

1. Introduction

In last message, "Worship in God's Presence Part 2," I touched on the tabernacle briefly.

The tabernacle is mentioned in Exodus, in Old Testament, and was a place to worship God and also called the tent of meeting. It was meant to be not only a place where we worship God but also where God would meet us.

In Old Testament days, once a year in "the Most Holy Place" only the high priest was able to meet God. But in New Testament days, through Jesus Christ, all the curtains were torn and we all have come to meet God anytime and anywhere. Jesus also appeared as somebody we can see, and according to 1 John 1:1, Jesus was "from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands touched-this we proclaim concerning the Word of life."

Jesus didn't just appear among us, but 1 John teaches us:

1) Jesus was from the beginning, which means Jesus is God.

2) Jesus was which we have heard. John is one of the people who heard Jesus talk in person.

John got closer to Jesus little by little, not only physically but also spiritually, and heard Jesus' words.

He just didn't hear Jesus but learned to hear the depth of Jesus' stories and words and appreciated them.

3) Jesus was "which we have seen with our eyes." Invisible God appeared in front of John as what he could see, and John tells about witnessing Jesus with his own eyes. This may have been very unusual and unrealistic to the Jews, but John gave a testimony of his own experience, doing something extraordinary.

4) Jesus was "which we have looked at." John not only saw Jesus and was able to see Jesus, but also looked at Jesus. Another translation also says "stared at" Jesus. This "looking" must have had intention. John was looking at Jesus with the intention of understanding Jesus.

5) Jesus was which "our hands have touched." Just like the third one, "which we have seen with our eyes," this refers to a person that can touch another person how much ever s/he wants, but we are not allowed to see or touch God.

However, John confessed that he had an intimate relationship with Jesus so much that he could touch Jesus.

He not only expressed their closeness in the relationship but also the distance. John must have wanted to show us that God is actually near us, not somebody whom we can't see or touch or who is far away from us.

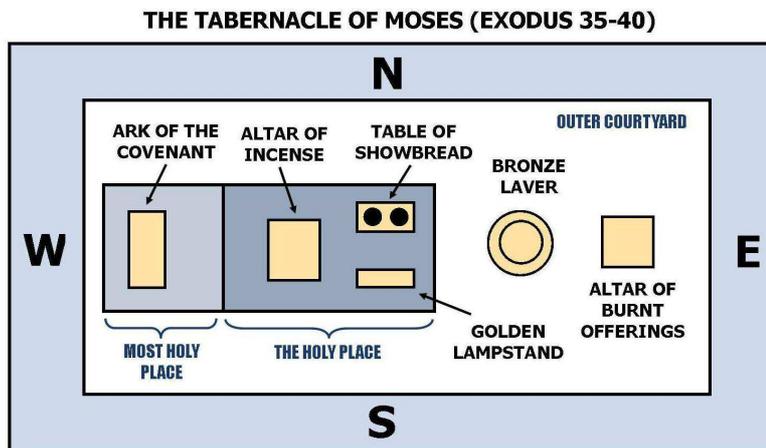
John tells us that Jesus was not only the wise who appeared among us all of a sudden, but also the living tabernacle. The tabernacle is Israel's and the Jews' history itself, and is indeed a copy and shadow of Jesus, and John must have been very surprised when he realized he was looking at what the tabernacle really was.

John also learned the fact that as long as the tabernacle existed, the way to the real Holy Place wouldn't be

opened. Therefore Jesus sacrificed himself as the complete offering to open the way, and we cannot even imagine how startled John must have been to realize all that. Jesus not only appeared among us as God in flesh but also opened the way by demolishing the Tent of Meeting and created the everlasting, true Holy Place.

Since this review is very important, I apologize it was a bit long.

Today's message's theme is what Jesus Christ's crucifixion accomplished. Let us look at this point along with the tabernacle.



2. Meaning of the tabernacle and offerings

In the blueprint of the tabernacle, you see the bronze stand, the bronze basin and the tent of meeting in order next to the gate. At the tent of meeting, the Holy Place and the curtain are in front and the Most Holy Place in the back. Also, Leviticus Chapters 1 to 7 tell us about five kinds of offerings and sacrifices: the burnt offering, the grain offering, the fellowship offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering. These offerings and everything inside the tabernacle all have meanings.

Read Hebrews 8:5

While everything inside the tabernacle and the offerings are a copy and shadow of what is in heaven, if we can see Jesus through them, we should be able to learn the meaning of each one of them. There are two areas where we can learn through various rituals and happenings shown by many saints in the Old Testament. One is that **we can learn the facts which actually happened and see what we should learn from them and then act accordingly.** We can say that's a study about our behaviors. The other one is that **we learn the essence of what God showed us in Old Testament, learn how great God is and how deep God's plans are, and get closer to God.** We can say this one is about a study of our inner selves getting closer to God. Learning about prophecies already accomplished and to be accomplished should be a way for us to realize that both past and future are controlled by God's plans. We should bow down before God and be more obedient rather than being simply curious.

Now let us learn about the tabernacle.

3. One gate

The tabernacle had only one entrance. You might think it's not unusual for buildings and facilities to have only one gate or entrance, but the tabernacle was about 130 ft long, and there were lots of people going in and out of there, so it would be more practical if there were more than one entrance to it. However, God showed Moses the tabernacle to have only one entrance. In John 10, Jesus teaches about a shepherd and his sheep. The good shepherd is Jesus and we are his sheep.

Read John 10:9

Also John 14:6

Not that there were lots of entrances or gates and we would be able to get to the Holy Place or the Most Holy Place, but there was only one entrance or gate to get there because Jesus Christ Himself is "the gate", and the only way to God is through Jesus. In the tabernacle, God is the Most Holy Place. The only way to God and only gate to God has to be through God's only son, Jesus, and nobody else. Unfortunately, from the New Testament days to modern days, there have been too many people who try to be a Jesus, a gate, or a savior, but the New Testament clearly dismisses them. The only gate/entrance to God is one and only Jesus Christ. Nobody shall get close to God without going through Jesus.

4. The bronze stand

Entering the tabernacle through the gate/entrance, we find the bronze stand. Here people offer their offerings or sacrifices.

God always has the gate open for us, but in order to get close to Him, we need to receive God's salvation first. God keeps the gate open for everybody no matter who s/he is. God loves everybody and gives everybody the way to Him and salvation. However, the decision to receive the salvation is up to each one of us. If one seeks the salvation through Jesus, God would give it to him or her without any condition, but if one refuses to accept the salvation, the gift is not his or hers. The gate is open, but whether to go through the gate or not is each person's decision. The bronze stand is the first thing any person who seeks salvation faces. It is where people offer sacrifices for their sins. Without solving the issue of sins between God and people, people wouldn't be able to get close to God. Because God is holy, we would never be able to go before God with our sins. If one desires to get closer to God to receive God's salvation, one's sin needs to be solved. Therefore, the bronze stand was placed for sins to be solved.

This is also clearly shown in Jesus' crucifixion. Among the seven things Jesus said on the Cross, the first one is in Luke 23:34.

Read Luke 23:34

On the Cross, Jesus excused our sins. Hebrews also teaches about Jesus' Cross.

Read Hebrews 9:12

Jesus' Cross was the true "Holy Place."

Jesus accepted the cross as the true Holy Place. In the Holy Place, after entering the gate, one finds the bronze stand for sacrifices for his or her sin, and through those sacrifices s/he would receive salvation. Jesus entered into the true Holy Place with His own blood, which means He sacrificed Himself for people who accept Jesus as their savior. To symbolize it, Jesus excused our sins in his first word in Luke 23:34.

The bronze stand in the tabernacle was there to show Jesus' Cross to come later. Thus, Hebrews teaches us about "a copy and shadow of what is in heaven."

5. The bronze basin

The Jews were able to reach the bronze stand with their sacrifices and needed to lay their hands on the sacrifices to show they were on behalf of them. They would slaughter their sacrifices and then the priest would burn them at the stand. Leviticus' details about sacrifices ends here, but in order to go toward the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, one would have to purify hands and feet at the bronze basin next. However, of course this is a place where only priests can go into. Everything in the tabernacle had specific measurements except for the bronze basin since it represents the walks of the saved, purification and absolution in their faith lives. Even

after we receive our salvation and become ones that are separated from worldly values and sins, we repeatedly are tempted and sin. No matter what kinds of sins we commit, or how many times we do, God forgives our sins through Jesus Christ. If sins are not forgiven according to what kinds of sins they are or how many times we would commit them, Jesus' salvation would be incomplete. Just like the bronze basin's measurements were not set, sins are all forgiven no matter what they are.

6. We are changed into the same as the priests in Old Testament.

Just as we have learned today, in Old Testament days, if you were a Jew, you could've made offerings or sacrifices. If the offerings were animals, you would lay your hands on them and offer on behalf. However, only the priests were allowed to burn offerings. They were the only ones allowed into the Holy Place, and inside the curtain was the place where only the High Priest could go into only once a year. It wasn't possible for anybody to worship anytime or anywhere at that time.

Before we move forward, let us be clear about what we have come to be allowed to do in New Testament.

Read Ephesians 2:11-18

We are not Jews, Levites, or sons of Aaron, the priests. In Old Testament days, we would be Gentiles who couldn't even take offerings to the tabernacle. However, in New Testament days, through Jesus Christ, the way to the new tabernacle and the new worship was opened. Paul talks about the way in verse 13, "...now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ," and also in verse 18

“For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.” Although we are not priests in Old Testament, Jesus Christ made it possible for all of us to get close to God and worship God in the closest place to Him just like the sons of Aaron, the priests. Therefore it makes sense for us to learn about the High Priest, the priests, the tabernacle, and the offerings. They were only accessible to the chosen and the priests, but they were only a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. We are allowed to worship God even in a closer place than the priests of Old Testament days. Learning about the tabernacle, the priests, and offerings which were formed according to the real ones in heaven has great meaning in learning about the worship we are allowed to do.

When we know about only one thing, and then we come to know even a greater thing, we are often caught off guard. For example, I grew up in the Kansai area and never saw Mt. Fuji until I was in junior high school. Because I had seen only ordinary mountains around me, I was startled with the height of Mt. Fuji. It was much bigger than any mountain I had known and also all the mountains around it.

Just like this example, learning about worship and offerings in Old Testament is very important to realize how Great the blessings and grace are in New Testament. I don't think that learning about them only in the New Testament is not good enough or anything, but in order to really feel how amazing what we have received through Jesus, we should look at and compare with the limited blessings and grace they had in Old Testament days. This doesn't mean what the Jews received back then was very limited or minute, however.

Read Isaiah 43:4

It's amazing that God said they were precious and honored in His sight. But still they were only worshipping a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.

7. Closing

Let us review of what we learn today.

First we had a review of last installment of the series and looked at John's relationship with Jesus in 5 ways.

1 John 1:1

I would recommend substituting it for was

-Jesus was from the beginning, which means Jesus is God.

-Jesus was which we have heard. John is one of the people who heard Jesus talk in person.

John got closer to Jesus little by little, not only physically but also spiritually, and heard Jesus' words.

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- Jesus was which “our hands have touched.” Just like the third one, “which we have seen with our eyes,” John confessed that he had an intimate relationship with Jesus so much that he could touch Jesus.

He not only expressed their closeness in the relationship but also the distance.

Then we looked at the tabernacle and offerings and meanings of them. Let us read Hebrews 8:5 once more.

We learned that when we study each one of them and see Jesus through them, we will be able to understand the meanings which they have. The tabernacle and offerings had intentions and meanings.

Then we learned about the gate, the bronze stand and the bronze basin of the tabernacle.

There was only one gate which symbolized Jesus. There is only one way to God and it's Jesus.

At the bronze stand, there were 5 offerings taught in Leviticus. Among the offerings, the sin offering was to forgive sins of a person who brought offerings. In Luke 23:34 Jesus excused our sins, which symbolized the bronze stand in the tabernacle, which is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.

As the bronze basin didn't have measurements, our sins are not measured by God and are all forgiven no matter what they are.

Last, we learned we have been changed into what the priest used to be in the Old Testament. The priests served in the tabernacle which was a copy and shadow, but we became ones who worship God in the real Holy Place

through Jesus' crucifixion. We also looked at the meaning of learning Old Testament in order to feel how big our blessings and grace are.

I feel that I have crammed quite a bit into a short message, but as we learn God's plan little by little, I believe we will be able to feel the blessings and grace we have received, and with them in heart we shall take one more step toward maturity.

Let's pray.