Jesus in the Tabernacle pt.2

1. Introduction

a. As we have seen the pattern given by God to Moses for the tabernacle contains many items which are types of Jesus. That is because, ultimately, Jesus replaced the tabernacle as the way to be able to meet with God. The tabernacle was a type of Christ pointing towards God's final provision of a way to salvation (the outer court), fellowship (the Holy Place) and ultimately encounter (the Holy of Holies) with Him.

b. Last time we looked at how salvation is only possible if the sacrifice for sin is offered and we are washed clean. We have to recognise our sinfulness and the need of a sacrifice and to come in repentance to receive salvation through Christ. We also saw that fellowship comes by allowing the light of Christ to guide us, by feeding on the Living Bread and offering up the incense of worship and prayer.

c. Today we begin by standing outside the Holy of Holies or Most Holy Place and gazing upon the curtain that separates it from the Holy Place.

2. The Curtain

Exodus 26:31-34 *"You are to make a special curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine twisted linen; it is to be made with cherubim, the work of an artistic designer.* ***32*** *You are to hang it with gold hooks on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold, set in four silver bases.* ***33*** *You are to hang this curtain under the clasps and bring the ark of the testimony in there behind the curtain. The curtain will make a division for you between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.* ***34*** *You are to put the atonement lid on the ark of the testimony in the Most Holy Place.*

a. 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 curtain made from fine twisted linen in blue, purple and scarlet and with cherubim. This curtain 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. You are aware that the responsibility of the cherubim is guard the place where God dwells (Gen.3:24) Everything about this curtain makes you very aware that beyond this curtain is the very presence of the King!

b. The curtain served as a physical separation keeping the priests out of the Holy of Holies. But this curtain is no ordinary curtain and entrance into the Holy of Holies is through no ordinary means. 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. The Holy of Holies is where God's Shekinah glory descended. It held the Ark of the Covenant, which represented God's presence with His people.

Isaiah 59:2 *But your sinful acts have alienated you from your God; your sins have caused him to reject you and not listen to your prayer*

c. The curtain was an ever present reminder of the sinfulness of man and the holiness of God. The priests could follow all of what was prescribed in God's law: offering sacrifices, consecrating themselves, putting out the bread, lighting the lamp, offering incense to Him. And yet, they still were not worthy to enter. Their sins, which were still present, were only covered. They were not dealt with finally.

d. Only once per year, the high priest would enter The Most Holy Place on the day of atonement. This was the only day of the year that the high priest could enter the most holy place and no one else was allowed to enter into any part of the tabernacle.

Lev.16:17 *Nobody is to be in the Meeting Tent when he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he goes out, and he has made atonement on his behalf, on behalf of his household, and on behalf of the whole assembly of Israel.*

e. There was only one person who could come into the meeting tent and through the curtain. Hebrew writings report that the curtain was four inches thick - how he got through a 4 inch thick curtain is a total mystery!!! He served as a mediator between the people and God, coming for the atonement of sins. Access to God was limited and restrictive.

f. This reminds us that by our own efforts it is impossible to come to God. There is only one way to God, His way. Sinful man, is locked out. If you try to come on your own you will run into the curtain, a barrier that you cannot break through. However ….

Mark 15:37-38 *But Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed his last.* ***38*** *And the temple curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom.*

g. When Jesus sacrifice was completed the curtain was torn in two. It happened instantly at His death. And it was supernatural, from top to bottom. The lesson for us is clear and simple. Jesus made the way for us to come to God. Jesus broke down the barrier. Jesus reconciles us to God. Jesus first takes our sin, our guilt, our shame, our unworthiness and strips it away. He then clothes us with His righteousness. And finally, He brings us into the Holy of Holies.

h. This is the glorious truth – the curtain that separated us from God was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died and entered into heaven as our High Priest. We can now live with hope and certainty that Jesus brings us into God's presence. Into the Most Holy Place.

Heb.6:19-20 *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, which reaches inside behind the curtain,* ***20*** *where Jesus our forerunner entered on our behalf*

i. Unfortunately, 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 wants us to come into the Most Holy Place.

3. The Most Holy Place

Hebrews 10:19-22 *Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus,* ***20*** *by the fresh and living way that he inaugurated for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,* ***21*** *and since we have a great priest over the house of God,* ***22*** *let us draw near with a sincere heart in the assurance that faith brings, because we have had our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water*

a. This is the most glorious good news! We can enter with confidence, the true heavenly throne room of God, of which the tabernacle is just a shadow. We can enter there because of the blood of Jesus. He opened a way through the curtain. Truly He is our great high priest. The Old Testament high priests offered the blood of animals to go in and symbolically bring the people of God. Jesus offered His own blood.

b. Notice His blood cleanses the heart and the conscience. We don't have to hesitate. We don't have to feel guilty. We can enter with confidence. We are not limited to the outer court of

salvation, or even the inner court of fellowship. We can enter right into the Holy of Holies and come into His presence.

4. The Ark of the Covenant

Exodus 25:21-22 *You are to put the atonement lid on top of the ark, and in the ark you are to put the testimony I am giving you.* ***22*** *I will meet with you there, and from above the atonement lid, from between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will command you for the Israelites.*

a. 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?

b. 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 *But now Christ has come as the high priest of the good things to come. He passed through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation,* ***12*** *and he entered once for all into the Most Holy Place not by the blood of goats and calves but by his own blood, and so he himself secured eternal redemption.*

Hebrews 9:22-24 *Indeed according to the law almost everything was purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.* ***23*** *So it was necessary for the sketches of the things in heaven to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves required better sacrifices than these.* ***24*** *For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with hands—the representation of the true sanctuary—but into heaven itself, and he appears now in God's presence for us*

c. 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.

Rom 3:25-26 *God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed.* ***26*** *This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness.*

d. 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.

5. The Golden Urn of Manna

a. 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 *And after the second curtain there was a tent called the holy of holies.* ***4*** *It contained the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered entirely with gold. In this ark were the golden urn containing the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant*

b. The manna that 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.

c. Jesus Christ is God's provision today. He is the one that sustains and strengthens us on our journey. As Jesus said,

John 6:32-35 *Then Jesus told them, "I tell you the solemn truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but my Father is giving you the true bread from heaven.* ***33*** *For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* ***34*** *So they said to him, "Sir, give us this bread all the time!"* ***35*** *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. The one who comes to me will never go hungry, and the one who believes in me will never be thirsty*

d. As the High Priest stood before the altar he was left in no doubt that he could only undertake this immense task by feeding on God and allowing Him to provide all that he needed. We too must never think that we can do God's work without feeding on his bread – the Lord Jesus Christ.

6. Aaron's Budding Rod

a. The second object placed in the Ark was Aaron's budding rod. This was just an ordinary rod. apart from the fact that it would still bud, flower and bring forth almonds! In Numbers 17:1-8 we read how God had Moses place twelve wooden staffs (representing the twelve tribes of Israel) in front of the Ark. Each staff featured the inscribed name of its tribe's leader, and God promised buds would sprout from the staff of the man He selected to serve as High Priest.

b. This rod reminds us that God is the one who chose the High Priest and gave him authority to minister to Him. In the same way, we need to recognise that God has chosen and given us Jesus as the way for us to enter into His presence. The presence of Aaron's staff in the Ark is fitting, since it points to Jesus who serves as our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-15). As High Priest, Jesus approached God on our behalf and offered a blood sacrifice to atone for our sins.

c. Also, the fact that a dead rod could produce fruit is a miracle that 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 us just as it couldn't contain our Saviour for the one who has defeated death is the one who now dwells within us by His Spirit!

7. Tablets of stone

a. **T**he 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.

b. They are symbolic of the dedication Jesus had to the law. Contrary to what some believe, Jesus didn't come to abolish the law, but to fulfil it (Matthew 5:17). Isaiah said the Messiah would exalt and honour the law (Isaiah 42:21), and Paul described how Jesus rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law because, when he was crucified, he took the curse for our wrongdoing upon Himself (Galatians 3:13).

8. The Ark of the Covenant

a. However, it's not just the contents of the Ark that point to Jesus and glorify His name. The design of the Ark itself points to Him. God, once again gave specific instructions for the top of the Ark.

Exodus 25;17-22 *You are to make an atonement lid of pure gold; its length is to be 45 inches, and its width is to be 27 inches.* ***18*** *You are to make two cherubim of gold; you are to make them of hammered metal on the two ends of the atonement lid.* ***19*** *Make one cherub on one end and one cherub on the other end; from the atonement lid you are to make the cherubim on the two ends.* ***20*** *The cherubim are to be spreading their wings upward, overshadowing the atonement lid with their wings, and the cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the atonement lid.* ***21*** *You are to put the atonement lid on top of the ark, and in the ark you are to put the testimony I am giving you.* ***22*** *I will meet with you there, and from above the atonement lid, from between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will command you for the Israelites.*

b. The Hebrew word translated here as atonement lid is *kappōret*. The traditional translation "mercy-seat" that is found in many translations came from Tyndale in 1530 and was also used by Luther in 1523 however the noun is actually formed from the word "to make atonement." The item that the Israelites should make would be more than just a lid for the ark. It would be the place where atonement was signified. The value of this place was that Yahweh sat enthroned above it, and so the ark essentially was the "footstool." Blood was applied to the lid of the box, for that was the place of atonement.

c. The cherubim on the top of the mercy seat are described as facing each other and the mercy seat itself. Their wings were outstretched and overshadow the mercy seat. These cherubim are an interesting feature, one that is not explained anywhere. But from their use elsewhere we can draw some conclusions.

d. The first mention of cherubim in the Bible is in Genesis 3:24. After Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, cherubim were placed on the east side of the garden, along with a flaming sword, to guard the way to the tree of life. The garden represented God's presence on earth and so the cherubim also seem to serve as gatekeepers to God's presence.

e. In 1 Samuel 4:4, and other places, God is described as being enthroned between the cherubim over the ark. Psalm 18:10 describes God as mounting the cherubim and flying. The first chapter of Ezekiel describes creatures that are later identified as cherubim. These creatures are strange indeed. But above their heads is the throne of God.

f. It seems like the cherubim are closely associated with God's presence. And so, these images of cherubim atop the mercy seat could symbolize God's presence and holiness. No image of God was allowed. But the images of the cherubim point to God's presence.

g. Interestingly we also see the design for the atonement lid revealed in John 20:12. Weeping outside of the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene looked inside and saw two angels - one sitting where Jesus's head had been and the other sitting where Jesus's feet had been. This is exactly the same as the design for the atonement lid for the Ark.

h. In the empty tomb, angels sat at opposite ends of the place where Jesus was laid to rest - the true mercy seat and place of atonement. Jesus, as our High Priest, applied His own blood to the mercy seat and thus brought us into God's presence. Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice. As our

High Priest, Jesus entered the Most Holy Place and secured our redemption forever with His own blood rather than the blood of animals (Hebrews 9:12).

i. Everything about the tabernacle was centred around the Ark – this was the focal point. When God gave Moses the instructions for the tabernacle He began by giving instructions for the Ark. In the Most Holy Place, God Himself was present in a cloud over the Ark's atonement lid or mercy seat (Leviticus 16:2; Numbers 7:89) and appeared as a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. This was where God's presence resided and we see this when we follow the story of the Ark through scripture.

j. The Ark 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.

k. So it is today. It is the person and presence of God that leads us today and it is the presence of God that will lead us tomorrow. Sometimes we sense that presence, quite often we don't. But none of that changes the fact that God will lead us right to the very day when faith becomes sight and the final and eternal resting place is found.

l. But where is the Ark now?

Rev.11:19 *Then the temple of God in heaven was opened and the ark of his covenant was visible within his temple. And there were flashes of lightning, roaring, crashes of thunder, an earthquake, and a great hailstorm.*

m. In the temple, John viewed the ark of God's covenant, the emblem of His faithfulness, presence, and atonement to the Israelites. The last chronological reference to the ark in the Old Testament is in 2 Chronicles 35:3. What happened to it after that is not known. Many scholars believe it perished in Shishak's invasion, during Manasseh's apostasy, when Nebuchadnezzar burned the temple in 586 B.C., or during the Babylonian captivity (1 Kings 14:26; 2 Kings 25:9; 2 Chron. 33:7; Jer. 3:16.)

n. Jewish tradition held that Jeremiah hid the ark in a cave on Mt. Sinai (2 Macc. 2:4-8). There was no ark in the second temple that Nehemiah built, which Herod the Great modernized, and which later perished in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. What John saw, however, was not the earthly ark but its heavenly counterpart (Heb. 9:24).

o. Whatever happened to the earthly Ark it has never been found and that makes sense since we no longer need an Ark to provide a place for God to meet with us because through Christ we have access through His blood into the heavenly throne room and into God's presence.

9. Conclusion

a. 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 into the very gates of Heaven and into the presence of God.

b. God's greatest desire is to dwell with us and Jesus echoes that cry of the Godhead in John 17

John 17:24 *Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they can see my glory that you gave me because you loved me before the creation of the world .*