is observed during the night of the Spring equinox. Therefore, the last month of the old year continues until the crescent of the new moon is seen – even if it goes past the Spring equinox. This means that it is possible under God's calendar, depending upon the position of the Sun and Moon, to have a year longer or shorter than 365.24 days.

Incidentally, God's solar-lunar method of reckoning time always places the Passover between April 3 and May 2. This time-frame insured the availability of ripe barley which was waved before the Lord at the time of Passover. (Leviticus 23:514) Today, orthodox Jews claim that God's calendar is not a solar-lunar calendar, but rather a lunar calendar. If this were true, it would mean that a lunar year is 10 or 11 days short of a solar year. For example, if a lunar calendar was used, the 70 weeks of years (Daniel 9) would be 14 years short of the required 490 solar years or 475.39 years.

History does not confirm a prophetic fulfillment of Daniel 9 during this time frame. Also, barley begins to ripen around the first of April in Canaan. A lunar calendar would place the Passover too early in the growing season for ancient Jews to offer a sheaf of ripe barley before the Lord.

Another point should be mentioned. After the Babylonian captivity, the Jews incorporated a Fall-to-Fall calendar. This was done to synchronize their civil records with the dating scheme used throughout the kingdom of the Persians. But, the FalltoFall civil calendar of the Medes and Persians and the Spring-to-Spring calendar of God were never confused, merged or used interchangeably by the Jews. In fact, Bible writers sometimes juxtaposed both calendars to secure a specific date. For example, notice these two passages:

"The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa . . ." (Nehemiah 1:1)

"In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before . . ." (Nehemiah 2:1)

In the first text, Nehemiah associates the month of Kislev (ninth month of God's Spring-to-Spring year) with the 20th year [of Artaxerxes], according to the FalltoFall Persian calendar. Later, Nehemiah dates another event in the month of Nisan (first month of God's year) as

though it were still the 20th year of Artaxerxes. Scholars have asked, “Why didn't Nehemiah increment the year of Artaxerxes to 21?” Simply this – the year was not incremented to 21 because the king was still in his 20th year. Consider the chart below and see the harmony of this reckoning.

You can easily see that Kislev, God's ninth month, and Nisan, the first month of God's new year, fell within the 20th year of Artaxerxes reign, even when the king's 20th year is reckoned from Fall to Fall. Today, Americans reckon time in a similar way without confusion. When producing new cars, auto manufacturers observe a Fall to Fall calendar for each model year. New cars appear in auto dealer s showrooms in September, even though the calendar year actually begins on January 1.

One last point needs to be made before leaving the matter of calendation behind. Notice this text: “Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field.” (Exodus 23:16) Some people have questioned how the Feast of Ingathering (also known as the Feast of Tabernacles) could be “at the end of the year” since the feast itself begins on the 15th day of the seventh month. (Leviticus 23:34) The context of this language has to do with agriculture.

The Feast of Ingathering marked the end of the year s growing season. Some have claimed that this text proves that the Jews observed a Fall to Fall calendar prior to the Babylonian captivity. However, No Biblical or archeological evidence has been found to support this claim. Think about the specifics of the text. How could one celebrate the Feast of Ingathering and the end of the year if the feast occurs on the 15th day of the seventh month? (Leviticus 23:34) The seventh month is not near the end of a year! If the feast was celebrated near the end of a year, then the Lord would have placed the feast during the 12th month.

I have introduced the subject of solar-lunar calendation so you can appreciate how God enabled the Hebrews to mark the passage of time, especially the timing of the feasts. In addition to the six annual feasts, God required a feast to coincide with the observance of each new moon. How thoughtful of God! By placing a “monthly party” on the arrival of new moons, the Jews unwittingly documented the passage of time for those of us who would live thousands of years later.

The Passover

The story of Israel s miraculous deliverance from slavery in Egypt has significant meaning. Remember that God not only designed the deliverance process, He also required Israel to perpetually commemorate the events surrounding the Exodus each Spring, beginning the 14th day of the first month. (Exodus 12:10-14) There are four lessons surrounding the Exodus that are particularly noteworthy, so pay close attention to the parallels as they relate to end-time events:

- God tested the loyalty of the Hebrews through a Sabbath Rest Test before He delivered

them.

- God tested the faith of Hebrews and Egyptians by demanding that “blood be posted on the door posts” the night He passed over the nation.
- God punished Egypt with ten plagues because of rebellion.
- God destroyed Pharaoh and his army because of defiant rebellion.

Note: These matters are discussed at some length in the February, March and April 1995 Day Star issues.

Exodus/End-Time Parallels

1.

A test of loyalty: If you have read the June 1996, Day Star which discussed the topic of the Lord's Day, this particular parallel from the story of the Exodus should be familiar. First, most Bible students understand that a time is coming when no one will be able to buy or sell unless he receives the mark of the beast. The mark belongs to a “beast” who will appear in the future. This beast is none other than that great fallen angel, Lucifer. He is symbolized as a “beast” in Revelation 13:11 because he will come with great deceptive power. John describes Jesus as the lamb in Revelation 5:6. Interestingly, John describes Lucifer as having a “lamblike” appearance to the people on Earth, but speaking like the great red dragon of Revelation 12.

Lucifer is the great imposter who will physically appear in the form of a man-god with his fallen angels. He will have a mark which represents evil. The widely known number “666” will be tattooed on the right hand of those who submit to him and his mark will also be his assumed name which will be tattooed on the foreheads of his lieutenants. Those people who choose to worship or submit to the demands of the devil will openly display these marks. This ancient Antichrist (the devil) will demand that all people who oppose his laws and authority be executed. (Revelation 13:15)

In this setting, God will test the loyalty of all people on Earth through a Sabbath Rest Test just before deliverance comes – just like He tested the Hebrews before they entered the Promised Land. The prophet John states very clearly that the remnant who remain loyal to God during Earth's last days will obey God's commandments (Revelation 12:17), even to the point of forfeiting their lives. (Revelation 6:9) God's fourth commandment will become the focus of this worldwide contest. God requires the human race to rest on the seventh day of the week. (Exodus 20:8-11) The devil, imposter that he is, will exalt the sacredness of a counterfeit day of worship and demand that everyone render homage to him on that day. The contest will be very simple to understand, just like the Sabbath contest was easy to understand in Pharaoh's day.

2.

A test of faith: The events surrounding the “pass over” contain three important parallels: First, God Himself, passed over the land and examined each household for Himself to see if blood was properly applied over the doorposts. (Exodus 12:13) This close scrutiny parallels the final judgment of mankind when each human heart will be examined to see if the blood of Jesus has been applied. The great question asked of every person in the judgment is this: “Did you live by faith?” (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 8:1)

Second, the Bible is plain about the human condition – everyone has sinned against God and deserves to die. The wages of sin is death by execution. (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23) The parallel is this: The guilt, that rested upon the Hebrews before the Exodus, is the same guilt that rests upon all sinners today. Yes, God allows for the transfer of guilt, but the application of blood (from the Lamb of God) still must be placed on the doorposts of the heart (submission to the will of God), in order to be saved. The blood on the doorpost in Egypt revealed the faith of those people who believed that (1) God would pass over, and (2) God would accept the blood of the Lamb.

The people that believed the Word of God and acted accordingly were saved. (James 2:17) In days to come, the will of God will be fully proclaimed to every nation as a testimony. (Matthew 24:14) Then, the actions of people will reveal their faith or their great rebellion! The question that will confront the inhabitants of Earth will be: “Who will receive Jesus as their Passover Lamb? Who will depend upon His shed blood for salvation?”

Finally, God did not execute the first born in Egypt that night, whether man or beast, Hebrew or Egyptian, without warning. The object lesson here is twofold. First, God will warn the world of His actions. Second, He wants the world to understand a profound point: His law cannot be changed. In fact, when Jesus offered to be man's substitute, the Father had no alternative but to execute the Firstborn over all creation! (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15) Jesus is called the Firstborn of creation because of His preeminence over all created beings.

The title firstborn is often used by men to indicate the first child born. However, in the United States, we also use the term "First Lady" to represent a preeminent position (the wife of the President of the U.S). This second context is how Paul used the term "Firstborn" to represent Christ, for Jesus has always been an eternal member of the Godhead. By killing (or threatening to kill) the firstborn of Egypt, God revealed the sacrifice He would have to make for the salvation of man. This drama also reveals that God would someday kill His firstborn Son because the PLAN of salvation requires the substitute to die according to the demands of the law.

Jesus became sin for us, so He had to be executed as a sinner. (2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 20:9) The killing of the firstborn becomes significant when we realize how the first born male was regarded in ancient times. First born males were viewed as “much more special” than any other offspring because the firstborn was heir to the family name and blessing.

3.
Ten plagues – result of rebellion: The ten plagues that fell on Egypt reveal two important truths. First, we have to marvel at the rebellion of Pharaoh after reading the narrative in the Bible. His kingdom was decimated by the plagues and yet, he continued to rebel against the authority of the Most High God. What does Pharaoh's mind set say about man? Paul wrote: “The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. (Romans 8:7) When we consider the end-time parallel, remember that a time is coming when the authority and will of God will be just as plainly presented to the inhabitants of the Earth as it was to Pharaoh. Unfortunately, many people will respond the same way Pharaoh did. (Revelation 11:8)

Second, the Bible is very clear that God is going to punish the inhabitants of Earth with a series

of 14 plagues because of wickedness and rebellion. Just as the ten plagues on Egypt were real, painful and deadly, so the coming 14 plagues will be real, painful and deadly. However, the good news is this: The seven last plagues (Revelation 16) will not affect the children of God, just as the last eight plagues in Egypt did not affect the Hebrews.

4.
Destroyed because of defiant rebellion: This parallel should not be hard to grasp. At the end of time, Satan is going to lead the armies of the world into conflict with the Almighty. God will completely destroy His enemies just as He destroyed Pharaoh and his army. (Revelation 19:11-21)

God carefully designed these four object lessons so the Passover's perpetual observance would continuously keep the issues that actually concern man's salvation before the minds of the Hebrews. Did the Hebrews appreciate these lessons? If they did, it was never for very long.

In fact, history indicates that the celebration of Passover became an outward religious ritual having little or no transforming effect upon those who commemorated the event. How sad that the true significance of the Passover was largely lost by those who observed it because they failed to search beneath the surface of this ceremonial law.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

“Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is an alien or native born. Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread.” (Exodus 12:17-20)

The observance of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are inseparably joined together. The Passover was celebrated on the 15th day of the first month and the Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the same day. The term “feast” is somewhat misleading since God required Israel to search and rid their homes of all yeast and eat yeast free bread that was “hard as a rock” for seven days. What was God trying to illustrate with this “feast?” The Hebrews knew that yeast operates through the process of fermentation. A little bit of yeast will “infect” the whole batter. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

On the other hand, pure bread has no yeast. God connected the Passover service with the Feast of Unleavened Bread because He wanted Israel to see the connection between deliverance and purity of heart. God's goodness and grace do not lessen His demand for a pure heart. (Revelation 21:27; 22:15) The Hebrews were to thoroughly search their houses for yeast and remove any trace of yeast before Passover began. This annual feast was to remind them of their constant need to be on guard against the yeast of sin in their homes and lives.

If this were true then, how much more so today? We, too, must search our hearts often and remove any known sin. The devil is a master at gradualism. Sin creeps in slowly, but steadily. Sin will overtake an individual, as well as a whole nation, if it is not firmly resisted. The history of Israel (indeed, all nations) fully confirms this point.

In the Scriptures, yeast represents sin and is demonstrated by the vain, foolish – even fermented ideas of man. (Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1) Men and women may try to excuse sin, justify sin, defend sin, rename sin, promote sin, exalt sin or extol the benefits of sin, but make no mistake – sin is deadly! God hates sin and those who love it! God forbade the Jews from presenting any offerings to Him that contained yeast! (Exodus 23:18) Jesus warned His disciples, “ ...But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” (Matthew 16:11-12) Today, we can see a parallel in the following way: There are seven religious systems in the world today. Each one of them is full of yeast. The doctrines of the world's religious systems have fermented and are unacceptable to God. In these last days, God is going to present the pure bread of truth about Jesus and His commandments. The gospel will be proclaimed and every person on Earth will have an opportunity to choose life or reject the truth. Revelation's story indicates that many, if not most, will reject the pure bread of life because they love the yeast of sin.

One last point. On the morning after the Passover (the third day after the Passover lamb was killed) the high priest presented the “firstfruits” of the winter harvest before the Lord. (Leviticus 23:11) This presentation of firstfruits (wheat, barley, oil and wine) pointed forward to the presentation of Jesus before the Father as perfect firstfruits of the harvest. (1 Corinthians 15:20; Luke 24:7)

In other words, Jesus was the Passover Lamb, slain for the sins of the world. He was also the pure, unleavened Bread of Life that came down from Heaven. (John 6:35) Further, Jesus took with Him, at the time of His ascension, the firstfruits of that Passover harvest. (Matthew 27:52,53; Ephesians 4:8) The Bible also speaks of two more harvests that presented firstfruits – one at Pentecost and one in the Fall at the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)

“Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord.” (Leviticus 23:16) When the Passover week ended, the first day of the following week (Sunday) began the count for the Feast of Weeks. The count continued through seven, seventh-day Sabbaths. The day after the seventh Sabbath was when the Feast of Weeks was celebrated. In Christ's day, this feast was known as Pentecost (from pente which means fifty) because the feast was held 50 days after the Passover week was completed. This one-day feast was a celebration of the winter harvest that was gathered in early Summer (June/July).

This feast illustrates the work of the Holy Spirit in the first phase of His ministry. (The second

phase will be described in the Feast of Tabernacles.) The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to soften and influence the human heart toward spiritual matters. (1 Corinthians 2:14) Unless a person is Spirit born, they cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:5) The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) began with a presentation to the Lord of the firstfruits from the late winter harvest. This feast was to be an lesson illustrating how God is able to bring life, even a bountiful harvest, from the cold soil of human hearts.

God wanted the Jews to understand that men may work the soil of the heart and plant seeds of truth, but it is God's Spirit that brings spiritual life.

Acts 2 records a wonderful demonstration o the meaning of this feast, which happened shortly after Jesus went to Heaven. The Holy Spirit descended on the disciples of Jesus on Pentecost and 3,000 people were converted that day! (Acts 2:41) This harvest came from the toil of Christ Himself. He had traveled from village to village, healing the sick, lame and blind. He had preached freedom to the slaves of twisted religion and superstition, and had penetrated the smokescreen of foolish religious dogma with words of life. As a result, 3,000 people were baptized into Christ as the firstfruits of the Gospel of Christ. (Matthew 7:29)

God's timing is always perfect and this was no exception! Pentecost was a time when Jewish males came to Jerusalem from many nations to attend this feast. (Acts 2:9-11) The Holy Spirit used Peter to boldly take advantage of this precise moment in time. What a tremendous opportunity to preach a risen Jesus to the Jews! As a result of that Pentecost, Israel came to know about the appearing of Messiah, their corporate guilt in killing Him, and the victory of the risen Savior!

As a result of the powerful outpouring and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, 3,000 people were able to "see" that Jesus was the fulfillment of Scripture! (Acts 2:22; Acts 13:48)

To summarize, the Passover harvest was the first presentation of a harvest to the Lord and the Feast of Weeks was the second presentation. Remember, Passover pointed to a harvest representing those who die in the Lord, Jesus Himself was "THE firstfruits" of that harvest. The harvest of the Feast of Weeks came next and the firstfruits of this harvest were the 3,000 people baptized at Pentecost in Acts 2.

If the Passover harvest reveals Christ s power over death (resurrection), then the Feast of Weeks reveals the "quicken" work of the Holy Spirit that produces a "born again" person. (Romans 8:5; 1 Peter 4:36) Indeed, the Gospel of Christ spread throughout the world after Pentecost (Colossians 1:6) and the reverberations of that event continue, even down to our day! The gospel of the kingdom is still alive, but the time has come for another, even greater harvest!

The Feast of Trumpets

The Feast of Trumpets was the first of three convocations in the Fall. According to Jewish history, the arrival of the seventh month was marked by a feast where priests blew warning trumpets all day long! Afterwards, trumpet blasts would sound throughout the camp each

morning and evening for eight more days. The Bible says, "On the first day of the seventh month hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. It is a day for you to sound the trumpets." (Numbers 29:1)

Unfortunately, the Old Testament does not say much about the Feast of Trumpets. However, the purpose of the Feast of Trumpets is not reduced by our lack of information. Every Jew understood the primary purpose for the Feast of Trumpets. In effect, the Feast of Trumpets was designed to warn every man, woman and child that the Day of Atonement was about to arrive.

God's mercy has always moved Him to warn people before He executes His judgments and the Jewish nation was to take this warning very seriously. God required that all sins be transferred to the sanctuary before sundown on the ninth day of the seventh month. (Leviticus 16; 23:27-32) In fact, to show the children of Israel just how serious He was, God told Moses that if any household was found guilty of unconfessed sin on the Day of Atonement, that household was to be cut off from the camp. In other words, the heritage of each Jewish family was at stake on the Day of Atonement. So, the Feast of Trumpets served as an impressive announcement, as priests trumpeted a warning throughout the entire camp for eight days, heralding the Day of Atonement.

Jewish records also indicate that the Jewish people also considered these feasts as a time of judgment and a time to be reconciled with God. It was a time for soul searching, reflection, and to make certain that the sins of every person in the household were transferred to the Altar of Burnt Offering. This period of spiritual reflection shows God's desire to summon His people to repentance before the great and terrible day of judgment. He does not want one person to be lost. (Isaiah 55:67; Matthew 18:14)

For individuals who understand the seven trumpets of Revelation, the parallel is quite obvious. In the very near future, seven trumpets will sound in Heaven and corresponding events on Earth will lead up to the close of God's mercy (His generous offer of salvation). The seven trumpets of Revelation will be a time of judgment and deep reflection for the people of Earth. The events associated with the trumpets and the resulting devastation will ultimately produce a Sabbath Rest Test and a time when the Mark of the Beast will be implemented.

Just as the Feast of Trumpets aroused the children of Israel to their true spiritual condition and need for reconciliation with God, the seven trumpets of Revelation will also arouse the people of the world to recognize their need to be reconciled to God. The motives of people's hearts will be revealed by the course of coming events and those who oppose God will be exposed for whom they are. (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14) Yes, God's mercy is great, His patience is longsuffering and His salvation is free, however, there is an end to God's patience with sin and sinners. God's grace for sinners is beyond comprehension, however, it does not last forever. (See Genesis 6:57; Romans 2:58; Revelation 14:9-10; and Revelation 18:45.)

The Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement occurred on the 10th day of the 7th month. This was the most serious

day of the year for the Hebrews. Basically, the Day of Atonement focused on the termination of judgment and the disposing or elimination of sin. If any personal sin was left unresolved, the Israelites considered it to be a life and death matter. Remember, in God's economy sin is never forgiven, but instead, the guilt of sin is transferred to either a perfect substitute or the sinner pays the penalty for the sin. To appreciate the significance of this matter, consider the sequence of events that took place in ancient Israel on the Day of Atonement. After we look at the basic process, we will consider the parallels.

Note: There is not always a direct parallel between the Earthly and Heavenly Day of Atonement services. Some people have mistakenly tried to defend a Day of Atonement in Heaven. This event does not exist. The Earthly Day of Atonement services are better understood as a grand process in Heaven that leads to the full disposition of sin over a period of several thousand years. Keep this point in mind so the beauty and intended meaning of this service will produce a better understanding of law, sin, penalty, grace and the orderly ways God uses to redeem man.

The first order of business on the Day of Atonement focused on the worthiness of the high priest. Before the high priest could officiate on behalf of Israel, his own sins and the sins of his household had to be resolved. How sobering it must have been for the high priest to realize that it was the Lord God, Himself, who would carefully examine the motives of his heart before he could officiate for the children of Israel as their Earthly high priest intercessor.

To show the seriousness of this event, the high priest had to offer a perfect bull from his own flock, which was very expensive, as an atonement for his own sins and the members of his own household. Then, with censer and atonement blood in hand, the high priest went behind the veil to stand in the very presence of God. There, he sprinkled some of the blood from the bull on the atonement cover of the Ark. If God considered the high priest's offering acceptable, only then could he continue on to perform the next service, which was the cleansing of the temple. As the high priest left the Most Holy Place, he set the blood of his sacrifice aside for a short period of time. (See Leviticus 16, 21 and 22.)

The cleansing of the temple involved several steps. First, two perfect goats were presented to the high priest. Lots were cast to determine which goat would die for the penalty of sin. Then, the high priest killed the Lord's goat. With censer and atonement blood in hand, the high priest entered behind the veil a second time to stand in God's presence. There, he sprinkled blood on the atonement cover of the Ark and communed with God. If this offering was acceptable, the high priest was permitted to continue with the final phases of the cleansing service.

After leaving the Most Holy Place, the high priest retrieved the blood from his personal sacrifice and mixed it with the blood from the Lord's goat and placed it on the horns of the Altar of Incense. Then, he returned to the court yard and also placed this blood on the horns of the Altar of Burnt Offering. After all this was done, the high priest approached the scapegoat and placed his hands on the head of the goat. Solemnly, a capable man led the goat far into the desert to cause the goat to die of starvation.

The Worthiness of the High Priest

Several features are present in the Day of Atonement service that need consideration. First, the worthiness of the high priest parallels the worthiness of Jesus in Revelation 5. Here is the point: Before the high priest could cleanse the temple, he had to be found worthy. Parallel: Before Jesus (man's High Priest) could sit as man's judge and cleanse Heaven's Temple, He had to be found worthy to do so. Understand that judgment of human beings is a process that cleanses Heaven's Temple. The guilt of righteous people is transferred to the scapegoat (the devil will provide whatever restitution is necessary) and the sins of the wicked are placed on their own heads (the wicked will provide their own restitution).

The issue on the Day of Atonement was whether or not the high priest was qualified to cleanse the temple – to eliminate the record of sin. The scene described in Revelation 5 focuses on the question of who is worthy to break open the seals. At first glance, there does not seem to be any connection or parallel between “who is worthy” and the cleansing of the temple. However, a very strong parallel does exist. Consider the following: The Earthly temple was cleansed by removing guilt which had been transferred to the temple by sin and guilt offerings. (Leviticus 16:19)

When the high priest placed “mixed blood” on the horns of the altars, he returned them to a state of holiness (through Christ's blood). When he placed his hands on the scapegoat's head, the guilt of the temple was transferred to the scapegoat. (Leviticus 16:21) (Remember, the first goat paid the penalty for sin.) Thus, at the end of the day, the sanctuary was cleansed because sin had been removed.

So, how does this relate to the worthiness of Jesus and opening the seven seals? The third seal identifies a point in time (1844) when Christ began to examine the record books of Heaven to determine who will be saved and who will be lost. Before Jesus could begin to cleanse Heaven's Temple – that is, before Jesus could sit in judgment – the Father and the host of attending angels had to find Jesus worthy to judge man.

To clarify this further, let us review the process. When a person sinned, he brought his sacrifice to the temple, confessed his sin and slaughtered a perfect lamb. The priest transferred the blood to the horns or sides of the Altar of Burnt Offering. The sinner went away from this process “clean,” but the temple was still considered “unclean.” On the Day of Atonement, a goat which had been chosen as the Lord's goat, suffered the penalty of sin and was executed. The temple was restored to “holiness,” when the high priest applied the goat's blood.

Conversely, the temple was made “unclean” by the blood of the sinner's lamb. This illustrates the point of the “mixed blood” which the high priest used on the Day of Atonement. Through the blood of Jesus, a sinner's guilt is transferred into the temple. It is also the blood of Jesus that makes the temple holy. Consider this parallel: When a sinner receives Christ as his/her perfect substitute, the sin is transferred into the Temple in Heaven. When Jesus judges the life record of that particular sinner, Jesus demonstrates to all created beings that the sinner lived by faith.

Jesus then declares, by virtue of His shed blood for the human race, that the sinner is now holy. The restitution for the wrongs committed by this sinner will be placed on the head of the scapegoat (the devil) at the end of the 1,000 years. (Revelation 20) The opposite can also be

true. If Jesus judges the life record of a sinner and determines that he or she did not live by faith, then Jesus, by virtue of His worthiness, declares the sinner to be condemned. Sadly, in this last scenario, the restitution for the wrong committed by the sinner will remain on his/her own head.

Again, the worthiness of the Earthly high priest on the Day of Atonement can be correlated with the worthiness of Jesus in Revelation 5.

Note: For a more in depth study on this topic, order the November 1995, issue of Day Star.

The Cleansing of the Temple

The Day of Atonement's focus was on the cleansing of the temple itself. During the past year, the guilt of sin had been transferred from the sinner through blood and defiled the temple veil and both altars. So, to cleanse the temple, the guilt of sin (represented by the blood from the sinner's sacrifices) was "canceled" on the horns of the altars by applying a mixed blood offering! After the mixed blood was applied, the temple itself was no longer defiled. Again, what is this mixed blood? It was the blood of the bull and the goat.

The bull was the high priest's offering and the goat was the Lord's offering for the penalty of sin. The bull's blood represented a sin offering for individuals. Christ is our sin offering. The blood of the goat represented a sin offering for the whole camp of Israel (corporate atonement). For God so loved the world! (John 3:16) When these sacrifices were mixed together, atonement was complete. The mixed blood, applied to the atonement cover on the Ark and horns of the altars, made the unholy into something holy! The blood of Christ not only cleanses us from our sins, it cleanses the temple, too!

The cleansing process also involved three pieces of furniture mentioned in the following order: the Ark of the Covenant, the Altar of Incense and the Altar of Burnt Offering. The "order" of atonement is described twice in Leviticus 16:20-33, which indicates that the specific order the high priest followed in cleansing Heaven's Temple was important.

First, the high priest offered atonement before the Ark of the Covenant, then he offered atonement at the Altar of Incense and the last step in the atonement process was at the Altar of Burnt Offering. Notice that the high priest offered atonement from the inside out – first the Most Holy Place, next the Holy Place and then to the courtyard, where the Altar of Burnt Offering was located.

After the high priest completed the cleansing process on the Altar of Burnt Offering, he placed his bloody hands on the head of the scapegoat. This act symbolized the transference of guilt from the temple to the goat. Finally, the scapegoat was led out into the wilderness to die. (Leviticus 16)

God prescribed a specific order to cleanse the Earthly sanctuary because the process parallels the concluding work of Christ in Heaven. On Earth, three articles of furniture were cleansed of

guilt and restored to a holy state each year. Each act of atonement performed by the high priest shadows a specific event Jesus conducts in Heaven's Temple.

For example, the high priest's atonement before the Ark represents phase one of the cleansing process in Heaven's sanctuary. In 1798, God called Heaven's court to order. At that time, the Father asked for someone, who was considered worthy of the calling, to take the book sealed with seven seals and begin opening each seal. (Revelation 5:16) Only Jesus, the Christ, was found worthy.

He alone could make atonement for God's law. He alone, in all the universe, was born under the condemnation of law and tempted in every possible way, and yet, never sinned. He alone confirmed the holiness and virtue of God's law by living a perfect life and then laying it down in humble submission as a perfect sacrifice. He alone was found worthy to restore God's law to its rightful honor. He alone could reconcile an evil world to the Father and He alone could rescue the faithful from the coming wrath of God which the law requires. (Romans 4:15; 5:9,10) Make no mistake about it!

Jesus fully vindicated God's character and restored the holiness of God's law before He began cleansing Heaven's Temple. (For more information on the timing of Heaven's courtroom scene, please read the book 18 End-Time Bible Prophecies, Appendix E.)

After offering atonement for the Ark, the high priest moved to the Altar of Incense. During the past year, this altar had been contaminated by the morning and evening sacrifices (for corporate sins). The high priest sprinkled blood on the horns of the Altar of Incense and it was made clean. The parallel for this action is found in Revelation 8:25.

Just before the seven trumpets begin on Earth, services performed at Heaven's Altar of Incense will come to an end. The angel will cast the censer down indicating that corporate daily intercession is no longer available. Jesus will step out of the way and consequently, the God's wrath will begin on Earth. As the seven trumpets blow in Heaven, corresponding events occur on Earth.

Although these events will be horrendous, God's wrath will be "mixed" with mercy. These Trumpet events are intended by God to awaken the whole world to the nature of His law, sin, penalty, grace and the orderly way He redeems man. These events will cause many people to put their faith in Jesus, the Lamb of God, and be saved.

After the high priest provides atonement for the Altar of Incense, he moves to the Altar of Burnt Offering. The Israelites contaminated this altar throughout the year by their sin offerings. The high priest sprinkled blood on the horns of the Altar of Burnt Offering also cleansing it. The parallel for this segment of the atonement services is described during the seventh trumpet.

The mystery of God will be accomplished just before the seventh trumpet sounds. (Revelation 10:7; Colossians 2:13; Romans 11:25; 16:25; Ephesians 1:9-14, 3:6-12) At that time, everyone will make their decision for or against God's truth. The Holy Spirit will seal people in Christ or they will receive the mark of the beast. At the seventh trumpet, people will make their final

decision and God will close the door of mercy.

Just before the door of mercy closes, however, a great number of people will be martyred for the cause of Christ. This is the meaning of the fifth seal. The blood or souls under the Altar [of Burnt Offering] indicates that these sacrifices are for the salvation of other people. The blood of martyrs will convince many people to take their stand for the cause of Christ. When each person has made his/her decision, the Altar of Burnt Offering will be cleaned. Thus, the cleansing of the Heavenly temple will finally be completed.

The only portion of the service remaining is to transfer the sins of the righteous to the head of the scapegoat (devil). This endtime parallel event will occur 1,000 years after Jesus takes His people home. Then all of the inhabitants of Earth will be present to witness the results of God's judgment and the restitution required by the saints. (Revelation 20:11; 1 Corinthians 6:13)

Many more spiritual lessons can be drawn from the Day of Atonement service than can be described in these few paragraphs. This brief study is designed to cover the "big picture," so you might begin to appreciate the direct relationship between the sanctuary on Earth and the Temple in Heaven. God reveals a great deal about His future plans if we are willing to investigate them in His Word. If the Day of Atonement teaches anything, it teaches that God has a welldefined plan for dealing with the properties of sin. The complexity of issues involved with the resolution of sin proves how terrible sin is – it is much more hideous than human beings recognize. Throughout the endless ages of eternity, the people redeemed from Earth will study God's laws, sin, penalty, grace and the orderly way that He saved man. This knowledge, no doubt, will compel all inhabitants of the universe to never allow sin to rise again.

The Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles)

The Israelites presented the last and largest display of firstfruits five days after the Day of Atonement at a feast called the Feast of Ingathering. The Israelites commemorated this seven-day feast at the end of the summer growing season and the title reflects the "gathering in" of the last harvest. They also called this feast the Feast of Tabernacles because every Jewish male was required to go to Jerusalem to participate in this feast. There were not enough "motels accommodate such a large crowd, so they erected temporary tents (or tabernacles) for this joyous occasion.

Just as the Feast of Weeks illustrated the first phase of the Holy Spirit's work on the human heart, this feast reveals the final work of the Holy Spirit on behalf of mankind. A great outpouring of Holy Spirit power will occur upon all people just before Jesus comes. (Joel 2:28-32) This final stage of the Holy Spirit's ministry will be highly visible and marked by clear lines of demarcation. (Zechariah 4:6)

Everyone will have an opportunity to know God's truth and make their decision for eternal salvation. People who listen to the Spirit will be led into all truth. (John 16:13) People who refuse to listen to the Spirit will be led into damnation by the devil's evil schemes. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10) The people who love God's ways (His truth) will have their faith severely

tested. If they do remain loyal to God, they will receive a wonderful gift.

God will give them the “gift” of a sinless nature – a nature which will have no propensity or attraction to sin. Just before the first plague of God's final wrath begins (the first of seven plagues), the faithful children of God will be granted a nature like Adam and Eve's nature, before their sinful fall. (Hebrews 8:10-13; Romans 1:17; 1 John 3:2)

The final two phases of the Holy Spirit's work demonstrate God's great compassion for the human race and His deep desire that not one person be lost. First, the Holy Spirit stirs each person's mind and heart to consider the ways of God. The individual who responds to the Spirit's prompting will recognize his/her need for Jesus Christ as a perfect substitute. The people who accept Jesus Christ will then willfully submit themselves to the Gospel of Christ. (John 14:15; 1 John 2:5) With this decision, they are reckoned as righteous (imputed righteousness), even though the moment of glorification (God's gift) has not been given yet. (Romans 8:1)

During the time of the trumpets, each person's decision to follow God's ways will be tested. Then, at just the right time during the closing scenes of Earth's history, those people who pass the final test of faith will be granted a new nature. The righteousness of Christ will be imparted to every faithful child of God! (Colossians 1:27; Revelation 10:7)

When this process is completed, God's people who are still alive will no longer need an intercessor or mediator in Heaven. Every one of God's children will be sealed in a righteous character. Jesus marks this highly important moment by declaring, “Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.” (Revelation 22:11)

Later, at the end of the seven last plagues, Jesus Christ will appear in the clouds at the Second Coming. At that time, He will change the mortal bodies of the saints into immortal bodies (glorification). (1 Corinthians 15:53)

Notice the following parallels: In ancient times, man prepared the soil and planted the field. God watered the seed and brought forth the harvest. The union of humanity with divinity is apparent in this illustration. The Feast of Ingathering points forward to the Second Coming, when the final ingathering of all saints occur. Down through the ages, faithful Christians have prepared the soil and planted the world field.

God waters the seed and brings forth the harvest just in time for the ingathering. With great joy and rejoicing, men and women, boys and girls will “tabernacle” in the Heavenly city of God until Jesus Christ creates a new Heaven and a new Earth.

Just like the other harvests, the firstfruits of this last, great harvest will be presented before the Lord. The firstfruits of this harvest are 144,000 men and women who will serve God as prophets during the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 7:14; 14:4) Since the firstfruits of the Earthly harvests were the exclusive property of the high priest of Israel (Numbers 18), the 144,000 servant/prophets (firstfruits) will belong to Jesus, man's High Priest. They will accompany Jesus throughout eternity and serve Him wherever He goes.

The 144,000 will be the first to experience the gift of the new nature. They receive the “gift” of righteousness from Christ first because they are sealed first. (Revelation 7:14) Similarly, those who live by faith and stand firm for the truth as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, will be sealed just as the 144,000 were sealed. Then, at the end of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will “gather in” the faithful. There will be a great feast filled with good food, inexpressible praise and joyous celebration! (Revelation 19:9)

The Sum of All the Parts

The Lord is righteous in everything He does. “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he...” (Deuteronomy 32:4) The Earthly and Heavenly temples confirm that God is upright and just. His works are perfect and His ways are beautiful beyond words.

In this brief study, we have examined several elements of the Earthly and Heavenly temples. We have analyzed the Heaven/Earth Linkage Law and have observed the parallel operations of both temples. We have reviewed the Earthly temple's essential services and examined their practical applications. We have studied the temple furniture, the annual feasts and their meanings.

In every aspect of the temple services, we have observed how the ministry of Jesus is revealed. It is clear that God used the Earthly sanctuary and the Heavenly Temple of God as a teaching tool for human beings to grasp the PLAN of salvation. Indeed, all the lessons learned from this study point to the revelation of all that Jesus is!

High Priest

Finally, no study about the Temple of God would be complete without considering the High Priest's appointment. We can glean numerous and beautiful illustrations as we study the details of this position. In the case of Aaron, Israel's first high priest, the story begins with the call of Moses.

God appeared to Moses at the burning bush and “called” him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. At the time he was called, Moses had been a shepherd for 40 years. He was very reluctant to undertake such a huge task at the age of 80, since he had already attempted to deliver Israel at the age of 40 and failed. Moses foolishly complained to God and tried to excuse himself from the responsibility by saying he did not know the language. (Exodus 4:10)

His greatest worry was that the Israelites would not believe him. The adversities of life had humbled Moses and he knew that he could not, in his own human strength, accomplish such a task. So, to assist Moses with this responsibility, the Lord sent Aaron, Moses' elder brother, to be his spokesperson. It did not take long for the elders of Israel to recognize the “priestly calling” of these two Levite brothers. (A priest is one who is appointed by God to represent men before Him. Hebrews 5:1) God confirmed that He was speaking through Moses and Aaron by using incredible manifestations of divine power.

The people of Israel listened and responded, and soon like Pharaoh, came to regard Moses like God and Aaron as his prophet. Notice: "Then the Lord said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet." (Exodus 7:1)

In temperament, Aaron's character lacked the fortitude and directness that Moses demonstrated. When God commanded Moses to meet Him on Mount Sinai for 40 days, Aaron capitulated to the demands of the people and allowed them to create a golden calf. Although Aaron's character was flawed, one of his positive virtues was his willingness to listen and be sympathetic toward the people's needs.

This attribute reveals an essential characteristic about the position of high priest – he must love people. The high priest should have a special burden for the people of his "flock" and do whatever he can to serve them and meet their needs. (Obviously, Aaron went too far and sinned against God when he allowed the people to build a golden calf.) At the same time, since the high priest stood between God and the people, he had to satisfy God's needs, as well.

Moses anointed Aaron with oil as the high priest of Israel. (Exodus 30:30; Leviticus 16:32) In this role, God appointed him to conduct the "essential" service of the tabernacle. His sons were also anointed as priests and they conducted the routine services in the sanctuary. Aaron's firstborn son was to be his successor in the office of high priest. Remember, Pharaoh and the people considered Moses like God, and Aaron as his prophet. This arrangement revealed two fundamental aspects regarding Christ's ministry in Heaven! Jesus is both, King of kings (role of Moses), and Lord of lords (role of Aaron). (Revelation 19:16)

Jesus' role as High Priest includes both authority and mediation. Only Jesus can balance these two roles perfectly. Jesus loves the human race and is willing to do whatever it takes to save people. Jesus listens to people and responds to their needs. He knows our struggles, as no one else does. (Hebrews 4:15) However, Jesus also loves His Father and is anxious to defend the righteousness and purity of God's government. The methods Jesus uses are perfectly aligned with the will of God. Is this a conflict of interest? Can Jesus actually please God and sympathize with man? Yes! For He is both man's perfect substitute and the Lamb of God. (Romans 5:10) He alone can resolve the issue of man's salvation and exonerate God from Lucifer's falsehoods.

Someday, all the angels of Heaven and the people of Earth will marvel at what a wonderful person Jesus Christ is! This should not be a surprise to anyone! A day is coming soon when Jesus' words will be fulfilled: "By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength. All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame." (Isaiah 45:23-24)

Conclusion

We have a friend in Jesus. He is a friend who understands our needs. He also understands our limitations, weaknesses and foolishness. Notwithstanding, He is willing to be our High Priest and present us before God without a blemish. He is willing to save us and grant us power to

overcome the ravages of sin. He is willing to release us from anxiety, doubts and bad habits.

He has the power to do all of this and more! Why not surrender your heart to Him? Why not say, "Lord, I am willing to go, be and do all that you ask." If you are willing, He will enable you to succeed in all that He has asked you to do! You have a friend in Heaven who loves you so much that He was willing to die the second death for you. Can mere mortals comprehend such love? Not easily. That is why we find it difficult to call on Him to help us with our greatest needs.

But be sure of this, He is quite capable of dealing with any problem you are wrestling with today. So, let Him help you. He is ready. Are you?