

# THE WORD OF

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# TRUTH

Bible Study Course

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:32

**13**

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## THE SANCTUARY -- POINTING TO JESUS

When God gave direction to Moses to build a sanctuary, the structure was not to be a mere building, but was to be a profound visual object to constantly direct the minds of men to Christ and the work of salvation.

Every part of the building and its furnishings held a significance in respect to the work of our great high Priest and provided a simple means by which the work of redemption may be explained to those who were the object of that redemption. In this lesson we shall look briefly at some of the sanctuary items and the symbolism with which they were invested. The following lesson will be an abridged discussion of two ceremonies, firstly, that associated with the atonement concerning a personal sin offering and secondly, it will cover the annual atonement at the cleansing of the sanctuary.

## 1. What was God's objective in establishing a sanctuary in the midst of his people, Israel?

Exodus 25:8

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Note: The sanctuary was to teach the people their part and Christ's part in the process of redemption. With the people so educated, it is Christ's intent that they should embrace Him and that He should dwell in their hearts (1Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 3:17-19; Hebrews 8:10).

There were four sanctuaries used by the Jews from the time of the initial structure when God first gave the directions at Sinai, to the last tabernacle which was destroyed about 37 years after Jesus walked the earth. These were:-

1. The transportable tabernacle built under the direction of Moses.
2. The sanctuary built during the reign of Solomon and later destroyed by the Babylonians in 586/585 BC.
3. The temple (and Jerusalem) rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah between 457 BC and 408 BC., which was after the 70 years captivity in Babylon. This structure continued until a few years before Christ.
4. The temple mentioned in "3" above was rebuilt by king Herod between 20 BC. and 66 AD. This sanctuary, "Herod's temple", and Jerusalem were both destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. Though Jerusalem has since been rebuilt and inhabited by several nations, the Jewish sanctuary has not been re-established even to this day.

The descriptions as given in this study will be confined to the original sanctuary, that built by Moses under the direction of God. The presence of God continued in each of the sanctuaries built, until the rending of the veil at the death of Jesus. He being the object of the whole sanctuary system, rendered the earthly sanctuary and sacrificial services obsolete at His death (Colossians 2:14-17).

Also referred to as the "tabernacle of the tent of the congregation" (Ex.40:29), the structure was tent-like in appearance and was made from various skins, goat's hair and woven fabric, such as may be moved from place to place as the Israelites journeyed through the wilderness. See fig.2.

The tabernacle was situated in a courtyard, bounded by a curtain wall suspended on 20 brass posts on its long side (100 cubits) and 10 brass posts on its short side (50 cubits). The entrance to the courtyard and the entrance to the tabernacle was a curtain (door) of purple, blue and scarlet. The colours signified the sovereignty of Christ, His law and His redeeming blood (Exodus 27:9-19. Note, 1 cubit is approximately 450 mm., the distance from a man's elbow to the tip of his fingers).

Let us now look further into the representations of the sanctuary and their meaning for Israel of old and for God's people today, as they dwell in the twenty first century.

## **2. The tabernacle and the courtyard were positioned in a specific direction. Indicate that orientation as required by God.**

Exodus 27:13-14

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Note: The opening to the courtyard and to the tabernacle was on the eastern side and as with all sanctuary details, carries a great significance. In the pagan religion, sun worship was a prominent part of, and is directly connected with, Satan worship. In the worship of the sun, the extoller would face the rising sun. To avoid any allusion to sun worship, God orientated the sanctuary so that when the worship of the true God was conducted, the worshipper, as he faced the sanctuary and the priest as he ministered at the altar, would have their backs to the rising sun. God's abhorrence of sun worship was seen on an occasion when Israel apostatised and turned their backs on God, to embrace this heathen form of worship (Ezekiel 8:15,16).

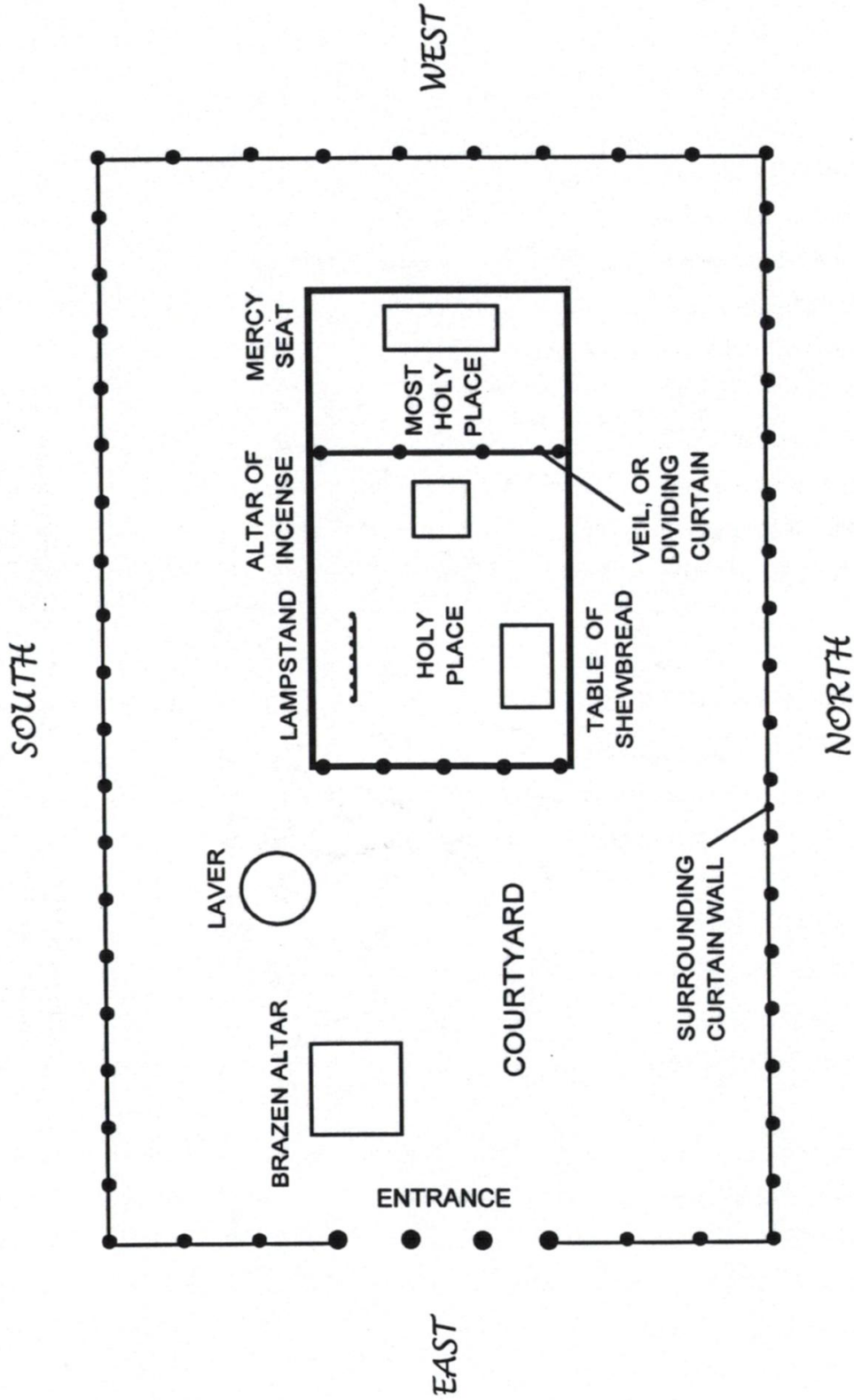
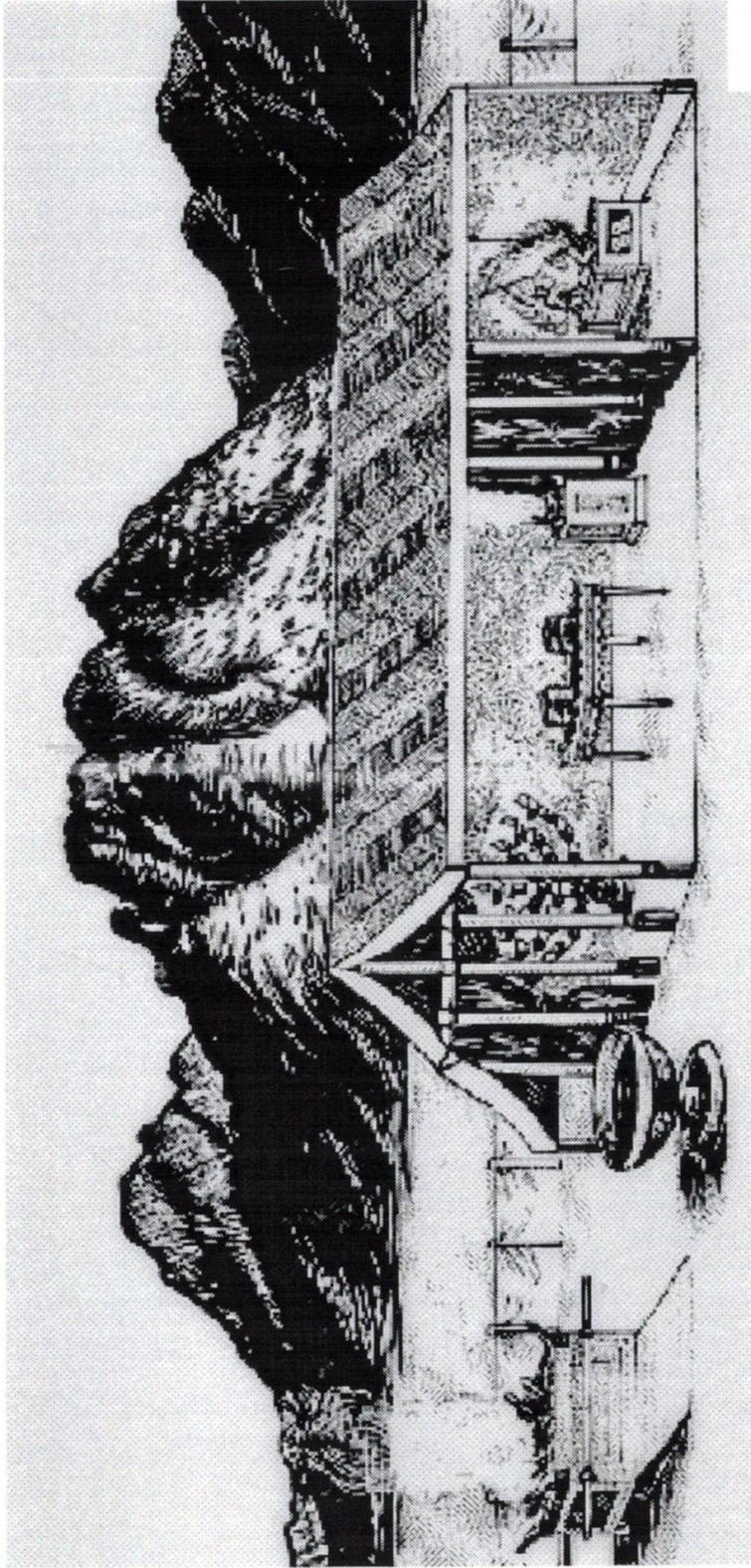


fig.1. Plan view of the sanctuary and the courtyard



*fig. 2. A cut away view of the portable sanctuary (artist's impression). Note that the Laver should be positioned closer to the southern wall than what is depicted in the drawing.*

**3. From what material was the surrounding wall of the courtyard made?**

Exodus 27:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Note: The door to the courtyard represented Christ (John 10:9; 14:6). As soon as the sinner passed through that door, he was surrounded by the white linen boundary of the courtyard wall. The white linen being a symbol of the righteousness of Christ, a righteousness to which the sinner himself may attain (Rev.19:8; 3:4,5; 1:13).

**4. What two pieces of furniture were located within the courtyard?**

Exodus 30:17-21; 27:1-8 \_\_\_\_\_

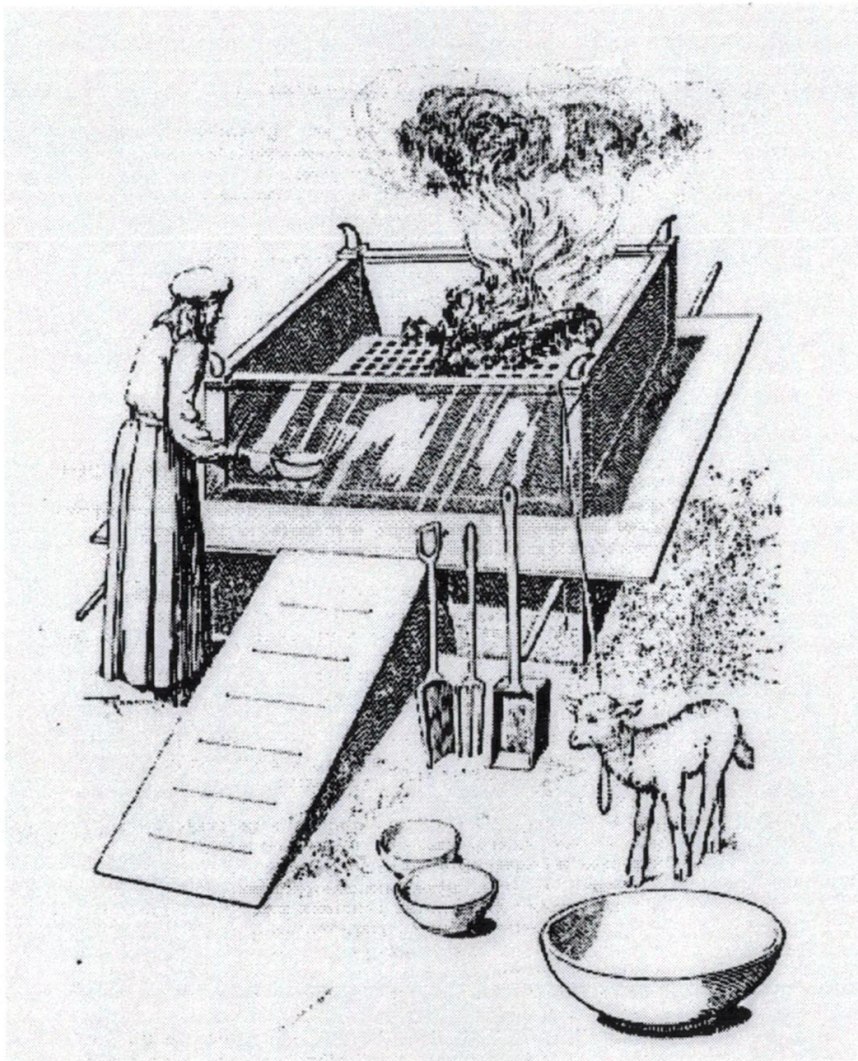
Note: The main functions of the brazen altar were to consume the whole sacrifice (except the skin) when a general atonement was made for the sins of the people. This was known as a "burnt offering". Should an individual desire to receive atonement for an unknown sin, of which he had now become aware, a "sin offering" was made. The fat and kidneys of the sin offering were burnt on the brazen altar, or altar of burnt offering. Figure 3 illustrates the altar.

In this way, fat, as a symbol of sin, was consumed by the fire (Leviticus 4:3, 8-10,13,14,19,27-31). It is a fitting symbol of the final destruction, when all sin will be consumed in the lake of fire in the last day (Ps.37:20).

The courtyard represents this earth and the sanctuary building represents the heavenly Sanctuary. It is the courtyard where the sacrifice of the offering was made and it was this earth where the sacrifice of the Lamb of God was made. As the priest ministered in the Holy place to make atonement with the sin offering, so Jesus entered the Holy Place in the heavenly Sanctuary when He ascended into heaven. Here He made atonement with His own blood as the sacrifice for sin, the sacrifice made in the courtyard of this earth.

Note also, that as the symbol of sin (fat) was consumed on the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard, so will sin be finally consumed by fire on this earth (Isaiah 24:20,21; Jeremiah 25:33; Malachi 4:1,3). A description of the altar is given in Exodus 27:1-8.

The laver was a water container at which the priest would wash before entering the tabernacle (Ex.40:30-32). See figure 4.



*fig. 3. The Brazen Altar, also known as the Altar of Burnt Offering. The place where certain offerings were consumed by fire.*



*fig. 4. The Laver. A water container, where the priests would wash before entering the sanctuary.*

**5. The sanctuary building itself, was divided into apartments. How many apartments were there and what names were given to these rooms?**

Exodus 26:33 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. What three pieces of furniture were located in the Holy Place, also known as the First Apartment?**

Exodus 40:22-27 \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Our text uses the term "without the veil". In particular, this term refers to the part of the sanctuary outside of the Most Holy Place, that is, the Holy Place, or first apartment. Conversely, "within the veil" may have either of two meanings, depending on the context. It may refer to any part of the sanctuary building in general, or it may be a specific reference to within the Most Holy Place.



To further illustrate the ambiguity of the expression "within the veil" and thus demonstrate the need to interpret this in context, notice that Leviticus 16:12,13 uses the expression "within the veil" to specify the MHP, while Hebrews 6:19,20 speaks of Christ having entered "within the veil". Here, "within the veil" could only be interpreted to mean "entered the heavenly Sanctuary" without specifying "where" in the sanctuary.

This understanding of the term is drawn from the fact, that Christ's ministry within the heavenly Sanctuary follows the pattern given to Moses concerning the sanctuary on earth (Hebrews 8:5; Exodus 25:8,9). That is, after the sacrifice was made, the priest entered the HP to offer the blood on the altar of incense (see p.12); then once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter the MHP (lesson 14, Hebrews 9:6,7). In like manner, when Jesus ascended to heaven, after His sacrifice on Calvary, He entered within the veil, or into the Sanctuary. According to the pattern, the first stage of His priestly ministry could only have been in the Holy Place.

Again, Numbers 18:10-13 uses the term "most holy place" to refer to a fit place where fit people may eat of the sanctuary offerings. This is clearly not a reference to the MHP of the sanctuary, for only the high priest may enter that sacred precinct and then only once a year.

### **7. What was contained in the Most Holy Place, the most sacred part of the sanctuary?**

Exodus 26:33-34 \_\_\_\_\_

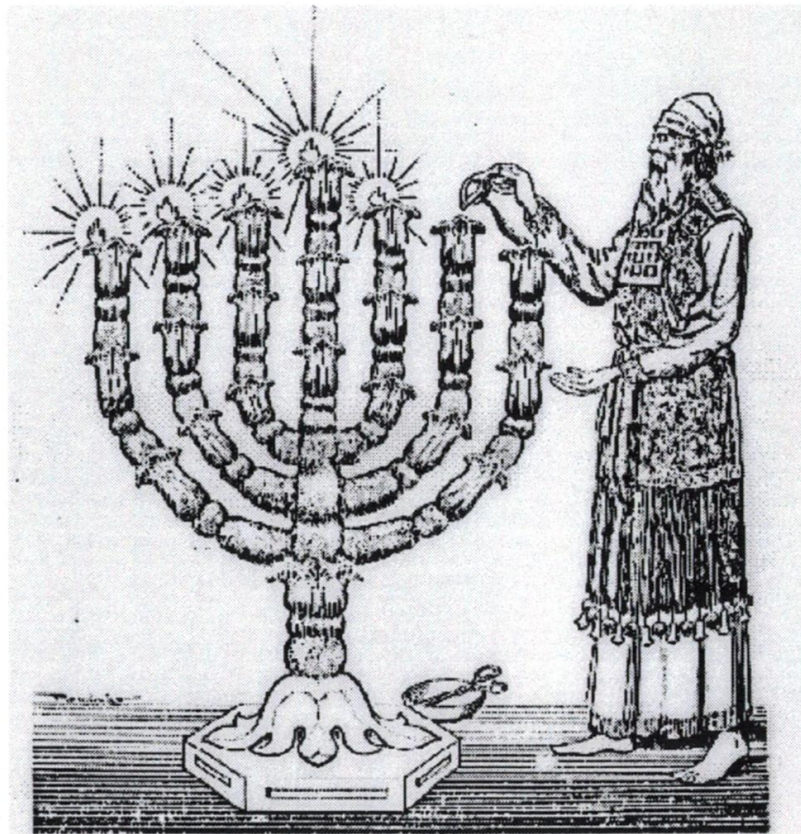
The sanctuary building consisted of two rooms called apartments. The first apartment was the holy place and the second apartment, the most holy place. In the holy place against the southern wall, was the candlestick with its seven lamps. The lamps were to remain burning continually and in the absence of God's glory, were the only source of light within the building.

Opposite the lampstand, against the north wall, was the table of shewbread on which lay twelve small loaves of bread. This bread was baked and replaced fresh once a week. Just before the dividing curtain (vail) stood the altar of incense and it was upon this altar that the priest burned incense both morning and evening. As with the table of shewbread, the altar of incense was made of wood and overlaid with pure gold. The lampstand was one piece of beaten gold of fine craftsmanship.

### 8. What was represented by the candlestick, or lampstand?

John 1:4,9; 12:46

Note: Not only was Jesus the light of the world, but, as we behold Him in His word, we are also to become like Him (2Corinthians 3:18). In turn, His people become lights to the world, referring others to the Source of light, thus reflecting glory back to Him (Matthew 5:16; 1Thessalonians 5:4-8; Isaiah 49:6; Ezekiel 36:23). Figure 5 is an artist's impression of the lampstand.



*fig. 5. The seven branched lampstand, the source of light for the sanctuary.*

## 9. What symbol is given by the bread?

John 6:35,48-51

Note: The bread in the sanctuary had a number of representations; it was a symbol of the manna with which the Hebrews were fed in their journey through the wilderness (Exodus 16:4,14,15,31), as well as a symbol of Jesus, the Bread of life. In giving them the manna, God had designed that they should appreciate their dependence on Him for the supply of all their temporal needs and as the bread represented Christ, the people were fully dependent on Him for their spiritual life. Jesus explained the symbolism and pointed to Himself as the true Bread, that which imparts eternal life. To eat this Bread, is to eat His flesh and to eat His flesh, is to take in His Word and to take in His word, is to have it work in us by His Spirit (John 6:53-57,63; Leviticus 18:5). Figure 6 is an artist's impression and illustrates the table of shewbread.

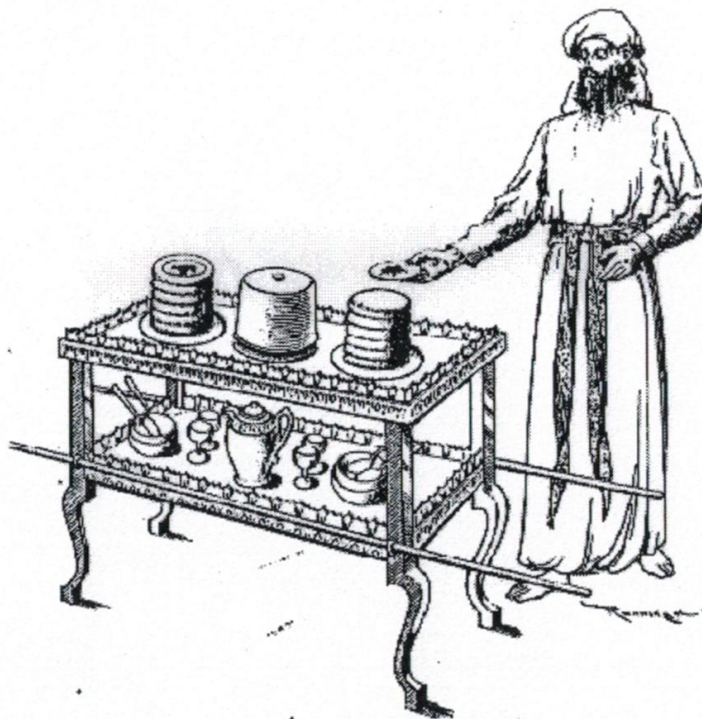


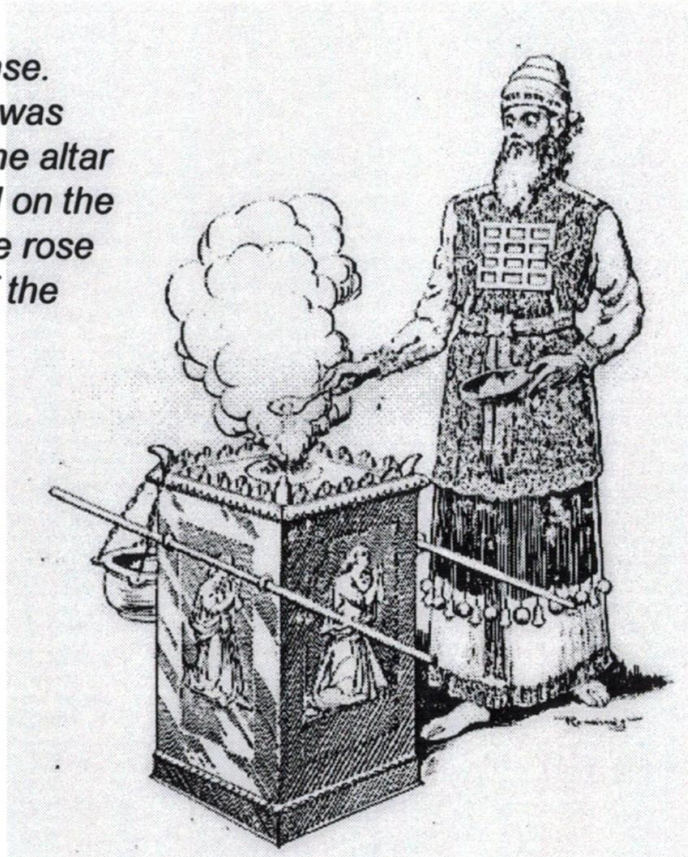
fig. 6. *The table of shewbread with the twelve loaves of bread and utensils*

### 10. What did the incense represent?

Psalms 141:2; Revelation 8:3-4

Note: The sweet smelling incense, as it rose into the air, was a delightful fragrance, a beautiful illustration of how God receives the humble and submissive prayers of the penitent (Philippians 4:18). As the incense ascends to God, so the intercession of Jesus stands between us and the Father, who with love and mercy receives the petitioning of Jesus on behalf of every repentant sinner. Jesus offers our prayers to the Father with pleading and faultless purity that we cannot offer (1Tim.2:5; Rom.8:26,34). By praying in Jesus' name we have access to the heavenly Father; but to receive of this high privilege we must abide in Christ (John 14:6,14; 15:7,8; Eze.36:36,37; Ps.66:18). Figure 7 is an artist's impression of the altar of incense.

*fig. 7. The Altar of incense. Blood from the sacrifice was placed on the horns of the altar and incense was burned on the altar. The sweet incense rose to God as an emblem of the prayers of the penitent*



**11. The "Ark of the Covenant" was like a box and was located in the Most Holy Place. The covering, or lid of the Ark, had a special name and function. Indicate these two characteristics.**

Exodus 25:21, 26:34 \_\_\_\_\_

Note: It was at the mercy seat that the radiant visible presence of God, or Shekinah glory was seen. This represented the throne of God and God demonstrated His acceptance of the repentant people by manifesting His presence in the midst of the earthly representation of His throne (compare Psalm 99:1; 11:4; 1Kings 8:30). No human eye, but that of the high priest, ever beheld this scene. He was to enter this sacred place only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. At times, the light emanating from behind the veil, would become so bright, that the priests were unable to enter the sanctuary at all (Exodus 40:35). Figure 8 is an artist's impression of the Ark.

**12. What was contained within the Ark of the Covenant?**

Exodus 25:16; 31:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Exodus 16:33,34 \_\_\_\_\_

Numbers 17:10; Hebrews 9:3,4 \_\_\_\_\_

Note: At the time of the dedication of the temple built by Solomon, the Ark contained only the two tablets of stone upon which were written the Ten Commandments (1 Kings 8:1-11). When Aaron's rod and the pot of manna were removed from the Ark is not known.

The two stone tablets on which was inscribed the testament of God, written by the finger of God, is an exact transcript of the original law of God contained in the heavenly Ark. The earthly Ark was merely a receptacle to hold the tables of the law. It was the presence of these divine precepts that gave the Ark its value and sacredness. So where is the Ark now?



*fig. 8. The Mercy Seat, with its covering cherubims, represents the throne of God. A fitting title for the throne of One who is full of mercy and compassion. (This drawing is an artist's impression and should not be considered as having a close resemblance to the original )*

Due to Israel's rebellion against Him, God sent the people into the captivity of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) (Jer.25). Just before the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC., a number of men, faithful to Jehovah, took the Ark from the sanctuary and hid it in a cave where it has laid undisturbed ever since.

If God took the Ark from the Jews because of their sin, He is not going to restore it to them without their complete repentance and returning to Him. Even after the rebuilding of the sanctuary under Ezra, Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, God did not see fit to restore the Ark of the Covenant to the Sanctuary, nor did He restore it to the Tabernacle rebuilt by Herod.

Israel's long standing rebellion against the God of heaven manifested itself in the rejection and crucifixion of the prophesied and long awaited Messiah (Acts 7:51,52). They had clearly demonstrated their unfitness to be the repositories of the Ark of the Covenant (Acts 13:46, also lesson 12, p.9).

The nation of Israel has not changed, she still denies the only One in all history who fulfils every word of her own prophets (Acts.8:35–60; 1Peter 1:10–12; Romans 3:1,2; 9:4,5). Because of their rebellion, the sacred Ark will never be restored to national Israel.

There are people today, even among the Jews, who claim to know exactly where the Ark is located, some even claim to have seen it. But due to political hazards they have been unable to expose it. The Israelite people plan on rebuilding the temple on its original site in Jerusalem and expect to furnish the Most Holy Place with the original Ark of the Covenant. But what they fail to realise is that God removed the Ark from them because of their sin. It is now too late, God has rejected them as a nation, they can no longer be the light unto the Gentiles (Acts 13:45-48; 1 Kings 9:1-9; 2Chronicles 15:2). However, salvation to individual Jews is open, as to every man. God alone will reveal the Ark to the world in His own time, as a testimony against the inhabitants of the earth for the flagrant disregard of His law (Rev.11:19).

The ark that has been discovered in its hiding place and now seen by men, is possibly a replica. The original was permitted to be viewed and touched by only a few sanctuary officials of the Levitical priesthood as authorised

by God. Violators were destroyed (Numbers 4:1-20 notice vv. 4 and 20; 1Samuel 6:19,20). On the occasion when the Philistines seized the Ark, they were evidently spared from this edict out of God's mercy on their ignorance (1Samuel chapters 5 and 6; Acts 17:30). The searchers who find the Ark and who are aware of God's requirements concerning it, would need to take care that they themselves were not destroyed should they violate its sacredness.

### Conclusion

It was never God's plan that He should simply dwell among His people in a building made with hands. God designed that the sanctuary should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul. The placing of the tabernacle in the midst of the camp of Israel was to have been an illustration and object lesson; that lesson was to lead them to the truth of salvation and an understanding of God's desire to dwell within the heart and life of the Hebrew and every true believer throughout time (1Cor.6:19).

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