

#23 Altar of Incense: Introduction

Jesus said” I am the way, the truth and the life, and no one can come to the Father except through Me”. We can interpret that as another cliché or we can see the reality of what He said. Was Jesus saying there are three unfolding revelations of him that lead us to the Father? Is Jesus, the Way, the same revelation as Jesus, the Truth? Is Jesus, the Truth, the same revelation as Jesus, the Life? Those who have studied the scriptures know there are various and diverse revelations of Jesus Christ. He may first be seen as Savior. As the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He may be seen as the Son of God who is the first of many sons of God. Some understand Him as the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. He may later be seen as The Lord of highest authority who must be obeyed. He may be seen as the Lord of all lords and The King of all kings. To whom every knee must bow. He may be seen as the captain of the hosts of the armies of God. Each of these represents an unfolding revelation of Jesus Christ. Rarely would anyone receive a complete revelation of Jesus at his conversion experience. **He is, of course, the only way to the Father.**

Many of these otherwise confusing statements are brought to light in the Tabernacle of Moses. In the tabernacle of Moses, the three revelations of Christ can be seen in the three veils that separate the worshiper from the manifested presence of God. The general presence of God was in the entire tabernacle but there was the specific place of God’s presence in the Most Holy Place. There was no open access to the Most Holy Place, behind the third veil. Only the consecrated high priest [who was the son of Aaron and of Aaron’s priestly order had access to the Holy place, behind the second veil. That access was only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Any Israelite, who was not circumcised or have a sacrifice for his sins, had no access to the Outer Court, behind the first veil. Three separate revelations of God are seen in the three separate divisions of the tabernacle. Three separate sources of light illuminated the three sections. Natural light from the sun, moon and stars illuminated the Outer Court. The gold lampstand, with its pure oil and its seven mounted lamps of gold, illuminated the Holy Place. The manifested presence of God, the glory of God, illuminated the Most Holy Place.

Light speaks to us of revelation. Three levels of light indicate three levels of unfolding revelation of God. The curtains or veils spoke two things. First, stay out. Second, with proper preparation, you may enter. In the tabernacle of Moses, the third veil said, there is not **yet** access.

HEB 9:8 The Holy Spirit {is} signifying this, that the way into the holiest (Most Holy Place) has not yet been disclosed, while the first tabernacle is still standing....., Christ opened up our access to the Most Holy place. Not the one on earth, which no longer exists, but the Most Holy Place in heaven.

The first veil then speaks to us of **Jesus the Way**. The second veil speaks to us of **Jesus the Truth**. The third veil speaks to us of **Jesus the Life**. Once we have the revelation that Jesus is the only way and there is or will be no other, it leads us to repentance. Then by faith we step up to the altar of Calvary and have our sins cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Each succeeding step to the laver etc. is an unfolding revelation of “ Jesus The Way”. There are seven such steps in the Outer Court. The last Outer Court revelation of Jesus Christ leads us to full consecration. In the earthly tabernacle, the consecration offering was the last thing the priests did before entering into the Holy Place ministry.

In this study we are particularly interested in the Altar of Incense ministry. The Lampstand and

the Table of Showbread ministry are covered in other studies. However the foundations for all the Holy Place ministries must begin with the second veil which we have identified as the **Veil of TRUTH**. This Begins with our revelation of Jesus Christ who **IS TRUTH**. It is not just that Jesus preached to us a message that was “true”. He Himself is ultimate, absolute **TRUTH**. In the world and too often in the church, truth is relative. It is somewhat like doctrines that vary from church to church. In some churches baptism is essential while in others baptism is considered as a ritual that provides nothing in our experience. In some churches the communion service is practiced each Sunday while in others, the communion is considered as a Jewish ritual of Passover that was done away with at Calvary. That kind of truth is relative. The Lord Jesus Christ is **God’s absolute TRUTH**.

People have a lot of foolish doctrines that only get straightened up when they get the Revelation of God’s absolute **TRUTH**. Isaiah prophesied with power for five chapters. Then he saw the Lord. When he saw the Lord he was devastated and was finished as a prophet of God because he saw the uncleanness of his own lips. With that revelation of **ultimate truth**, Isaiah saw his own need for cleansing. **TRUTH** revealed the lie that was in Isaiah. Of course this revelation of God brought Isaiah to the place where God could correct the problem and to continue to use him as God’s prophet.

This is the nature of **TRUTH**. It not only reveals the truth about Jesus but it reveals the truth about ourselves. A normal revelation of the truth about Jesus puffs us up and makes us proud. We want to write books about our experience and get on the talk show circuit. However the true revelation of Jesus brings to us the true revelation of ourselves. That doesn’t puff us up. That devastates us and brings balance in our lives. Anyone who sees himself in the light of Jesus Christ can never be the same again. Anyone who has seen Jesus Christ and has not seen his own uncleanness and foulness, hasn’t see the Christ of scripture. When John the Revelator saw Jesus in Revelation 1, he fell like a dead man. That is normal!

REV 1:17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,

From this we can see the second veil can be a very dramatic and devastating experience. Some people have the mistaken idea they can just stroll through the second veil and on through the third veil because the third veil is torn from top to bottom and Jesus has made the way for us. Whatever the condition of the third veil, the veil of truth still confronts us with **TRUTH**. First, the truth about Jesus, and then, the truth about ourselves. The devastating part for us is when we see ourselves in the light of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Place life and ministry is a progressing revelation of Jesus Christ. Whenever we see Him we should also see ourselves. In the Holy Place, there is the gold Lampstand, the gold table that held the Showbread and the gold Altar of Incense. Not only do each of these represent a Holy Place life and ministry but each of these represents a clear revelation of Jesus Christ, who **IS absolute TRUTH**.

Most everyone, who has eyes to see, has seen the extreme superficiality that is in the church today. So much that is passed off as Christianity is just cosmetic. An outward form but inwardly shallow, full of spots and wrinkles. When we compare the church today with the church in scripture we see the church today, in general, is frivolous, impractical and insignificant. In many

ways the visible church today is irrelevant. This is also the world's evaluation. It is just not a force to be reckoned with. Jesus said he would build His church and it would be a force to be reckoned with. What then went wrong?

If we saw the church from the picture and type of the tabernacle of Moses it will give us some insight of what God intended for the church, which is **His** body. This church is pictured as the **LAMPSTAND**.

REV 1:20 "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the **seven golden lampstands**: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. One church in each geographical location is represented by one lampstand. REV 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

Jesus is the one who is walking among the **golden Lampstands** who knows what is happening in that church and every Lampstand church..

REV 2:5 "Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and **will remove your lampstand** out of its place-- unless you repent.

From this it is clear that if Jesus removed the lampstand from the church at Ephesus, the Holy place ministry would go into darkness. Is it possible that is what has happened in the visible church? God has called us to be a Kingdom of Priests. It was the priests duty to keep the lampstand full of oil and the wicks trimmed. Eli and his sons let the lampstand go out, the Holy Place went into darkness. The Holy Place ministry stopped. It was just a short time until the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant. The glory of God departed from the Tabernacle.

If the Lampstand is the church and the Lampstand is removed, the church is no longer **the church**. However the visible church may not know anything happened. The Ark of the Covenant was absent from the Tabernacle for about 60 years but the priests were still continuing the rituals. It seems normal to continue to hold "church" Sunday after Sunday even if God is not there.. Obviously, the whole ritual will be superficial and cosmetic. Most would not know anything was wrong.

The main point in what I want to share about the Lampstand Church is it is not in the Outer Court. There is no Lampstand in the Outer Court. God has only designed **one place** for the Lampstand, and that is in the Holy Place. If there is such a thing as a counterfeit church, it would have to be in the Outer Court. It is just not possible for a superficial church to be in the Holy Place. There is no such thing as a superficial Lampstand made out of wood or lead or even brass. What God recognizes is a **PURE GOLD Lampstand**, hammered out of one piece of gold. Our conclusion from this then is : It is not Jesus Christ that has built a superficial church, therefore it must be the work of men.

The Lampstand Church will have passed through all the unfolding revelations and experiences of "Jesus the Way" and will have been confronted with Jesus Christ the Truth. Since the Lampstand is made of pure gold, it is apparent the church must have experienced the work of fire and had all the dross removed. That is where all superficiality is removed. What was only cosmetic is made real by the fire. The church that Jesus builds, which is a power to be reckoned with, will be **A**

LAMPSTAND CHURCH. We shouldn't confuse what we see with what Jesus is building. The "ministry" in the Holy Place is not one or the other but is all three. The Lampstand, the Table of Showbread and the Altar of Incense represent the full ministry. **The next study will be Incense and the Incense Altar.**