

# CHIEF

## MINISTRIES

June 2018

*And commanded the people, "As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it. <sup>v4</sup>Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about two thousand cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before." (Joshua 3:3-4 ESV) They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." (Hebrews 8:5 ESV)*

During the era of the Mosaic law (1300 B C – 33 A D). God gave Moses basically 2 things: teaching and miracles. You could say these precipitated what we call the Word and the Spirit. The Word included the moral law (the 10 Commandments), the ceremonial law (how the people of Israel should worship God), and the civil law (how the people of God should govern themselves). The Spirit was seen in such things as the lightning at Sinai, the thick cloud over the mountain, the daily manna, the supernatural guidance by the pillar of cloud and fire. The Word was not only for the teaching of God's ancient people but also for us today. *"For whatever was previously written was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).*

During this period there was a surprising mixture between the symbols and God's actual presence. The symbols pointed to the coming of Christ and the Holy Spirit – over 1300 years later – and the real presence of the Lord. Such symbols included the tabernacle generally and things in the tabernacle particularly – the bread, the incense, the lampstand, the most holy place, and the ark of the covenant. *For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. <sup>v3</sup> Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, <sup>v4</sup> having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. <sup>v5</sup> Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. (Hebrews 9:2-5 ESV).*

Even though Moses gave them these symbols, God had a way of revealing Himself immediately and directly from time to time. In other words, these symbols pointed to the future coming of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but there came also an extraordinary display of the manifest presence of God in Moses's day and at various times later on. So whereas things such as the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were symbolic for the future fulfillment, God had a way of manifesting Himself during this period in an astonishing manner.

During the 40-year period in the wilderness the immediate and direct presence of the Lord was, as I said, manifested by the cloud by day and the fire by night. These supernatural manifestations of God's presence were given to the children of Israel primarily for guidance. *Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. <sup>v37</sup> But if*

*the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. v.38 For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys. (Exodus 40:36-38 ESV).*

I often think we have an interesting occurrence in our day – of symbols only! Whether it be the burning of incense in the more liturgical churches or the manufactured smoke in the services of some charismatic churches, there is a curious absence of the real presence of God! Some churches have pictures of doves. Some churches have flag wavers, which are made to look like flames of fire or running water. But so often, the symbols are all there is – just the symbols.

Many believers long for the true presence of God to emerge in churches where there so often seems to be symbols only. I suspect that with the diminishing of the genuine presence of God there is an increase in symbols.

The tabernacle – a tent – in the wilderness was erected under Moses’s leadership. And yet Moses merely built it according to a divine plan. Creative though Moses may have been, he was not given liberty to do as he thought best: he had to follow instructions. Everything pertaining to the tabernacle – the ark, the table, the lampstand, had to be carried out “*according to their pattern which was shown to you on the mountain*” (Exodus 25:40). After all, what Moses made was a “*shadow*” of what was in heaven (Hebrews 8:5).

In other words, the real – or the original – is in heaven. All that was on earth was a copy of the real. What is more, the tabernacle pointed forward to two fulfillments: the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit. All that is in the tabernacle pointed to these and to His presence.

There were two compartments of the tabernacle: The holy place and the most holy place – also called the holy of holies. This was at times referred to as the tent of meeting. It was where God met with Moses and spoke to him face-to-face. (Exodus 33:7-11).

In the first room – the holy place – there were the table, the lampstand and the altar of incense. On the table was the bread, called showbread or bread of the presence. The bread was eaten by the priests and was once used in an emergency for David when he was on the run (1 Samuel 21:6). The bread pointed to Jesus – who called Himself the “*bread of life*” (John 6:48). The bread also pointed to the Lord’s supper – bread being the symbolic body of Jesus. “*I will tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink, His blood, you have no life in you*” (John 6:53).

Yes, the Lord’s supper, – the Eucharist, or Holy Communion – was God’s symbolic presence. Roman Catholics teach that the bread and wine are literally the body and blood of Jesus once the priest proclaims “this is my body...this is my blood.” This is called transubstantiation. Martin Luther came up with a ‘view’ he called consubstantiation, that the bread and wine are paired with His body and blood. Ulrich Zwingli regarded the Lord’s supper as only a memorial of Jesus’s death on the cross. John Calvin believed that Jesus is spiritually present in the Lord’s supper when we believe this by faith. I believe there can be a great sense of His presence in a manner promised uniquely in the Lord’s Supper. The Cane-Ridge revival was started in Red River Kentucky due to a powerful manifestation of the power of God during the Lord’s Supper.

The Lord’s supper is so sacred that God sent judgment on certain Christians at Corinth. Because they partook in a manner “unworthily” – that was, showing contempt for certain members of the church. God sent illness and sometimes death to these believers (1 Corinthians 11:21-32).

Also in the first room of the tabernacle was the altar of incense. This was to be burning continually. It was positioned next to the curtain that separated the holy place from the most holy place. The aroma went through the curtain, making its way into the holy of holies. Symbolizing the prayers of God's people. Prayer is to be made continually before God. For our prayers are a sweet smell to God that wafts into His very presence. In the book of Revelation we are told that an angel, *"was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of all the saints ascended before God from the angel's hand"* (Revelation 8:3-4). This is a reminder that all our prayers are special to God, that they are bottled up in heaven – only to be poured out in His time.

The Golden lampstand, the menorah with its seven branches, is what gives illumination in the holy place. Otherwise the priests would not be able to walk around in the tabernacle at night. Jesus fulfilled this when He said, *"I am the light of the world, whoever follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"* (John 8:12).

The second room is the most holy place. This represented the immediate presence of God. A curtain separated the holy place from the most holy place, or holy of holies. In the most holy Place was the ark of the covenant. This was the most sacred and fearful item of all. Inside the ark were the tablets of stone on which God wrote the ten Commandments, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. (Hebrews 9:3-4). On top of the ark was a slab of gold – called the mercy seat. Only one man – the high priest – could enter the most holy Place, and this was done only once a year – on the Day of Atonement. A bell was tied to his ankle so it could be heard outside. A rope was also tied to his ankle so that he could be dragged out in the event he should die or be struck dead. The high priest never entered the most holy place without the blood of an animal. He would sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat.

When we remember that the tabernacle was a copy of the true tabernacle in heaven, it is a reminder that there is a heavenly mercy seat. Jesus entered heaven *"by His own blood"* (Hebrews 9:12) and sprinkled it on the heavenly mercy seat. It was at the mercy seat that the atonement of Christ took effect.

When Moses finished the work, God put His seal on the tabernacle. *"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle"* (Exodus 40:34-35).

This is what I mean regarding the real presence of God mixing with the symbol. The tabernacle was a symbol; all the things in the tabernacle were symbols, and yet God manifested His visible presence in the original tabernacle. He would do this later at the dedication of Solomon's Temple. When the ark was brought into the temple, *"the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not continue to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord"* (1 Kings 8:10-11).

The ark therefore was the most hallowed of all the symbols. And yet the Israelites would need instructions concerning the ark that would teach them reverence. On the day the children of Israel prepared to cross over the Jordan into the Promised Land, Joshua gave instructions. They were told to keep a distance from the ark *"of two thousand cubits...Do not draw closer to it"* (Joshua 3:4). For the ark not only symbolize the presence of God; it also represented the awesomeness and glory of God. Here again, what was a symbol of God's presence was nonetheless very real: *"when the carriers of the ark came to the Jordan, the feet of the priests carrying the ark dipped into the edge of the water... Then the water that flows down from upstream stood still and rose up in a heap very far away"* (v15-16). The priests who carried the ark stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan. This was reminiscent of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea on dry land. *All Israel passed by the ark until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry land* (verse 17).

These things said, God would not allow the ark to be “used” – manipulated. The Israelites made a huge mistake one day. They used the ark as a superstitious symbol, as if its presence would substitute for people’s responsibility. When they lost four thousand soldiers in battle with the Philistines, they concluded that the ark’s presence would have saved them. *“Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh to us, that it might come among us and rescue us out of the hand of our enemies”*. So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of Hosts, who dwells above the cherubim (1 Samuel 4:3-4). This gave the Israelites a premature sense of victory. When the *“ark of the covenant of the Lord came up into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the ground was in an uproar.”* (verse 5). It also produced a demoralizing of the Philistines, but that was temporary. For the Philistine fought and Israel lost thirty thousand soldiers. Not only that, the ark of God was captured (verse 10-11)

The Israelites could not figure this out. How could this happen to them? If the ark didn’t fight for them, what hope did they have? But while the ark was with the Philistines, the result was disastrous for them. Their god Dagon, fell on its face before the ark. Not only that, but also *“the hand of God was very heavy”* on the Philistines wherever the ark went (1 Samuel 5:3, 11). The eventual consequence was that the Philistines gladly sent the ark back to Israel. But when the ark came to Beth-shemesh, some seventy of the men were suddenly put to death, *“because they had looked into the ark of the Lord”* (1 Samuel 6:19). Whereas the ark was a symbol of God’s presence. God overruled in a manner that it was more than just a symbol. When King David ordered the ark to be brought to Jerusalem, *“Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God because the oxen had stumbled”, immediately God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God* (2 Samuel 6:6-7).

Therefore, through the law and those things that came with the law, such as the ark, were only shadows and not the realities themselves, God himself was never far away. But when Jesus died on the cross, He fulfilled all the things that the mosaic law had introduced. The book of Hebrews shows how Jesus’s death was a fulfillment of the Day of Atonement. When Jesus cried out, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). He meant that the law was fulfilled on our behalf.

Possibly the most extraordinary sense of God’s presence of all time was the day Jesus died (we call it Good Friday). While Jesus was crying out, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?”*, Darkness covered the land. It lasted for some three hours (Matthew 27:45-46). What was the darkness? It was the awesome, fear-inducing glory of God. His manifest presence. It was His glory. When Moses introduced the Day of Atonement, God said, *“Speak to Aaron your brother so that he does not come at any time into the Holy Place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is on the ark, so that he will not die, for I will appear in the cloud on the mercy seat”* (Leviticus 16:2). Note carefully: God Himself would appear in the cloud. Recall that when the ark was brought into the temple, the cloud filled it. The priests could not perform their service, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple. But Solomon then said, *The Lord has said that He would dwell in thick darkness*” (1 Kings 8:12). A dark cloud. That is what took place on Good Friday – it was the divine affirmation of the cross. It was God’s seal on His Son’s death. Darkness, the manifest presence of God, filled the earth.

But there is more. The Feast of Pentecost – meaning 50 days – came annually to commemorate the giving of the law. The Holy Spirit came down on the disciples 50 days following the death of Jesus. As Jesus’s death signified the fulfilling of the mosaic law, so the coming of the Spirit ratified Jesus’s fulfillment of it. *“If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law”* (Galatians 5:18).

The Holy Spirit would produce the awe toward the things of God that were taught by Moses and Joshua. The aftermath of Pentecost was summed up: *“Everyone was filled with awe”* (Acts 2:43). When Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit and were struck dead – much like those who abused the ark – *“great fear came upon the entire church”* (Acts 5:11). They were scared. Everybody was.

I doubt the early church needed pictures of doves to remind them of the Holy Spirit. There was no need to burn incense. Symbols are not needed when God Himself is manifestly present.

So.... I now ask you. Are you full of God's presence? Do you walk with Him and talk with Him? Is His presence what you long for, desire to be overcome by? We sing the song, "Holy Spirit you are welcome here" and we talk of "letting the Spirit take control", and then we have all these 'people' "steadying the ark", putting their two cents (if it's even worth that!) into the mix and are busy controlling the Spirit – or trying to! "No, we don't have time for that they'll say", "Uh, we've got to keep the service moving – we have an agenda, you know"....the 'leaders' who have been put 'in charge', couldn't lead someone out of a wet paper bag! Lord, PLEASE, awaken the church – Your church, the body, breathe life, spiritual life, back into Your body. Let our spiritual lungs be able to hold what You want to do. These prisons are ripe, Lord, but it always seems like the 'leaders' are never listening, only to their own voice, never taking the time to really hear from You, O God! Have mercy, Lord. Come sit on the mercy seat that those who love You and serve You have prepared for You and Your presence, Lord, and for all those prophesying their own agendas, move them out of the way, Lord. Any hindrances, any encumbrances Lord that are keeping You from pouring out a fresh rain of Your Spirit, Lord; from the top on down. From wardens to majors to captains to lieutenants to sergeants to CO-V's down to CO-I's, from state directors to regional directors in every department, from chaplains to clerks to field ministers to teachers to every inmate involved in any kind of ministry, Lord; if they're not for You, they're against You! Remove them in Jesus name as we attempt to bring in the end time harvest behind the walls of the prison. For every ministry trying to build their own name or their own kingdom; take away their ability, Lord to even get into the gates. We desire lovers of Your presence to help educate and draw us closer to You. Help them that love You and only You and put You first above ALL else! Let Your Glory fall my Lord. Let Your presence change us as we submit to You and only You, in Jesus's powerful, Almighty name. Amen!

Can You Feel That?

Hallelujah,

## ***Chief***

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***Christ's***

***Heart***

***In***

***Every***

***Felon***