



LESSON ONE

The Type of the Old Covenant and the Reality of the New Covenant

Scripture Reading:

HEBREWS 9:1-15

- 1 Now then the first covenant also had ordinances of service, and its sanctuary was of this world.
- 2 For a tabernacle was prepared, the first, in which were the lampstand and the table and the loaves that were set forth, which is called the Holy Place;
- 3 And after the second veil, a tabernacle, which is called the Holy of Holies,
- 4 Having a golden altar and the ark of the covenant covered about everywhere with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna and Aaron's rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant,
- 5 And above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the propitiation place, concerning which it is not now the time to speak in detail.
- 6 Now these things having been thus prepared, into the first tabernacle the priests enter continually, accomplishing their worship;
- 7 But into the second, only the high priest enters, once a year and not without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of ignorance of the people,
- 8 The Holy Spirit thus making this clear, that the way of the Holy of Holies has not yet been manifested while the first tabernacle still has its standing,
- 9 Which is a figure for the present time. According to this tabernacle both gifts and sacrifices are offered, which are unable to perfect, according to conscience, him who worships,
- 10 Consisting only of foods and drinks and various washings, being ordinances of the flesh, imposed until the time of setting things right.
- 11 But Christ, having come as a High Priest of the good things that have come into being, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not of this creation,
- 12 And not through the blood of goats and calves but through His own blood, entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, obtaining an eternal redemption.
- 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who are defiled sanctify to the purity of the flesh,
- 14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
- 15 And because of this He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that, death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

QUESTIONS:

Section 1:

1. What do the two tabernacles symbolize in Hebrews 9? What is the difference between the two, and where would you like to be?
2. Use examples to show that everything in the new testament age was symbolized by the items in the old testament age.
3. Explain that the first tabernacle signifying the old covenant was a type rather than the reality of the new covenant.

Section 2:

1. How did Christ accomplish the eternal redemption for us? Explain that redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ has an eternal effect.
2. How can we serve the living God? What is your experience?
3. What does it mean that Christ is the mediator of the new covenant?

Section 3:

1. Name all the furnishings in the outer court and the holy place
2. What do each of these furnishings (in the outer court and the holy place) represent in our experience?
3. Where in the tabernacle is the incense altar? And what is its function?

Section 4:

1. What are the three items in the ark of the testimony?
2. How are these items in the ark related to our experience today?
3. What is the result when we enjoy Christ as the tables of the covenant?

THE TYPE OF THE OLD COVENANT AND THE REALITY OF THE NEW COVENANT

In 9:1-3 we see that there were two tabernacles. Hebrews 9:1 says, "Now then the first covenant also had ordinances of service, and its sanctuary was of this world." The sanctuary here is the entire tabernacle (Exo. 25:8-9), including the first tabernacle which is called the Holy Place (v. 2) and the second tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies (v. 3). Verse 2 says, "For a tabernacle was prepared, the first, in which were both the lampstand and the table and the loaves that were set forth, which is called the Holy Place." By the term "Holy Place" in this verse we can understand that the first tabernacle was that part of the unique tabernacle which was called the Holy Place. Verse 3 says, "And after the second veil, a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies." The Holy of Holies was the second tabernacle. Hence, we have the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, and the second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies.

These two tabernacles are symbols of two covenants. The Holy Place is a symbol of the old covenant and the Holy of Holies a symbol of the new covenant. Although it is difficult to realize the true significance of these covenants, it is easy to understand them if we consider the tabernacle. According to 9:2, in the Holy Place, the symbol of the old covenant, there were the lampstand and the table. These two things were good, but they were far off from God's presence. Although a person could find nourishment at the table and enlightenment at the lampstand, he had no way to contact God. In the Holy Place there was neither God's presence nor the way to come into His presence. Moreover, in the Holy Place there was no oracle, no place for the divine speaking of God. Where there is the oracle, there is God's speaking. But in the Holy Place there was no divine speaking. Furthermore, there was no meeting with God in the Holy Place. The highest blessing is to meet with God. However, no one in the Holy Place could say that there he was meeting with God, for there was no way to meet Him in the Holy Place. Therefore, with respect to the Holy Place, there were four no's: no presence of God, no way to contact God, no oracle for the speaking of God, and no meeting with God.

This is a true picture of today's religion. Although the Holy Place is good and in it we may have nourishment and enlightenment, there is no presence of God, no way to come into His presence, no divine speaking, and no meeting with God. How pitiful!

We need to remember that the book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrew Christians who were staggering in the Holy Place. They were uncertain whether to come forward to the Holy of Holies or to shrink back from the Holy Place to the outer court. This means that they were on the border between the old covenant and the new

covenant. The writer of Hebrews was marvelous and full of patience; he did not write superficially but in a very deep way. His writing was so deep that during the past nineteen centuries most of his readers have not fully realized what he said.

We have seen that the Holy of Holies signified the new covenant. What was in the Holy of Holies? Hebrews 9:4 speaks of the Holy of Holies as "having a golden altar." The golden altar, which was the incense altar, was not in the Holy of Holies, but it belonged to the Holy of Holies. Notice that it does not say that the incense altar was in the Holy of Holies, but that the Holy of Holies had the incense altar. What is the function of the incense altar? It provides the way to come into God's presence. The incense altar signifies the proper prayer with Christ in resurrection as the incense for our acceptance. Hence, it is the entrance into God's presence. When I was in religion as a youth, I was taught to pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." Although we prayed a great deal in that way, we never entered into the Holy of Holies. Actually, the more we prayed in that way, the more we remained in the outer court, or even outside the outer court. That is not the experience of the incense altar. When we pray in the Lord's name with Him as the fragrant resurrection frankincense, we immediately enter into the Holy of Holies.

In 9:4 we see that in the Holy of Holies was also "the ark of the covenant covered round in every part with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant." Above the ark were "cherubim of glory overshadowing the propitiation-cover" (v. 5). Here in the Holy of Holies we not only have the entrance into God's presence but God's presence itself. Over the ark was the lid called the propitiation-cover, which was the place of the divine oracle of God's speaking. It is here that we have God's speaking. It is here that we meet with God and have fellowship and communion with Him. This is the new covenant symbolized by the Holy of Holies.

We all need to consider where we are. Are we Christians in a place where there is some amount of nourishment and enlightenment but no entrance into God's presence, no presence of God, no speaking of God, and no way to meet with God? Are we in that place or in the place where it is so easy to come into God's presence, have His speaking, and meet and have fellowship with Him? If you are in this place, then you are in the Holy of Holies.

The two tabernacles are not only symbols of two covenants but also types of two ages, two dispensations—the old testament dispensation and the new testament dispensation. If you are in the Holy Place, it means that you are in the old age, in the old

dispensation. If you are in the Holy of Holies, then you are in the new age, in the new dispensation.

The covenant and the age are one; they are inseparable. Without the age, there is no practical application of the covenant. The Holy Place, symbolizing the old covenant, symbolizes the old testament age. The Holy of Holies, symbolizing the new covenant, symbolizes the new testament age. Now the difficult point to understand is this: what is realized today in the new testament age was altogether a symbol in the old testament age. In the old testament age there were the shadows, but in the new testament age there are the realities. In the old testament age there was the covering of sins, which was a figure of the forgiveness of sins. In the old testament age there was the law of letters, which was a figure of the law of life in the new testament age. In the old testament age God was God to His people and His people were a people to Him according to the written law. That was a symbol that today in the new testament age God is God to us and we are a people to Him according to the law of life. Moreover, in the old testament age the priests taught the people to know God according to the law of letters. That was a shadow of the inward ability to know God in life according to the law of life. Therefore, everything in the new testament age was symbolized by the items in the old testament age.

I. THE FIRST TABERNACLE—THE HOLY PLACE, SIGNIFYING THE OLD COVENANT AS A TYPE

As we have seen, the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, signified that the old covenant was a type (9:1-2, 6, 8-10). Since the Holy Place was a symbol of the old covenant, it signified that the old covenant was a type of the new. Hence, the entire Holy Place was a type, a figure, not the reality.

A. Of This World

The first tabernacle was of this world, of this creation (9:1). It was altogether material, not spiritual, and it was on earth, not in heaven. It was a temporary type, not the permanent reality.

B. With Ordinances of Flesh

The first tabernacle had ordinances of flesh (9:10). None of these ordinances was in the spirit or according to the spirit. Every one of them was related to the flesh. Because they were of letters outwardly, not of life inwardly, they could only give the worshippers a form, not the slightest amount of life.

C. Unable to Perfect the Worshippers

The first tabernacle as a type of the old covenant was unable to perfect the worshippers (9:9). Because it was not spiritual and had no life, it was unable to perfect those who served God through it. It exposed the shortcomings of God's worshippers, but it could not perfect them with real things of life in spirit.

D. A Parable, a Type of the New Covenant

The first tabernacle was a parable, a type, of the new covenant. It was not the reality but only a type, a figure, of the reality. Nevertheless, the Jews hold the type as the real thing. We must tell them of this. They are very thoughtful and need this kind of help. The Hebrew believers likewise were not clear concerning this at their time and also needed help in this matter.

E. The Way of the Holy of Holies, of the New Covenant, Not Yet Manifested until the Time of Reformation

Verse 8 says that at that time "the way of the Holy of Holies" had "not yet been manifested while the first tabernacle still has its standing." At that time, the way of the Holy of Holies, that is, the way of the new covenant, had not yet been manifested. To say that the way into the Holy of Holies was not manifested while the first tabernacle still had its standing means that the way to enter into the new covenant had not yet been opened. When we come to 10:19-20, we shall see that a new and living way has been freshly cut. This is the way to enter into the Holy of Holies, into the new covenant. As we have seen, the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, signifies the old covenant, and the second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, signifies the new covenant. Now the veil that closed the Holy of Holies has been riven by the death of Christ (Matt. 27:51) since it has crucified the flesh (Heb. 10:20; Gal. 5:24), and the way of the Holy of Holies has been manifested. Hence, we do not need to remain in the Holy Place, the old covenant, in the soul; we must enter the Holy of Holies, the new covenant, in the spirit. This is the goal of this book. The writer seemed to be saying to his readers, "Hebrew brothers, you should no longer remain in the old covenant. You now have a new way to come out of the old covenant and enter into the new covenant." The writer's concept in the book of Hebrews is that the Holy of Holies and the new covenant are one; the Holy of Holies is the new covenant. When we come into the Holy of Holies, it means that we come into the new covenant, and when we come into the new covenant, we enter into the Holy of Holies.

Very few Christians have seen this or have found this key. But we have found the key, which is that the Holy of Holies is the new covenant and that the new covenant

is the Holy of Holies. When we come into the Holy of Holies, we are in the new covenant. In the new covenant we have the imparting of the law of life. In the new covenant God is our God and we are His people according to the law of life. In the new covenant we have the inward ability to know God and the forgiveness of our sins. If we put all these together, we find that we are in God's presence, at His oracle, and are meeting with God and having fellowship with Him. This is the new covenant with the law of life.

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II. THE SECOND TABERNACLE—THE HOLY OF HOLIES, SIGNIFYING THE NEW COVENANT AS A REALITY

The second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, signifies that the new covenant is a reality, not a type (vv. 3-5, 7-8, 10-12). Even during the old testament age, the Holy of Holies was not a type. It was a reality because God's shekinah glory, presence, and speaking were there. It was there that God met with people. However, in the old testament age, not all the people could come into the Holy of Holies, because the way of entering into it had not been manifested yet. The Holy Place was a type. Were the lampstand and the table in the Holy Place real? No, they both were pictures. But what about the shekinah glory and God's speaking in the Holy of Holies? They were realities. Although the way into the Holy of Holies was not manifested in the old covenant age, it has been manifested today. Therefore, we should no longer remain in the Holy Place; we must come forward into the Holy of Holies. When we enter into the Holy of Holies, we are in the new covenant enjoying all the bequests of the new covenant, which has become a testament. These bequests include God's presence, God's speaking, and God's meeting and having fellowship with us. While we have fellowship with God, He infuses and transfuses Himself into us. This is the reality of the new covenant. Do you realize that today we are here in the Holy of Holies? Have you seen that we are now in the oracle enjoying God's presence? Hallelujah, we have crossed the river! We have left the Holy Place on the other side and we are now on the golden side in the Holy of Holies. This is the book of Hebrews.

A. The Greater and More Perfect Tabernacle—the Better Covenant

Verse 11 says that Christ has come a "High Priest of the good things that have come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle." The greater and more perfect tabernacle is the better covenant. The Holy of Holies and the new covenant, which is the better covenant, are one.

B. Not of This Creation, Not Made by Man's Hand

The second tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, is "not made by hand, that is, not of this creation" (v. 11). It is made by God and is heavenly and eternal.

C. A Reformation, the Reality of the Old Covenant, Setting Things Right

Verse 10 speaks of "the time of setting things right." This phrase may also be rendered as "reformation." In the old testament age nothing was set right; nearly everything was upset. The time of setting things right occurred when Christ came the first time to fulfill all the shadows of the old testament so that a new covenant might replace the old one. Christ has set everything in its right position. The reality of the old covenant has set things right. This means that there has been a right arrangement, a right ordering. Hence, it is a reformation. This is different from the "restitution" in Acts 3:21, which will occur at Christ's second coming.

1. Christ Having Come as a High Priest of the Good Things That Have Come

The reformation depends upon Christ's first coming. He has "come as a High Priest of the good things that have come" (v. 11). His first coming is mainly for Him to be the High Priest. It is through His priesthood, the kingly and divine priesthood which He is now exercising in "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" as a more excellent ministry, that all things are set right with life in the spirit. The "good things that have come" are the things ministered by the kingly and divine priesthood of Christ.

2. Christ Having Entered Once for All into the Holy of Holies and Obtaining Eternal Redemption, Consummating the New Covenant

Verse 12 says, "nor through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, obtaining an eternal redemption." In the old covenant, the blood of goats and calves only made atonement for people's sins (Lev. 16:15-18); it never accomplished redemption for their sins, "for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). In Hebrew, the root of the word for atonement means "cover." Thus, "atonement" means to cover, not to take away sins. Since Christ as the Lamb of God took away the sin of the world (John 1:29) by offering Himself on the cross as the sacrifice for sins once for all (Heb. 9:14; 10:12), His blood, which He sprinkled in the heavenly tabernacle (12:24), has accomplished an eternal redemption for us, even the redemption of the transgressions under the first, the old, covenant (9:15),

which transgressions were only covered by animal blood. Thus, we have been “redeemed with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

a. Christ Having Offered Himself to God through the Eternal Spirit

Verse 14 says, “How much more will the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” On the cross, Christ offered Himself to God in the human body (10:5, 10), which body is a matter of time. But He did it through the eternal Spirit, who is of eternity, without any limit of time. Hence, in the eyes of God, Christ as the Lamb of God was “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). His offering of Himself was “once for all” (Heb. 7:27), and the redemption consummated through His death is eternal (9:12), having an eternal effect. The span of His redemption fully covers the span of sin.

b. His Blood Purifying Our Conscience from Dead Works to Serve the Living God

The blood of Christ purifies our conscience to serve the living God. To serve the living God requires a blood-purified conscience. To worship in dead religion or to serve any dead thing other than God does not require our conscience to be purified. The conscience is the leading part of our spirit. The living God whom we desire to serve always comes to our spirit (John 4:24) by touching our conscience. He is righteous, holy, and living. Our defiled conscience needs to be purified so that we may serve Him in a living way. To worship God in our mind religiously does not require this.

Verse 14 speaks of “dead works” and “the living God.” Since we were dead (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13), whatever we did, bad or good, was dead works before the living God. Hebrews is not a book which teaches religion, but a book which reveals the living God (3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22). To touch this living God we need to exercise our spirit (4:12) and have a blood-purified conscience. The blood of Christ was shed for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28). The new covenant was consummated with it (Heb. 10:29; Luke 22:20). It has accomplished eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12; Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19), and has purchased the church for God (Acts 20:28). It washes us from our sins (Rev. 1:5; 1 John 1:7), purifies our conscience (Heb. 9:14), sanctifies us (13:12), and speaks better things for us (12:24). By this blood we enter the Holy of Holies (10:19) and overcome Satan the accuser (Rev. 12:10-11). Therefore, it is precious and better than the blood of goats and bulls (9:12-13). We must highly value it and should not regard it common as animal blood. If we do, we shall suffer punishment by God (10:29-31).

3. Christ Being the Mediator of the New Covenant, the Executor of the New Testament

Verse 15 says, “And because of this He is Mediator of a new covenant, so that, death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant and the Executor of the new testament. By His death Christ has consummated the new covenant. In His death He has left this new covenant with us as a bequeathed testament, a designated will. Now in His resurrection, as the Mediator of the new covenant, He is the Executor of the new testament, executing what has been accomplished in the new covenant and bequeathed in the new testament.

a. To Enforce the New Covenant and Execute the New Testament

We have seen that all the promises of God have become accomplished facts in the new covenant through Christ’s redemptive work, and that all these accomplished facts have become bequests in the new testament. As the Mediator of the new covenant, Christ today in resurrection is enforcing the new covenant, and as the Executor of the new testament He is executing the new testament that all the bequests of the accomplished facts may become effective for us and that we may have the full enjoyment of them.

b. That the Called Saints Might Receive the Promise of the Eternal Inheritance

Today in His more excellent ministry with His kingly and divine priesthood, Christ as the Mediator is enforcing the new covenant, and as the Executor is executing the new testament so that the called saints might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (v. 15). What is the eternal inheritance? It is God Himself with all that He is, has, has done, and will do. All this is our eternal inheritance for our enjoyment. The way through which we inherit this is the new covenant. The promise of the eternal inheritance is based on Christ’s eternal redemption, not on our work. It is different from the promise in 10:36, which is conditioned on our endurance and doing the will of God. The eternal inheritance in the promise here is by the eternal redemption of Christ, whereas the great reward (10:35) in the promise in 10:36 is for our endurance and doing the will of God. Through His redemptive work, Christ has secured for us this promised eternal inheritance. Now with His resurrection life He is bringing us, the called and redeemed ones, into participation in all the riches of this eternal inheritance, according to the new testament in the new covenant way, that is, in the way of the Holy of Holies.

THE EXPERIENCES OF CHRIST PORTRAYED BY THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE

Christ is altogether mysterious, and our experiences of Him are also mysterious and very difficult to define. Thank God that this is clearly portrayed in His Holy Word by the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle, His dwelling place. This arrangement is of three sections: the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. In each section there was furniture. Many Bible teachers agree that the entire tabernacle with its contents is a detailed picture of Christ. When I studied the typology of the tabernacle as a youth, I was told that it was a picture of Christ, but I was never taught that it was also a portrait of our experiences of Christ. Gradually in my experience throughout the years, I came to realize that the arrangement of the furniture of the tabernacle presents a full definition of our experiences of Christ. We need to enter into the experiences of Christ as shown in the arrangement of the furniture in God's dwelling place.

I. IN THE OUTER COURT—IN AN OUTWARD WAY

In the outer court are the brass altar and the brass laver. Both of these signify the experiences of Christ in an outward way.

A. At the Brass Altar

At the brass altar, which signifies the cross (Exo. 40:29), we participate in Christ mainly as our sin offering and also as all the other offerings (Heb. 13:10, 12; 10:12). In principle, the offerings solve our problems with God, fully reconciling us to Him and making our situation with God righteous and peaceful. Through the cross of Christ, we are right with God and with one another. Christ as our sin offering has solved the problem of sin, and as our peace offering He has also made peace between us and God and with one another. Thus, through the offerings offered by Christ on the cross, our condition is one of righteousness and peace. This is the first experience that we enjoy in Christ outwardly.

B. At the Brass Laver

After the altar is the laver, which signifies the washing of the Spirit. Both the altar and the laver were made of brass. In typology, brass signifies God's righteous judgment. The washing of the Spirit is based upon the judgment Christ has borne for us. At the brass laver (Exo. 40:30-32) we partake of the washing of the Spirit, which is based upon the redemption of Christ (Titus 3:5). Although we have experienced Christ as the offerings, before we can come into God's presence we

also need to be washed, cleansed by the Spirit. This also is somewhat outward.

II. IN THE HOLY PLACE—IN AN INNER WAY

After having the two kinds of experiences in the outer court, we are qualified to come into the tabernacle. Firstly, we enter into the Holy Place, where our experiences of Christ turn from the outward to the inward. Here, in the Holy Place, we experience Christ in an inner way.

A. At the Showbread Table

When we enter into the Holy Place, the first item of furniture is the showbread table (Exo. 40:22-23), which signifies Christ as our life supply (John 6:35, 57). On the showbread table twelve loaves of bread were displayed. The number twelve signifies eternal completion and perfection. Christ is our eternal bread. Our inward enjoyment of Him at the showbread table is eternal.

B. At the Lampstand

After the showbread table is the lampstand (Exo. 40:24-25), where we experience Christ as the shining light of life (John 1:4; 8:12). That the experience of the lampstand follows the experience of the showbread table indicates that the light comes out of our enjoyment of Christ as our life supply. When we enjoy Christ as our food, we have light because the "life is the light of men" (John 1:4). This light does not come from knowledge but from the life we enjoy.

While the showbread table has twelve loaves of bread, the lampstand has seven lamps. Seven is also a number of completion, but it is not the number of eternal completion. It is the number of completion in God's dispensational move, denoting a completion in God's movement. For eternity we shall have the life supply, but the purpose of the lampstand is to enable God's people to move and act in the dark age. It is for God's dispensational move. In His economy and dispensation, God has His movement and action, which need the shining of the divine light. This shining is complete. As we enjoy Christ as our life, this life becomes the light by which we move and act in God's economy. Our experience proves this. Firstly, we enjoy Christ as life and as the life supply. Then this life shines within us, and we know how to move and act.

C. At the Incense Altar

The last item of furniture in the Holy Place is the golden altar, which is the incense altar. The incense altar, lampstand, and showbread table form a triangle. The showbread table was on the north, the lampstand on the south, and the incense altar between them on the west, very close to the separating veil. At the incense altar we

share in Christ as the sweet incense toward God for our acceptance by God (Eph. 1:6). God accepts us because of Christ, not because of what we are. This is why we must pray to God in the name of Christ. If we pray in, by, and with ourselves, our prayer will never be accepted. Christ as the acceptable, sweet incense must be added to our prayer. Our prayer is like a censer, and Christ is like the fragrant incense that is put into the censer. When we pray in and with Christ, Christ as incense is mingled with our prayer as it ascends to God. This incense becomes the element that makes our being and our prayer acceptable to God.

Although the incense altar is not in the Holy of Holies, it directs and leads us into the Holy of Holies. It is in the Holy Place, but its function is for the Holy of Holies. Hence, it is more inward than both the showbread table and the lampstand.

The Old Testament record of the incense altar's standing place implies the closest relation of the incense altar to the ark of testimony, over which is the propitiation-cover, where God meets His people. According to the Hebrew, Exodus 30:6 says, "Thou shalt put it [the incense altar] before the veil that is over the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee." We must be very careful in reading this verse. The incense altar was put before the veil that is "over the ark of the testimony." The preposition "by" means that the veil is separating the ark from the incense altar, whereas the preposition "over" means that the veil is not separating but simply covering the ark. The veil did not separate the incense altar from the ark; it covered the ark. Therefore, putting the incense altar before the veil was the same as putting it before the ark. Exodus 40:5 even says that the incense altar is set "before the ark of the testimony" without mentioning the separating veil that stands between them. Thus, the incense altar was before the ark. According to God's economy, the covering veil was not to exist for eternity; it was to be removed. When the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, this veil was taken away. According to God's eternal economy, the veil should no longer be there. In a sense, it was there not as a separating veil but as a covering veil. When the veil is removed, the incense altar is in front of the ark. When the book of Hebrews was written, the veil was gone. There was no veil in the eyes of God. Moreover, in Revelation 8:3 we see that the golden altar is before the throne of God. There is no separating veil. Thus, even in Exodus 40:3 and 21 the veil was, in the eyes of God, a covering veil, not a separating veil.

First Kings 6:22 (ASV) says that the incense "altar... belonged to the oracle." "Oracle" here means the "speaking place" of God, denoting the Holy of Holies, in which was the ark of testimony with the propitiation-cover, where God spoke to His people. Thus, the Old

Testament indicated already that the incense altar belonged to the Holy of Holies. (Though it was in the Holy Place, its function was for the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies. On the day of atonement, both the incense altar and the propitiation-cover of the ark of testimony were sprinkled with the same blood for atonement—Exo. 30:10; Lev. 16:15-16.) Hence, in Exodus 26:35, only the showbread table and the lampstand are mentioned as being in the Holy Place, not the incense altar.

The incense altar is related to prayer (Luke 1:10-11), and in Hebrews we are shown that to pray is to enter the Holy of Holies (10:19) and to come to the throne of grace, which is signified by the propitiation-cover over the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies. Our prayer often begins with our mind, which is a part of our soul, signified by the Holy Place. But our prayer always ushers us into our spirit, signified by the Holy of Holies.

Due to all these points, the writer of this book had to reckon that the incense altar belongs to the Holy of Holies. Verse 4 does not say that a golden altar is *in* the Holy of Holies, as the lampstand and the table are *in* the Holy Place, but that the Holy of Holies *has* a golden altar, since it belongs to the Holy of Holies. This concept fits the whole emphasis of the book of Hebrews which is that we should press on from the soul (signified by the Holy Place) to the spirit (signified by the Holy of Holies).

The incense altar typifies Christ in His resurrection as the sweet and fragrant incense in which God extends His well-pleasing acceptance to us. We pray with such a Christ to contact God that God may be pleased to speak to us. We speak to God in our prayer with Christ as the sweet incense, and God speaks to us in the sweet savor of this incense. This is the dialogue in the sweet fellowship between us and God through Christ as the sweet incense.

-----[SECTION 4] -----

III. IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES— IN THE INNERMOST WAY

A. At the Ark of Testimony

After the Holy Place is the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies we experience Christ in the innermost way. Firstly, at the ark of testimony (Exo. 40:20-21), we partake of Christ as the embodiment of God for God's testimony (Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3a). The word testimony here actually means the law of God, the ten commandments, which were put into the ark. Since the law was God's testimony, the ark into which it was put was called the ark of testimony. According to our natural concept, we think that the law is something which regulates us and makes demands and

requirements of us. In the Bible, however, the law is not mainly for regulations but for a testimony of what God is. Any kind of law is the expression of the one who makes it, the legislator. The ark of testimony is a type of Christ, the true testimony of God, who is the embodiment and expression of all God is. In the Holy of Holies, in the innermost part of God's dwelling place, we experience Christ as the ark of God's testimony. It is here that we enjoy Christ as the embodiment and expression of all God is, not only as the Redeemer, the life supply, and the light of life, but as all God is. The riches and the fullness of the very Godhead are our enjoyment here in Christ. Nothing in our experience of Christ can be richer and higher than this.

B. In the Ark of Testimony

1. Enjoying Christ as the Hidden Manna

In the ark of testimony we enjoy Christ in three aspects. Firstly, we enjoy Him as the hidden manna (Exo. 16:33-34). The hidden manna was in the golden pot, signifying our experience of Christ as our life supply in the innermost way, much more inward than that signified by the showbread table in the Holy Place. When the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, they ate the outward, open manna, but now we eat the inward, hidden manna in the Holy of Holies, the manna hidden in the golden pot in the ark. This is the manna promised to the overcomer in Revelation 2:17. The open manna was food for all the people who were outside the dwelling place of God wandering in the wilderness, whereas the hidden manna is for the person who is remaining in the innermost part of God's dwelling place, no longer wandering in the soul but abiding in the presence of God in the spirit.

2. Enjoying Christ as the Budding Rod

In the ark of testimony there is also the budding rod, signifying our experience of Christ as our acceptance by God in resurrection life for authority in the God-given ministry (Num. 17:3, 5, 8, 10). This is more inward than the experience of Christ as the incense for our acceptance by God. Aaron's budding rod signifies resurrection life. Where there is resurrection life, there is authority. Hence, the budding rod means authority in the resurrection life for our God-given ministry. The Israelites were debating about who had authority to represent God. When God caused Aaron's rod to bud, it signified that in resurrection he was authorized to represent God, to be God's deputy authority. It is the same today. The elders and ministers of the divine Word must have the authority which comes from resurrection life. The incense altar only signifies our acceptance in Christ by God, whereas the budding rod not only signifies Christ as our acceptance by God but also Christ as our authority given by God in His resurrection life. Here nothing is natural or within ourselves; everything is in resurrection, in the hidden Christ. It is here that the

resurrected and hidden Christ becomes our God-given authority in His resurrection life, which is budding, even in the cold darkness, without any element of death.

3. Enjoying Christ as the Tables of the Covenant

In the ark of testimony, Christ is also experienced as the tables of the covenant, the tables of the testimony, the ten commandments, that is, as our inward law of life, testifying, enlightening, and regulating us according to God's divine nature (Heb. 8:10). We have seen the law of the ten commandments was the testimony of God. It was only a figure, a form, not the reality of all God is. But the inward law of life, which is Christ Himself as the testimony of God, is the real testimony of God. When this inward law of life testifies, enlightens, and regulates us according to God's divine nature, it infuses God's divine nature and divine attributes into our being, conforming us to the image of God that we may express Him and represent Him. The last point in our experiences of Christ is that God's divine nature is imparted into our being to make us the same as God in nature and expression. The function of the inward law of life is to permeate and saturate us by infusing into us the elements of the Firstborn Son of God, the standard model, making us a reprint of the standard model so that God might have a corporate expression of Himself to fulfill His eternal purpose. This is the ultimate consummation of the experiences of Christ. We should not linger at the altar, for that is simply the starting point of our experiences of Christ. We must come forward until we reach the ultimate experience, the inward law of life, the focus of all the experiences of Christ in God's economy.

Negatively, the inward law of life, which is the automatic working of the divine life, kills the Adamic element within us, and, positively, it supplies us with all the elements of Christ. As the inward law of life works within us, the Adamic element is continually reduced and eliminated and the element of Christ, the divine element, is gradually added into our being. This discharging of the old element and adding of the new element is metabolic transformation. Eventually, we shall become exactly the same as Christ. Christ has passed through a process to enter into His perfection and glorification. Now He is repeating this process within us, bringing us into His perfection and glorification. This is the Christian life process and it must be our daily experience. When we open ourselves to the Lord and say, "Lord Jesus, I love You and I want You to occupy me, possess me, and make me one with You," the divine life, which was sown into our being at the time of Christ's resurrection, will work automatically. This working will bring about a thorough transformation, and we shall be conformed to the image of God's Firstborn Son. We shall be wholly "sonized" and brought into Christ's perfection and glorification. As this process transpires within us and the inward law of

life works Christ into every part of our being, Christ is formed in us (Gal. 4:19). This is the most secret mystery in the whole universe. Eventually, God will be wrought into man and man will be mingled with God. God and man, man and God, will thus become one entity. This is today's church and tomorrow's New Jerusalem. This is the divine economy. How blessed we are to see this!

The last and consummate experience of Christ as portrayed by the arrangement of the furniture in the tabernacle is the inward law of life. Romans 8:2 says that this is the law of the Spirit of life. The experience of Christ begins at the cross and consummates with the Spirit. Even the Triune God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, consummates with the Spirit. The Father is far from us, the Son is close to us, and the Spirit comes into us. Although the Son and the Father may be present, without the Spirit we can have no experience of Them. All the experiences of the Triune God depend upon the consummation of the Spirit. The inward law of life is just the working of the Spirit who is the Spirit of life. God is Spirit (John 4:24). Christ, as the last Adam, was made a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b); hence, He is now the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). The third of the Triune God is the Spirit. All our experiences of the Triune God must consummate with the Spirit. Moreover, the outer court corresponds to our body, the Holy Place to our soul, and the Holy of Holies to our spirit. Of these three parts, the spirit is the most important. Eventually, the consummate point of the experience of Christ is the Spirit of the Triune God in the human spirit of the tripartite man. The inward law of life signified by the table of testimony within the ark of testimony in the Holy of Holies simply denotes the Spirit of the Triune God working in the human spirit of the tripartite man. It is like the witnessing of the Spirit with our spirit (Rom. 8:16).

All real Christians have been to the altar—the cross of Christ. We thank God for this. But many Christians insist on staying at the altar, desiring to remain at the cross for eternity. Many people say, “Isn’t the cross sufficient? Isn’t the Lord’s blood precious?” We appreciate the cross and the blood as much as, if not more than, all Christians do. But this is elementary; it is just the ABC’s. If we look at the portrait of the furniture in the tabernacle, we shall see that we must come forward. We must tell all Christians to come forward. Do not merely come forward to the laver, where you may have some washings of the Spirit. Come forward to the experience of the rich supply of nourishment at the showbread table and to the enlightenment of the lampstand. But there is still more than this. We must come forward to the incense altar which ushers us into the Holy of Holies. Our incense altar today is our prayer with Christ. Many times we begin praying in our mind, but our prayer ushers us into the spirit, into the Holy of Holies.

In the Holy of Holies is the ark. The first of the three items in the ark is the hidden manna. With respect to the hidden manna, there are three layers of coverings: the tabernacle covering the ark, the ark covering the golden pot, and the golden pot covering and containing the hidden manna. Here in the golden pot we enjoy Christ in the most hidden way. It is not only in the Holy of Holies and in the ark but also in the golden pot. What is the golden pot? It is the divine nature of the Triune God which contains Christ, the standard model, as our life supply. How deep is this thought! When we enjoy Christ as our life supply in such a hidden and mysterious way, we shall experience the rod budding with authority in resurrection life. The budding rod brings us to the consummate item of God’s economy—the inward law of life (signified by the table of testimony), the working of the Spirit of the Triune God within us. The inward law of life is working within us, infusing the element of God into our being and making us a corporate reproduction of the standard model. In this way, God can have the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. This is what God desires today.