

Jesus in the Tabernacle

The Holy of Holies

By I Gordon

Introduction

So far in this tabernacle series we have looked at the Outer court and the Holy place. The outer court, with the brazen altar and laver, spoke of the means of salvation that is available in Christ. The Holy Place, on the other hand, spoke not of salvation but of fellowship and the means of growth in the Christian life. Now, in this final study we shall investigate the final remaining area in the tabernacle and that is the Holy of Holies. The Outer court showed us that Jesus is the Way. The Holy place showed us that Jesus is the Truth. But the Holy of Holies will give us a glimpse of Jesus as our Life. It is the very presence and power of God that was present within the Holy of Holies and it is that same presence that is essential to living the Christian life today. Let's have a look!

Not your ordinary veil...

Exodus 26:31-34 *"You shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman. "You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, their hooks also being of gold, on four sockets of silver. "You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and shall bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil; and the veil shall serve for you as a partition between the holy place and the holy of holies. "You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies."*

Now put yourself in the position of the High Priest. While in the Holy place, you look around to view the Holy of Holies. What so you see? Well, you see an amazing veil made from fine twisted linen in blue, purple and scarlet. This veil separates the Holy place from the Holy of Holies. Knowing the use of these colours, you recognise that they represent the entrance into a heavenly (blue), royal (purple) and redemptive (scarlet) area, for beyond this veil is the very presence of the King!

But this veil is no ordinary curtain and entrance into the Holy of holies is through no ordinary means. The veil was reported to be four inches thick ^[1] and entrance into the Holy of Holies was only allowed to the High Priest, through a blood sacrifice and only on one day of the year – It was the Holiest day in Israel's year... the day of Atonement.

Lev 16:2, 29-30 *The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat... This shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble your souls and not do any work, whether the native, or the alien who sojourns among you; for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD."*

Now, I guess you know what happened at the time Jesus died on the cross, but let's have a look at it anyway for it is truly remarkable given what we have just seen about the veil.

Matt 27:50-51 *And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.*

The veil was torn in two! ^[2] And it was torn from the top down! Being completely outside the realm of possibility for any man to have done this, you can only imagine the impact on the priesthood at the time that saw this. They could only have recognised this as from the hand of God (for it was torn from the top down) and I am quite sure that this event had a huge bearing in the later salvation of many priests that we read about in the book of Acts:

The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

Moving beyond the veil

There are several New Testament scriptures that now encourage believers to move beyond the veil (see [Eph 2:13-18](#); [Heb 4:14-16](#), [Heb 6:19](#), [Heb 10:19-22](#)). Many believers stop at the brazen altar in the outer court. They are happy to be saved but have no desire to go further. Others learn to feed on Christ and grow as they move into the Holy Place. This is good but as the scriptures above indicate, God does want us to come into the Holies of Holies.

Now, as mentioned earlier, for the High Priest in the Old Testament this could only happen on one day of the year – The Day of Atonement. Now as the High Priest moved beyond the veil what did he see? Looking around he saw the ark of the covenant and upon that the mercy seat.

A place to find mercy...

[Exodus 25:21-22](#) *"You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. "There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel."*

The Ark of the Covenant represented the very presence of God. As the verse above mentions it is there that the Lord met with the High Priest. In fact, the whole Tabernacle was constructed just to house the Ark of the Covenant so that God could dwell among man. But how could a holy God dwell among sinful men? Well, the High Priest had to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice upon the mercy seat so that the sins of the nation could be atoned for. This had to occur each and every year. Now the amazing thing is that this earthly tabernacle was only a copy of the very real heavenly tabernacle which Jesus entered following His death.

[Hebrews 9:11-12](#) *'When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.'*

[Hebrews 9:22-24](#) *'In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 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.'*

Jesus entered the heavenly tabernacle by His own blood and in contrast to the earthly High Priest, Jesus sprinkled His own blood upon the heavenly mercy seat to make eternal redemption and atonement! The impact of this act is given to us in the book of Romans and Hebrews (amongst others!). Speaking of Jesus, Romans tells us that He was -

'...displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier^[3] of the one who has faith in Jesus.' ([Rom 3:25-26](#))

The word 'propitiation' in the passage above is the same word translated as 'mercy seat' in [Hebrews 9:5](#). Jesus fulfilled that to which the earthly mercy seat in the Holy of Holies pointed! His blood brought peace and forgiveness for those that have placed their faith in Him.

Contents of the Ark of the Covenant

Scripture tells us that there were three objects placed within the ark. Each object speaks of a different aspect of Jesus Christ. Let's have a look -

[Heb 9:3-4](#) *Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant.*

The Manna – That which had been a perfect food, containing all that the Israelites required to sustain them on their entire journey through the wilderness, was placed in the Ark. The manna was God's provision until they reached the Promised Land. Jesus Christ is God's provision today. He is the one that sustains and strengthens us on our journey. As Jesus said *"Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which*

comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world...I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.” (John 6:32-35)

Aaron’s Budding Rod – The second object placed in the Ark was Aaron’s rod. Now, this was just an ordinary rod. Well, ordinary apart from the fact that it would still bud, flower and bring forth almonds! [4] That a dead rod could produce fruit is a miracle. It speaks of resurrection life! It speaks of the one who though dead, came back to life after three days. And it is this resurrection life that God now grants believers today. Death can no longer have a hold on them just as it couldn’t contain their Saviour for the one who has defeated death is the one who now dwells within the believer by His Spirit!

Tablets of stone – the third and final object within the Ark was the stone tablets upon which God had written the 10 commandments with His own finger. In contrast to the first stone tablets that Moses broke, these tablets within the Ark of the Covenant speak to us of the one, the only one, who has ever kept the law of God in its entirety [5]. They speak to us of the one who said *“Here I am, it is written about me in the scroll, I have come to do your will, O God.” (Heb 10:7)* The Word of God states that despite all the difficulties that the devil could throw at Him, Jesus was yet without sin! *“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)*

Conclusion - The Presence that leads us to rest

Numbers 10:33 *So they set out from the mountain of the LORD and traveled for three days. The ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them during those three days to find them a place to rest.*

Finally the Ark of the Covenant, God’s presence, went before them to find for them a place of rest. Through the wilderness, across the Jordan, and into the Promised Land... it was the Ark of the Covenant that led the way. From the many difficulties that Israel faced in the wilderness to the warfare and conquest in the Promised Land... It was God’s presence with His people through the Ark of the Covenant that gained the victory and gave His people rest. So it is today. It is the person and presence of God that leads His people today... and it is the presence of God that will lead them tomorrow. Sometimes you will sense that presence. Quite often you won’t. It’s just the way it is. But none of that changes the fact that God will lead his people right to the very day when faith becomes sight and the final and eternal resting place is found.

To conclude, the tabernacle teaches us about sin, judgement, sacrifice and salvation. But most importantly it teaches us about Jesus. He is God’s gift to this world. He is the one that will lead and guide those who trust Him right within the very gates of Heaven and into the presence of God. This journey is told incredibly well in the words of this very well known hymn. Read these words again. This is the original poem written by John Newton that became probably the best known hymn of all time. This is the original version written by Newton in 1772. The last three stanzas are probably different from what you are used to. But they are very good! :o) Beyond the veil and home at last...

Amazing Grace

*Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound)
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I’m found,
Was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.*

*The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.*

*Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.*

*The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who call'd me here below,
Will be forever mine.*

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] The Ryrie Study Bible has a note on [Ex 26:31-25](#) that states '... Josephus reported that the veil was four inches thick, was renewed every year, and that horses tied to each side could not pull it apart. It barred all but the High Priest from the presence of God, but when it was torn in two at the death of Jesus of Nazareth access to God was made available to all who come through Him.'

[2] The Believers Bible Commentary says the following 'In the book of Hebrews we learn that the veil represented the body of Jesus. Its rending pictured the giving of His body in death. Through His death, we have "boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh" ([Heb 10:19-20](#)). Now the humblest believer can enter God's presence in prayer and praise at any time. But let us never forget that the privilege was purchased for us at tremendous cost—the blood of Jesus.

[3] I like the part of the verse that says that God is both just and the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus. The thought is this... After the fall of mankind, God's love and God's justice were in conflict! God's love would have forgiven the sinner but God's justice demanded judgement. God's justice would have judged the sinner but God's love constrained that judgement! So what is the answer? The only way that could satisfy both love and justice was for God to come as a man and take the penalty Himself that mankind deserved. Through that act He could be just (because the penalty of sin has been met) and also the justifier (because His love could now set the sinner free). In the death of Jesus on the cross the following verse was fulfilled:

Psa 85:10 Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

[4] I would encourage you to read the entire story in Numbers 16 and 17. Korah led a rebellion against Moses' authority because he (and others) thought that they should be allowed to be Priests. Now the Priesthood was restricted to those from the tribe of Levi and Korah was not from this tribe! In chapter 17 God brings forth a test to show who was the one (and line) that He had chosen. It was a simple test – each of the tribes had to place their rod before Him and the rod that brought forth life (almonds) was the one that He had chosen. This test confirmed that Aaron was the true High Priest.

The test is no different today. You want to know who God's chosen one is? Well, it's simple. That which was dead must bring forth life. And if that is the test then I would suggest to you that the true High Priest today is the one who was dead but came back to life... Jesus Christ!

Just as an extra note, you may ask why almonds? Sure, they're tasty, but why would God bring forth almonds on Aaron's rod and what has that got to do with Jesus Christ? Well, thanks for asking... a good question indeed! William MacDonald in the Believers Bible Commentary writes: "Just as the almond tree is the first to blossom in the spring, so Christ is the firstfruits of resurrection ([1Co 15:20](#), [1Co 15:23](#)). The golden lampstand in the holy place was "made like almond blossoms, each with its ornamental knob and flower" (Exo 25:33-34). It was a priestly function to take care of the lampstand daily. Aaron's rod corresponded in design and fruit to the lampstand, thus signifying that the household of Aaron had been divinely chosen to minister as priests."

[5]

You no doubt remember the story how Moses, after receiving the first tablets of stone upon which the Ten Commandments were written, came down the mountain and upon seeing the sin and idolatry of the Israelites he threw the tablets to the ground and broke them! ([Ex 32:19](#)) Ouch. Ooops. God had to write a second set of tablets and this set were stored in the Ark. Symbolically, the first set of tablets represent you and me. It represents mankind. No sooner has the law gone forth from God's own hand than we have broken it and disobeyed the commandment. But the second set represents Jesus. Through trial, temptation, weariness and pain, He conquered all and lived a sinless life. He had to so that He could be our substitute as a sin offering. In Isaiah, which I am currently studying, Jesus is speaking and says *'I was not disobedient Nor did I turn back. I gave My back to those who strike Me, And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed.'* ([Isaiah 50:5-7](#))