

# Jesus in the Tabernacle Bible Study

## The Holy Place

By I Gordon

### Introduction

In the last study we looked at the outer court which contained the brazen altar and the brazen laver. It was bronze, bronze, bronze where ever we looked! Well, it's time to leave the outer court behind, with its emphasis on judgement and sacrifice, and move into the Holy Place. There we shall see no more bronze... but now all shall be gold and acacia wood. The three objects in this room will give us a greater insight into different aspects of the Lord Jesus Christ. They shall also show us what is required to make the next step from salvation to fellowship with Christ. Let's begin with the first object that faces us as we make our way into the Holy Place...

### The Table of Showbread

**Exodus 25:23-30** *Make a table of acacia wood--two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold and make a gold molding around it. Also make around it a rim a handbreadth wide and put a gold molding on the rim. Make four gold rings for the table and fasten them to the four corners, where the four legs are. The rings are to be close to the rim to hold the poles used in carrying the table. Make the poles of acacia wood, overlay them with gold and carry the table with them. 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.*

As you move into the Holy Place the first article that you see is the Table of Showbread. This table had twelve loaves of bread on it, each representing one of the twelve tribes of Israel. [Lev 24:5-9](#) tells us that the

showbread was made of fine flower <sup>[1]</sup> and set on the table, sprinkled lightly with frankincense. The bread could be eaten by the priests only and were replaced weekly. <sup>[2]</sup>

So what do you think this article is a picture of? Well, when it comes to the tabernacle you can basically answer 'Jesus' to all these types of questions and you'll be on the money!

Being made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, this table represents the person of Christ – again emphasising His humanity and deity. But the specific emphasis is on Christ as the Bread of life. You will remember [John 6:32-35](#) no doubt. Remember when Jesus said

*"I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Sir, they said, "from now on give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.*

We are to feed on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why the Bible was written! That is one of the key roles of the Holy Spirit! And you are doing that now as you study and meditate on Him once again! Think about how important bread is in the natural... It is a staple food the world over. And yet, God has designed us so that we need far more than just normal food. God says it like this:

*'Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ([Deut 8:3](#))*

And what better word to feed on than that which tells us about Jesus? This is what we do at the communion table. We are told to remember what He did for us at the cross. We also feed on the thought of His return which brings great encouragement and hope. But don't just leave it there! Between the Jesus who was and the Jesus who will be, is the one who is! Always feed daily on who Christ is for you now for Christ in you, right now, is your hope of glory!

### The Altar of Incense

**Exodus 30:1-8** *Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense. It is to be square, a cubit long and a cubit wide, and two cubits high--its horns of one piece with it. Overlay the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold, and make a gold molding around it. Make two gold rings for the altar below the molding--two on opposite sides--to hold the poles used to carry it. Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. Put the altar in front of the curtain that is before the ark of the Testimony--before the atonement cover that is over the Testimony--where I will meet with you. Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps.*

*He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come.*

As you look around the Holy Place the next item that takes your attention is the Altar of Incense. Made again from acacia wood with a gold overlay, this altar was used by Aaron, the High Priest, for the burning of incense every morning and evening... of every day! So let me ask you a question. Well, two questions. Do you know what incense is a picture of in the Bible? And if you do, can you think of any verses that tell us what it is a type of? Hmm, I think you might know the first but I see you struggling with the second! So here you go... Incense is a primarily a picture of prayer. If interested, check out the fine print for some scripture references to answer the second. <sup>[3]</sup>

So, let me ask you a further question if you would be so kind. If Aaron had to offer incense morning and evening each day, in what way does this picture Jesus? You will remember that Aaron was the High Priest and he was a picture of Jesus, our High Priest today. As Aaron offered up the incense (a type of prayer and intercession) each day, so this pictures the present day work of Jesus on our behalf. This is emphasised in a fantastic scripture in Hebrews that tells us:

***Hebrews 7:24-25*** "...Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, **holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.** "

So the brazen altar that stood in the outer court speaks of the sacrifice of Jesus made 2000 years ago to provide salvation for all who would believe. The golden altar in the Holy Place however speaks of the present work of the living resurrected Christ who intercedes and prays on behalf of His people! Did you know that Jesus intercedes for you? It is for this reason that the writer of Hebrews wrote that He is able to save to the uttermost. This High Priest will not let you down! Now before looking at the personal aspect of this altar, let's just look at how the incense itself was made.

### **Best not try replicating this incense – It's a one of a kind!**

***Exodus 30:34-38*** *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take fragrant spices--gum resin, onycha and galbanum--and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the LORD. Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from his people."*

Now, there was a special little formula that went into making the incense that was offered up to God on the golden altar. It included onycha, galbanum and other equally unpronounceable spices. But notice that God said that this formula was not to be replicated and used by the people personally. Any thoughts on why God would say this? Why would God copyright the incense formula so that it couldn't be duplicated? He even went so far as to say that if anyone does make it for themselves, they must be cut off from the people! Why is He getting precious about this particular fragrance? I'll let you think about it for a while but I'll put what I believe to be the answer in the small print again. <sup>[4]</sup>

### **The Personal Application of the Incense**

Just as we are to feed on Christ (the table of showbread), so, as priests before the Lord, we also offer up prayers, intercession and praise. And just as the fire burnt continually on the altar of incense, the New Testament tells us to pray continuously (1 Thes 5:17). This doesn't mean that we are continually in one long monotonous prayer throughout the day... I'd like to see you try that one! But we should maintain an attitude

where we are ready to offer up prayer and praise to God at frequent intervals throughout the day, as people <sup>[5]</sup>, needs and reasons for praise are laid on our hearts.

### **One amazing lamp!**

***Exodus 25:31-40*** *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. Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand--three on one side and three on the other. Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand. And on the lampstand there are to be four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. One bud shall be under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the second pair, and a*

*third bud under the third pair--six branches in all. The buds and branches shall all be of one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold. Then make its seven lamps and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of it. Its wick trimmers and trays are to be of pure gold. A talent of pure gold is to be used for the lampstand and all these accessories. See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.*

The last article in the Holy Place was the golden lamp stand. I've saved this one for last because it is my favourite! So let's just start with a few general points about this lamp stand. We read above that it was to be made out of pure gold. There was to be no acacia wood or any other material used here – just pure gold. So straight away we can see that we are dealing with something that is purely divine. Now obviously it doesn't take Einstein to know that the primary purpose of a lamp stand is to give light. In fact, it is worth pointing out that this was the only light source in the Holy Place. So let me ask you this – what in the Bible is said to be a light? Well, Jesus said 'I am the light of the world'. He also said that that Christians are the light of the world. <sup>[6]</sup>

But there is another. While Jesus is pictured in the lamp stand, I believe the primary fulfilment of this type is the Word of God. You will remember that famous scripture from the psalms no doubt:

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." (Psalm 119:105)*

*"And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times." (Psalm 12:6)*

*"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart... The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold..." (Psalms 19:7-10)*

As I said earlier, there were no windows or other light sources in the Holy Place. If you wanted to see the table of showbread or minister at the altar of incense, then it was the lamp stand that gave you the ability to do so. And so it is the word of God that sheds light upon our walk with the Lord today. It is God's word that brings us revelation and clarity concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ.

### Flowers, buds and blossoms...

Now here is some very cool confirmation that this lamp stand speaks of the word of God. God instructed Moses to make a lamp stand that had seven branches – three branches on each side of a center branch. On each of the branches there were to be 3 cups (in the form of flowers) and each cup had buds and blossoms. The center branch had 4 cups with each cup again having buds and blossoms. Now I see you drifting off... Stay with me here because this is where it gets interesting! The total number of decorations on each of the outer branches is therefore 9 (3 cups/flowers, 3 buds and 3 blossoms). The total number of decorations in the center branch is 12 (4 cups/flowers, 4 buds and 4 blossoms). So the overall total number of decorations (taking into account all seven branches) is:

$9 + 9 + 9 + 12 + 9 + 9 + 9 = 66$ . Why 66? Because the lamp stand is a picture of the word of God and there are 66 books in God's word the Bible that gives light to all that would read and study its words! But look also at the splits - If we take the first 4 branches we get 39 (9 + 9 + 9 + 12). There are 39 books in the Old Testament. The remaining 3 branches give us 27 (9 + 9 + 9) which speaks of the 27 books in the New Testament. Pretty amazing really. And remember that the lamp stand was made of pure gold. So too is the word of God. The Bible is a divinely inspired book!

### Keep that light shining

The last point that I would like to draw your attention to concerning the lamp stand in the Holy Place is a passage in Leviticus.

*Leviticus 24:1-4* *The LORD said to Moses, Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually. Outside the curtain of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the LORD from evening till morning, continually. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. The lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD must be tended continually.*

The lamp stand would give light but oil was required to keep it burning. It was the task of Aaron to tend to the lamp to ensure that its wick was trimmed and that there was a fresh supply of oil. If there was no oil, there was no light. It is the same for the word of God. Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit who has been given by our High Priest (Jesus Christ) to illuminate the word of God for us. The revelation and light that the word of God gives

depends upon the oil. To some the word of God is stale and dead. If that is the case you should pray as Paul did when he prayed for the Ephesians saying:

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength*  
[\(Ephesians 1:17-19\)](#)

## Conclusion

Just as the outer court spoke of salvation, so we have seen that each of the items in the Holy Place speak to us concerning our fellowship and life in Christ. In one aspect, each of the items speak of Christ. Jesus is the showbread that we feed upon. He is our High Priest who intercedes for us (the altar of incense) and He is the light that gives us life! The Holy Place also speaks to us of our need to feed upon Christ, to pray and intercede, and to receive revelation of God's ways through the light of His word. But there was still a holier place... the Holy of Holies. And that shall be the purpose of our next study in this tabernacle series.

## Bible Studies in the Tabernacle Series

[Jesus in the Tabernacle - An Introduction and Overview](#)

[Jesus in the Tabernacle - The Outer Court](#)

[Jesus in the Tabernacle - The Holy Place](#)

[Jesus in the Tabernacle - The Holy of Holies](#)

[1] There is a little bit more to this baking of this showbread. As noted above God's instructions were for it to be made from fine flour. The fine flour was made through a grinding and crushing process and speaks to us of the suffering that Jesus endured for us. This bread was also unleavened. As leaven speaks of sin, this was a reminder to us that 'In Him is no sin' ([1 John 3:5](#)).

[2] It is only those that are 'priests' today that can feed upon Christ. I am sure that you are aware that that is the privileged position of all true believers in this age. Speaking to all believers Peter writes "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." ([1 Pet 2:9](#)) And just as the Priests of old would continually minister in the tabernacle and feed upon the showbread, so we do the same in this age. But our bread is Christ!

[3] Here are a couple of scriptures so you don't just have to take my word for it:  
[Psalm 141:1-2](#) *A psalm of David. O LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me. Hear my voice when I call to you. May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.*

[Revelation 8:3-4](#) *Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.*

[4] This particular fragrance, this incense, is a picture of Christ. [Eph 5:2](#) tells us that 'Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.' That is the incense that God accepts. He accepts His Son and all those who through faith are 'in Christ'. Hence God didn't want anyone else trying to duplicate this fragrance... because no one can replace or duplicate Christ! He is unique! For someone to take and use this particular fragrance upon himself would be to say that they are acceptable to God in and of themselves. We should always consider what we are offering up to God. We should always consider in what ways we try to take credit for that which God does in and through our life. Don't take the glory for that which you have been given! He is the fragrant aroma to God and our boasting should only be in the Lord.

[5] Intercession for others is a big part of this altar of incense. It is the role of Jesus in this age for the saints as we have discussed. But it is also the role and privilege of all believers to intercede on behalf of others in this age. Samuel considered it a sin if he didn't pray for his fellow Israelites. ([1 Sam 12:23](#)) In fact intercession was found in all of the great saints of old. Moses interceded on behalf of the nation before God ([Ex 32:10-14](#)). To be fair he had to intercede for them lots of times!

[6] Christians are the light of the world as Jesus said in [Matt 5:16](#). Our light depends upon our dependence upon Him who is life as Jesus said in [John 1:4](#). John the Baptist was also said to be a lamp that burned for a while ([John 5:35](#)). The church as a whole is also

pictured as a lamp stand in [Rev 1:20](#). But there is another. Do you know what else is pictured as a lamp stand and as a light? It is something that I believe the lamp stand in the Holy Place is a direct picture of... We shall see what that is as we continue with this study.