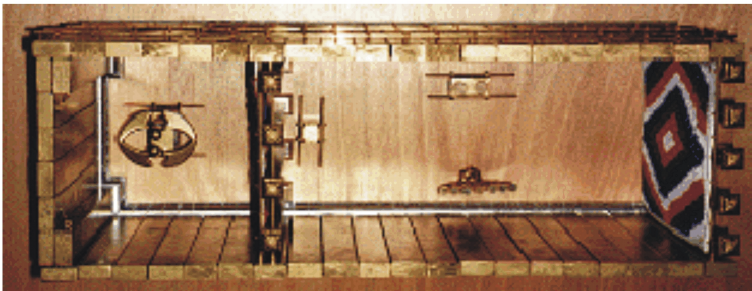
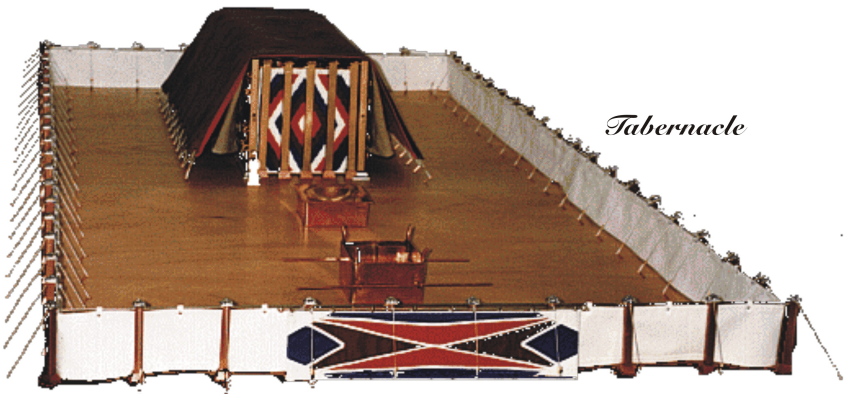


# *Build According to the Pattern*



by Dale Rumble



# Preface

There are two ways by which we can see order in the events of our growth in Christ. One is to go through persecutions, times of instruction, dealings and experiences in happy ignorance, seeing only the frustration, blessing or revelation of the moment. However, once through we look back and are able to see the hand of God in all things, and realize that His purposes were being worked out in our life. This is the order of spiritual hindsight. A more perfect way is to realize that we are seated with Him in heavenly places, and that we can by faith search out the order of our call and His purposes in the scripture. We can look down and see things happening from His perspective, for He has given the pattern of His work in His word. This is spiritual foresight.

The same principle holds true in Christian work and ministry. We have no right to build any way we please in the church. We would never assemble the materials for a house, and then just start nailing things together without following a blueprint. Most of us have seen children construct playhouses in this manner; they were great to play in but not suitable to live in. The same is true for much of what God's kids have built for Him to live in. We do not have the right to lead people to Christ, and then organize some hierarchical structure that we have devised in our mind, or copied from religious tradition. The pattern of His house is given in the scriptures. This tract has been written to encourage readers to search out the pattern of our maturity in Christ, and the pattern He is following in building us together as living stones to form His house.

## First the Natural

Paul presents a principle of order in his exposition on resurrection to the Corinthian church:

*However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.  
(1 Corinthians 15:46)*

The significance of this principle is that the Lord began to reveal His ways and purposes for man by using examples of natural things. For example, in the material and characteristics of the old testament tabernacle, He established patterns and types that are prophetic in foretelling His ultimate intention for the church. His purpose, like His person, is the same yesterday today and forever, so that the record of His relationship with Israel in the past, contains the promises of our destiny. His instructions for us today concerning our future, are best understood in the light of all that He has already spoken. That which is yet to be manifest in and to the church, is hid-

den in recorded scripture. For this reason we need not be ignorantly passive concerning what is to come: i.e. “I am saved, so I will just wait and whatever is to happen will happen.” Instead, we are to exercise faith in the promises of God, seek out His will for our life and fulfill it. We are called to be workers *together with* Him (2 Corinthians 6:1), and members *of* Him (1 Corinthians 12:27); we also are called jointly to be workers *together for* Him (Philippians 4:3), and members *of one another* (Romans 12:5). The “one hope of our calling” is centered in attaining the unity of believers prayed for by Jesus in John 17, and the experiential supremacy of Christ as head over all things in the church. The reward and glory of our spiritual destiny is linked to an active participation with Christ and His people in the body of Christ. We cannot hope to succeed without having a clear, balanced understanding of the current redemptive works of the Holy Spirit, and the Lord’s plan for His church, both now and in the age to come. We are living in a time of renewal and restoration, a period when much religious tradition is being discarded; there is a sweetness in our mouth as we feed on the word of revelation. Because we are walking a pathway on which there are fewer and fewer footsteps, it is mandatory that we be sure of our steps. The pattern of our personal and corporate redemption as shown in the tabernacle is a roadmap to guide our walk.

The following are some natural materials and physical characteristics used as types or shadows in scripture to better explain spiritual truths. Each is listed with its spiritual counterpart:

Oil	The Holy Spirit	Matthew 25:3-8; James 5:14
White Linen	Righteousness	Revelation 19:8
Water	The Scripture	Ephesians 5:26; John 15:3
Silver	Redemption	Matthew 26:15; Exodus 30:12-16
Purple	Royalty	John 19:1-5
Blue	Obedience	Numbers 15:38-40
Wood	Human Nature	Isaiah 61:3; Judges 9:10-15; Matthew 7:15-20; Ezekiel 17:22-24; Isaiah 55:12-13

Gold	Divine Nature	Revelation 1:13, 3:18, 14:14; Song of Solomon 5:10-15
Scarlet	Blood of Christ	Joshua 2:18-21; 6:25; Hebrews 9:12-23

Parables in the gospels are other examples of natural objects being used to convey spiritual truths.

## His House

The tabernacle that Moses built was God’s house during the period of His covenant with Israel. It was patterned after the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 8:2-5, 9:11, 23-34) and prefigures the house the Lord is building today in His church.

*Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are . . . (Hebrews 3:5-6)*

Thus the pattern of the church has its origin in heaven, and although we may not understand it, what the Lord is building on earth today, reflects an order of what is built above, and which one day will exist as the city of God on the earth (Galatins 4:26-27; Revelation 21:9-10; John 14:2-3). The first physical manifestation of how God would dwell with men is revealed in the tabernacle of Moses. For this reason, the Lord instructed Moses with great emphasis to be sure and build it according to the pattern He gave him on the mountain (Exodus 25:9, 40: 26:30; 27:8). If we are walking with our gaze on the ground and come near a building, the first view we have of it is its shadow. This only portrays relative dimensions and outline of the building and does not reveal any substance and detail. The tabernacle was, in such a sense, a shadow of the church. Indeed, this was its primary purpose. The Lord told Moses why the tabernacle was to be built:

*And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. . . (Exodus 25:8)*

It is quite amazing to see how mankind has always focused on the house of God, where He is present and may be worshipped. Christians are so often concerned that it be proper and correct, as though He would be less than He is if some furniture were lacking or out of place. It appears that in our humanity we can better relate to where God may be found, than we can to what He is like. In other words, as long as He is in His building among

us, then everything must be alright. It may have been because of this, that the Lord describes the ultimate relationship He has purposed with His people as their being built together for the place of His rest, a building which He will inhabit for eternity. Since each believer can contain but a small part of His glory, it is only the collective church that can begin to express the fulness of His life. This is the house that He is building; first, in local expressions of His body, and then, integrating these together by the Spirit in extra local dimensions which will one day be consummated in the city of God. At no time has He sought to live in physical buildings, other than to teach us of His ways, such as in the tabernacle.

*However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands . . . (Acts 7:48)*

The only house God will abide or remain in forever, is the one He Himself is building in the Spirit; the place of His rest, a place of eternal supply and joy (Psalms 132:13-17). It cannot be organized by man, it must be built by God. He is the Architect, the Builder; it is His life in men that is the material, and His glory will fill it.

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:20-22)*

The essence of this house can be summarized as follows:

- There is a unique cornerstone.
- There is a proper foundation built on the cornerstone.
- Christians are being built together by the Spirit of God, upon the foundation that rests on the cornerstone.
- The house is one of quality; a holy temple fit for God to dwell in.

This tract is not an exhaustive study of the tabernacle, for it only highlights certain important truths to give the reader confidence and faith to see that the pattern of God's purposes are truly hidden in the scripture.

## Materials

The precious material used in the construction (gold, silver, precious stones and cloth) originated in Egypt when Israel plundered the Egyptians during the exodus (Exodus 12:35-36). It is the same today, the most pre-

scious stones in the church are often those saints who were the deepest of sinners in the world. The Lord plunders the world to build His house. It is not our background that qualifies us as material for the church, but what He builds into us of Himself.

The only Israelites who participated in building the tabernacle, were those with a willing spirit whose hearts stirred them up to freely bring their contributions and skills. From among these, the Lord anointed certain ones with specific ability (or wisdom of heart) to perform the various skilled tasks as required (Exodus 35:5-35). We are coworkers with Christ on the same basis. We must freely give ourselves to Him; that is all He asks, our place and function will arise out of the anointing of His Spirit on us. We do not educate ourselves to minister, we simply offer ourselves to Him. We minister out of the anointing of the Holy Spirit; the character of His life that is built within us is the qualification of that ministry. In a sense, He is the Husbandman of the seed that He sows in our hearts, which He nurtures into a maturity that He can use in the building process.

## The Entrance

Let us imagine a person wandering around in the wilderness seeking the presence (or house) of God during the time of the tabernacle; the first thing he would eventually see was a wall of white linen supported on wooden pillars surrounding an area of 150 feet by 75 feet (Exodus 27:9-15). White linen speaks of the righteous acts of the saints. This is what the world should first see as evidence of God's presence in the church. It is not buildings, programs or organization but the righteous life of Christ being lived in His people. This is the bible read by the world, and it is easily understood.

*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)*

As our seeker walks around these walls he would come to a thirty-foot wide gate leading into the tabernacle on the side facing east. This gate was a curtain of purple, blue and scarlet colored material, supported by four wooden pillars (Exodus 27:16). The significance of this entrance is seen by considering the colors. They speak of a door that is provided by a king (purple), who was obedient (blue), and who shed His blood (scarlet). This is King Jesus! The door is supported, or presented to those who would enter, by four wooden pillars. Since wood is a type of humanity, these four wooden pillars speak to us of the four men: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John who wrote the gospels that present Jesus as the way of salvation. A hanging

curtain requires no special key or human strength to open. One need only lean against it to enter. This plus the great width of the entrance, tells us that it is by abundant grace we are saved, and not by our own works or ability. This gate is the only entrance, and the first step we all must take if we are to be accepted into the presence of God. Jesus said:

*I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved . . . (John 10:9)*

## The Cross

All furniture in the tabernacle, the three gates, and the articles in the court are positioned so as to form a cross, with the curtain we have come through being the bottom of that cross. Each item speaks to us of a vital part of our growth process, and as such they are arranged in the necessary sequence to instruct and encourage us in the various phases of our maturity. Just as there are nine spiritual gifts and nine spiritual fruits, so there are nine items that constitute this cross of maturity. Let us take a walk up the cross considering each item as we go.

Having passed through this first curtain, we find ourselves facing a copper covered wood altar that is between 6 and 7 feet square, and approximately four and ½ half feet high (Exodus 27:1-8). This was the largest object in the outer court or in the tabernacle. Its prominent size speaks of the importance of sacrifice. Once we are saved, the first step required of us is to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to Christ. This is key to any future growth; we don't mature by only receiving His life, we must lay down our life as well.

*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God . . . (Romans 12:1)*

This will involve two initial steps to the new believer: becoming united with Him in the likeness of His death through water baptism, and being baptized in the Holy Spirit, Who is the fire of God. This altar was continually being used by the priests to offer sacrifices for sin; we too will find that we must continually be presenting ourselves as a sacrifice to avoid going our own way. The animals were tied to the four horns of the altar so that they could not escape. For us there are the following four voluntary constraints that we embrace to remain in place as a sacrifice.:

- Commitment to His Lordship in our life
- Faith and trust in His dealings in our life (even when we don't understand them)



- Understanding that there is no good thing in our flesh
- A vision of His purpose for us in the church

As we walk beyond the altar toward the tabernacle, we come next to a laver filled with water. This laver was made from polished copper of the women's mirrors. The priests were required to wash their hand and feet here before they could enter the tabernacle to minister (Exodus 30:18-21; 38:8). Before we can truly be a holy priesthood unto Him, or become a mature, spotless Bride we must be a people who continually wash ourselves in the word of God.

*. . . that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle . . . (Ephesians 5:26-27)*

To be washed by the word involves two things: understanding and obedience. Understanding is vital since to be cleansed requires that we first see our need and understand the remedy. This comes when revelation of scripture clearly separates the soul and spirit of our person, enabling us to judge the thoughts and intents of our heart (Hebrews 4:12). The laver was made of mirrors, since God's word is precisely that to those who search it in sincerity; we begin to see ourselves in the word as the Lord sees us. Once our innermost being is exposed to us from gazing into the mirror of scripture, we are to then be obedient and put off what is unclean. Moreover the word, as a mirror, also reflects those changes that occur in us as we are cleansed. We begin to reflect Him little by little as the Holy Spirit unfolds our needs, and enables us to change and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory . . . (2 Corinthians 3:18)*

The key is revelation; we are not cleansed by following rules and laws of conduct. We must have our need revealed, and on that basis be obedient. This is a continuing process for we will only see certain needs after we have first dealt with those that we already know of.

In the entrance, at the altar and the laver, we were primarily concerned with our relationship to Christ. As we enter into the tabernacle proper we will now, not only face greater commitments in this realm, but also in the area of our covenant relationship with other members of the body of Christ. To be able to possess these new truths, we must continue to experience cleansing at the laver. If our heart is not prepared to embrace new truth, we will only acquire a head knowledge that will not be worked out as truth in our life. This is why the laver is positioned just prior to enter-

ing the tabernacle, and why the priests had to wash there every time they entered the holy place. We cannot neglect washing ourselves in the word if we expect to flow in what God is doing today in the church.

The tabernacle was actually made up of two “rooms” or tents; the larger outer one called the holy place, and the inner one, which contains the top of the cross we are considering, called the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 9:1-7). The entrance into the holy place was a curtain similar in appearance to the one leading into the outer court, except that it was higher and more narrow. The material was of fine linen and was purple, blue and scarlet in color. This speaks of Christ being presented as the way into the holy place, and therefore into whatever truth is contained or represented there. However, this curtain is supported by five wooden pillars which were covered with gold (Exodus 26:36-37). These pillars again refer to men, so that the entrance in this instance speaks to us of entering into those truths of Christ which are ministered by the five “ascension gifts” (or foundation) ministries: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, men given to shepherd and equip us for service to the church. The gold which covers the wood of the pillars, encourages us not to focus on the humanity of such ministries, but to recognize that they are love gifts of Christ to the church and should be seen as such (Ephesians 4:11). It is these ministries that lay the foundation and establish the house of God (1 Corinthians 3:5-11; Ephesians 2:19-22).

As we enter the holy place, we see before us two pieces of furniture, one on the left and one to the right. These represent, by their position, the horizontal member of the cross we are considering. The piece on our left, to the south, is a beautiful golden lampstand (Exodus 25:31-40). This provided the only light for the priests to minister by—for there were no windows in the holy place. There was a central lamp stem, and three branches on either side so that the lampstand had a total of seven branches, or seven lamps. Although the lampstand was very ornate, it was hammered out of one piece of solid gold. The lamp was fueled by pure olive oil. Since the lamp is made of gold it must refer to God; the oil speaks of the Holy Spirit, and light from the lamp denotes revelation. We can better understand the significance of these things if we examine certain scriptures concerning the sanctuary in heaven.

*. . . Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne. (Revelation 1:4)*

*. . . And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. (Revelation 4:5)*

*... And I saw between the throne ... and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. (Revelation 5:6)*

We know there is only one Spirit of God; the seven eyes, the seven lamps and seven Spirits speak of seven characteristics of His person that God has chosen to reveal to His people. These are basic truths of our faith that we must come to experience out of relationship with Him. Each trait was first revealed to Israel, and each expressed a promise of His personal supply for His people. These seven attributes, each of which was confirmed by Christ in His ministry, are listed below:

1. Jehovah-Shalom, “the Lord is (our) peace.” The Lord revealed to Gideon that, despite His awesome magnificance, He was a God of peace to His people, (Judges 6:21-24). When Jesus came, it was as the Prince of peace, as our peace and the way of peace (Ephesians 2:14-17; Romans 5:1, Colossians 3:15). Can you imagine your relationship to the Lord if He wasn’t your peace? This is basic in our union with Him.

2. Jehovah-Nissi, “the Lord is our (banner or) victor.” The Lord revealed Himself as the source of victory for Israel in the battle against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-15). Jesus overcame the powers of darkness for us. He is our victor; we can do all things through Him. Indeed, we can only conquer through Him (Philippians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 2:14). Our triumph is in Him!

3. Jehovah-Jireh, “the Lord will provide.” When God supplies the ram in the thicket for Abraham’s sacrifice, He revealed Himself as the God who provides for His children (Genesis 22:13-14). This revelation of the Lord is not only confirmed in Christ by many New Testament scriptures, but also by the experience of each one of us. The riches of heaven are ours through Him.

*And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)*

We can agree with James that every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift comes down from our Father above (James 1:17). He is our provider indeed!

4. Jehovah-Shammah, “the Lord is present.” When the Lord described to Exekiel the future city in which He would dwell among His people, He named it “Jehovah Shammah.” It is a wonderful truth that God is not isolated in some geographic location in heaven; He lives with and in His people. Jesus said:

*. . . I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5)*

*. . . and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)*

How could we walk in victory, or into a new circumstance without knowing His presence is with us?

5. Jehovah-Rapha, “The Lord your healer.” The Lord tested Israel at Marah where He made the bitter waters sweet. He charged the, through Moses, that if they would obey Him and keep His statutes, He would put none of the diseases on them that He had put on the Egyptians, for He was “the Lord their healer” (Exodus 15:26). This truth was dramatically confirmed by the Lord’s ministry as He healed the sick, and commissioned His twelve disciples to do likewise. He continues to manifest Himself through the gifts of healing and prayer for the sick (1 Corinthians 12:9; James 5:14-15). We are healed by His stripes.

6. Jehovah-Raah, “the Lord my shepherd.” Perhaps more than any other expression of His relationship to Israel, the Lord was best known as their shepherd (Psalm 23:1; Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekial 34:12, 23-24). This was also the primary focus of Jesus in establishing the identity of His ministry to His people (John 10:1-27).

*I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. (John 10:11)*

The Lord’s role as our shepherd is very important because sheep so clearly exemplify our needs and limitations; we are prone to go our own way, to be scattered from one another and expose ourselves to dangers. Without Him, who is the great Shepherd of the sheep we would be scattered in the earth.

7. Jehovah-Tsidknew, “the Lord our righteousness.” The primary lamp of the candlestick was located on the center stem of the lampstand; it was from this shaft that the other six branches emerged with their lamps. In the same way, it is only when we know the Lord as our righteousness, that we can appropriate and know Him in the other six ways He has chosen to reveal Himself. It was Jeremiah who first prophesied of Him as “the Lord our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:5-6). This, more than anything else, is the central theme of the New Testament. Anything else is the central theme of the New Testament; all else flows out from this truth (Romans

3:21-26;5:19;10:3-10;1 Corinthians 1:30).It is only in and through Him that we are able to understand righteousness, and only by His life can we become a righteous people (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We need to personally possess each of these seven revelations of the Lord's person in order to receive His life as we should in our relationship with Him. To not do so, is to walk with a corresponding leanness in our soul.

The right arm of the cross we are considering is represented by a table located to our right, on the north side of the holy place. Upon this table rested twelve loaves of bread. The table was made of wood covered with pure gold and had a gold crown or border around its upper surface. The bread was called the "bread of (His) Presence"; it was always present;it was eaten by the Aaronic priesthood and replaced fresh every Sabbath. The twelve loaves represented the entire nation, one loaf for each tribe (Exodus 25:23-30; Leviticus 24:5-9). There were also bowls located at the table to be used for the libations or drink offerings. A libation involved the priests poring out wine before the Lord at the doorway of the tent as one part of various offerings and sacrifices (Exodus 29:40-43; Numbers 28:7-31). Implicit in this piece of furniture is a clear picture of the lord's table that we eat and drink from in the church. The communion service is not the "table of the church," it is the Lord's table, and no true believer should be excluded from partaking. The twelve loaves, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, speak of His presence today in the communion bread for *all* believers. The wine libations represent the pouring out of His blood in the new covenant. The many offerings of wine (drink offerings), and the continual eating of the bread of His presence by the priests, speak to us of our need as His priests today, to feed on Him. The communion service is a proclamation to the world above, around and beneath us of the blood covenant relationship that we jointly have with Christ (1 Corinthians 11:24-26). It is absolutely basic to the unity of believers; to speak of Christian unity without a common table, is a travesty of truth.

Standing between the candlestick and the table, we see directly before us the altar of incense, which was the tallest article of furniture in the tabernacle. It was made of wood and *covered* with gold. Fragrant incense was burnt unto the Lord, morning and night by Aaron when he trimmed the lights of the lampstand (Exodus 30:1-10). The sweet smelling incense is a type of the worship, praise and prayer we offer up as His priests today. The height of the altar speaks of its importance; there is no ministry that we will ever have that is greater than worshipping the Lord in spirit and in truth. This is the primary ministry within His house. Our worship and prayers rise to the altar of the sanctuary in heaven (Revelation 8:3-4).

*You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)*

The fire burning incense on this altar, was taken from the fire in the great altar at the entrance into the outer court. This speaks of the sincerity we must have to worship in spirit and in truth; it is to be a result of having already offered ourselves to Him, so that what comes forth in worship is natural flow from the commitment of our heart, not merely sounds from our mouth. The blood of the sin offering was poured on the horns of this altar once a year for the annual atonement of sin in Israel. Prayer and worship are rooted in appreciation and love for what He has done in washing our sins away, and making us acceptable for His presence. Worship is the incense of redemption (Revelation 5:8-14). I cannot imagine a mature Christian who does not have a desire to pray and worship. The incense was made of equal parts of four spices, which were red (stacte), black (onycha), brown or yellow (galbanum) and white (frankincense) respectively. This speaks of the Lord's desire for communion with every race and color of man (Exodus 30:34-38).

Immediately beyond this altar was another curtain, which was the entrance into the Holiest of Holies. This curtain is similar in appearance and size to the entrance into the Holy Place, but is suspended on four wooden pillars overlaid with gold (Exodus 26:31-33). This was the curtain which was ripped from top to bottom when Christ was crucified, signifying that the breaking of Christ's body on the cross had now opened the way for all to come into the presence of God (Matthew 27:50-51). Previous to Calvary, only the high priest was allowed to enter the Holiest of Holies, to where God was present above the mercy seat. Although presenting the Christ of the four gospels as indicated by the four wooden pillars, its relative position to the cross we are considering, indicates that this curtain represents more than coming to Christ for initial salvation. The more we grow in our knowledge of Him, the more we understand the great need of coming frequently to the throne of grace. This entrance was more narrow than the outer gate. The more narrow entrance speaks of a narrower way; it is a call to come into His presence for purging and refining, for mercy and grace. We are to come with incense and in *faith* not only as individuals, but as a people; we cannot grow personally or corporately apart from the supply of His mercy and grace (John 1:16). It is a dangerous thing to have no sense of need in our life for these virtues; we will always need grace and mercy, and to see our needs more clearly the more we grow in Him.

*Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)*

*Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh . . . let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our body washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering . . . and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together . . . (Hebrews 10:19-25)*

I have observed that new or immature Christians generally speak mostly of their conversion (or deliverance) experiences, whereas those who manifest real growth are concerned with what Christ is currently doing in their lives. For such Christians, the altar of incense, and the curtain into the Holiest of Holies have become practical realities of their pressing into God.

We come to the end of our journey “up the cross” when we stand before the ninth item namely, the ark of the covenant inside the Holiest of Holies (Exodus 25:10-22). The ark was a wooden box overlaid with gold inside and outside; above it was a pure gold mercy seat, having two golden cherubim with spread wings facing inward toward each other, from the two ends of the mercy seat. It was here that God dwelt. Let us examine these objects to understand why they speak of the maturity to which we are called. The Lord instructed Moses to place the following three things in the ark as a testimony (Hebrews 9:4):

1. Manna (Exodus 16:14-15, 31-35). A jar (an omer full) of manna was to be a perpetual testimony of how we are to derive our spiritual food. Jesus is the living bread, the bread of God that we must “gather daily” to feed our soul. The manna gathered by Israel was shared with others, so that all had sufficient. It is the same in the body of Christ—we are to share the Bread of Life with other members. What was “gathered” in the past does not suffice for tomorrow, we must have living bread every day; however when we learn to enter into Sabbath rest, there is life in what we “gathered” yesterday just as Israel did. Jesus said:

*. . . I live because of the Father; so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. (John 6:57)*

2. The tablets of stone. The two stones upon which the ten commandments were inscribed, were placed in the ark to remind Israel of the law of God (Deuteronomy 10:2). This very clearly speaks to us of having the laws of the Spirit written on our hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3).

*. . . I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (Jeremiah 31:33)*

Maturity is not knowing right from wrong based on what is written in a book, but from what the Spirit of God has inscribed in our heart. This is the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, which sets us free from legalism (Romans 8:2).

3. The third item of the testimony was Aaron's rod. The authority of Aaron's priesthood was established before Israel by God during a time of rebellion (Numbers 17; 18:1-8). Each tribe were told to place a rod in the sanctuary overnight. The next morning, Aaron's rod for the tribe of Levi had sprouted, put forth buds, produced blossoms and bore almonds. by this supernatural sign God demonstrated His selection of Aaron. The Lord has also called us as priests with authority in His kingdom.

*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and what ever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:19)*

Aaron's rod teaches us, that if we are to exercise His authority, it is come from the fragrance of a sweet spirit (blossoms), from one who brings forth new life in others (buds), and from one who has fruits of the Spirit (almonds) in their life.

The gold covered wood of the ark signifies one whose humanity is hidden behind the nature of God. When a person has the above testimony of the Lord within them, and is one who abides in the presence of God, under the blood of the mercy seat, truly we can say that such a person is a mature Christian! It is here that we can begin to reign with Him, for we are now reigning in our life.

The cherubim are significant, for they speak of the ministry of angels. The purposes of God are always worked out for man in concert with the ministry of angels.

*Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14)*



Each period of time, when God began to do a new thing in His relationship with man, was ushered in by a prominent ministry of angels. Some examples are:

- Adam's removal from Eden
- Final promise concerning Isaac (Abrahamic covenant)
- Beginning of Israel
- Exodus of Israel from Egypt
- Birth of John
- Birth of Jesus
- The temptation of Jesus
- The resurrection of Jesus
- The ascension of Jesus
- The ministry of the early church

For this reason, we can expect to see angels become an increasing part of the spiritual ministry that will unfold in the days ahead, as the Lord brings His church into her fullness.

## Growth in the Body of Christ

As we progressed up the cross, we have been considering our growth in Christ largely from a personal point of view. Let us go back to the entrance into the Holy Place, to the curtain supported by five wooden pillars. This represents the doorway into truths concerning the body of Christ. These are the truths revealed through the fivefold ministries that build us together as "one man" under the Lord's headship. Peter likens the growth of interpersonal relationship to "living stones being shaped and fitted together" to form the Lord's house.

This relationship is pictured for us in the structure of the tabernacle walls (Exodus 26:15-30). The walls were constructed of straight, smooth vertical boards that were fifteen feet high and twenty-seven inches wide. The interesting thing about the wood was that it was cut from the Acacia tree. The wood of this tree was very hard, gnarled and close grained. It required much effort and skill to bring forth smooth, straight boards with surfaces that could be fitted together to make straight walls. This speaks so clearly of our human nature; it is hard and crooked from sin and from going our own way. Our nature resists change. We are well aware of the great dealings that God brings into our lives to change and fashion our hearts, so that we can be fitted together with brothers and sisters as one body in

Christ. The boards were mounted in vertical positions parallel to one another, all pointing toward heaven; no board was above another, all were in the same position relative to the others. Each board was mounted in a tightly coupled fashion to its two neighboring boards. This expresses the truth that in each church we are to be members of one another, for the strength of the church can be measured by the strength of our bond of fellowship with one another. We cannot be independent of one another.

*. . . from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every join supplies . . . (Ephesians 4:16)*

Each of us has been fashioned to fit in the place prepared for us in His body just as each board was fitted in position. The boards were kept above the dirt of the earthen floor of the tabernacle by being mounted in two sockets of silver. This tells us that His redemption (silver) saves and keeps us from (above) sin. Each board was placed on its sockets and held in position there by two extensions called tenons. The Hebrew word for tenon is “YAD,” which means “hand.” Thus, each board is held securely in place by two hands. This is a picture of the “laying on of hands” ministry in the church, which serves to identify and confirm the place and ministry of members, so that recognition and support by other members enables the body to function in unison and harmony (Acts 6:6; 19:6; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 timothy 1:6).

Even though the boards were correctly positioned at their base by the sockets and tenons, because of their great height, they required additional support to enable them to jointly form a uniform straight wall. This was provided by five wooden bars mounted in parallel horizontal positions on the outside surface of the boards. One of these bars, located in the center of each of the three walls extended along the entire length. These bars represent the five “ascension” gift ministries of the church, who as elders or traveling ministries, have been given to equip the saints for their ministry and through teaching, counseling and shepherding to bring them to corporate, collective maturity in a body.

*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith . . . as a result we are no longer to be children tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine . . . (Ephesians 4:11-14)*

The physical perfection in strength and stability of the walls because of the union of the boards, expresses the order that should be present in an assembly established and shepherded through the fivefold ministries. The

wall stands as one large board, as an illustration of how the assembly should stand as one man. A local body of Christ can easily be fragmented and divided without these five bars “holding the wall straight” through building the relationship between members out of which each member functions in their place. The significance of the horizontal position of the bars is that they serve the other boards, indicating that these five ministries are servants of the church. The bar located in the center touches and supports each board in the entire wall. This expresses the dimension of an apostolic ministry, since apostles serve as “master builders” or “foundation layers” of assemblies, with a vision that embraces and touches the whole body. They understand how each of the various parts of the body are to fit together and function as a whole.

The center bar is the only one whose dimensions are clearly given; it covered the entire length of the wall. This tells us that the apostle’s ministry is called to build within a certain area or sphere. He is not to over extend himself, and he should avoid building on other men’s foundations, being conscious of the call of God that sent him forth. Paul speaks of these things in his own ministry.

*. . . and thus I aspired to preach . . . that I might not build upon another man’s foundation. (Romans 15:20)*

*But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. For we are not overextending ourselves . . . not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men’s labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we shall be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you. (2 Corinthians 10:13-15)*

The center bar was different in length on the end wall compared to bars on the sides, which tells us that apostolic ministries can be different in scope and magnitude.

It is unfortunate that today many New Testament churches which have been founded by valid apostolic and supporting ministries, will often have no fellowship with other churches established by equally valid ministries. Each local assembly, each church in a locality and the church universal are always to be a visible expression of the Lord’s character and life. This cannot be the case where there is division. How this unity can be attained, is partly revealed in the manner by which the tabernacle walls were joined together. Even if each wall was straight, the rear wall must also be perfectly united to the two side walls to form stable right angled corners. This was accomplished by two rings, one at the top and one at the bottom, that joined the end boards of the walls and held them tightly together. It re-

quires more than correct doctrine and good ministry to unite believers, it also requires an overflow of the *peace and love* of God, which is what these two rings represent. These virtues are sufficient to bond individual, separate assemblies into one body if each one has been built upon a proper foundation. Peace and love are always basic to unity, for they reflect the presence of Christ's government.

*. . . being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:3)*

*Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. (Colossians 3:14)*

The word "bond" comes from the Greek word "sundesmos," which means "joint bond (or band)." These bonds or rings were not large, but in their absence, the walls would simply fall flat. It is no different in the church. We can have the right organization with all the ministries, and yet fail completely in the unity we are called to, if we are not deeply established in the peace and love of God. The peace of God is not an armistice, which means there is no war, rather it is a consequence of a total surrender to His government (Isaiah 9:7). When assemblies have been built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, there will exist a government that is plural in nature, where Christ is visible as the Shepherd and Head. There was more than one bar supporting each wall, telling us that this leadership will be made up of men, who although diverse in ministry, are submitted to one another and are jointly committed to serve and shepherd the church together. This is the environment that promotes the peace, and thus the government of God. If it is the intention of those who build churches to make a name for themselves, and build their own kingdom, there will be a loss of the government of God and a separation from other assemblies. Where neighboring assemblies have been properly set in order, there should be a flow of life and ministry between them that is much deeper than casual fellowship. However, because of differences in culture, personalities and backgrounds, it often requires a stretching of hearts by the love of God, especially of leaders, to commit themselves to attain the quality of unity that Christ prayed for. We cannot be independent either as individuals or as assemblies, for we are one body. The Lord is dealing with His children in this area today. Unity is not possible without the overriding influence of His peace and love regardless of how correct the church structures are. We are required to love and fellowship all believers. It is true that we are not called to build except with those who lay the foundation that Christ has given to build His church upon; when this is the case, ministry should flow freely between assemblies giving proof of the oneness of His church. We need

only consider the walls of the tabernacle to understand whether a proper foundation exists.

All boards, including the five bars were covered with gold. This tells us that we are to see the Lord's nature in each other as we stand in our position in His body. The five bars were each held in their position along the walls by pure gold rings fastened to the boards. This teaches us that it is the Lord who sets in place and upholds the fivefold ministries who He has chosen for the church, and that each member should support them accordingly.

## The History of His House

Certain dimensions in the design of God's tabernacle in Israel provide specific areas that represent the three periods, or phases of the Lord's house among men. The outer court was enclosed by walls which had a total surface area of 1,500 square cubits (Exodus 27:18). Counting one cubit for a year, this represents the amount of time between Mount Sinai and Calvary. During this period, God's house was in the tents or tabernacles, and temples (i.e. Solomon's). The area covered by the Holy Place was approximately 2,000 square cubits. This represents the present 2,000 year period of the church age, where the house of God is made up of members of His body built together in the Spirit. The area covered by the Holiest of Holies is approximately 1,000 square cubits. This represents the millennium age, a period of the fulness of His house when He will dwell among men in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21).

## Responsibility for the House

When we see in the book of Numbers (chapters 1, 3, 4 and 18), how men were appointed as priests to oversee and be responsible for the tabernacle, the various offerings and sacrifices, we are given a picture of how similar responsibilities are to function in local churches of the New Testament. The Lord was present in only one place in Israel, the tabernacle; today, although He is present in each Christian, His house exists wherever believers are built together in a local expression of the body of Christ. The tribe of Levi was chosen by God to bear this responsibility of His house, and as such they foreshadow the ministry of elders and deacons who have the same responsibility for local churches. Aaron and his four sons represent the ministry of elders; their brothers from the same tribe, who were given to Aaron to serve by assisting and carrying out delegated duties associated with the tabernacle, represent the deacons. Aaron and his sons were anointed of God to serve before Him in their priesthood, and they were commissioned to delegate specific responsibilities to their fellow Levites. The tribe of Levi in a total sense, is a shadow of the "corporate diakonate"

of elders and deacons that are to serve each local assembly. The distinction between the types of service are clear from the charge given by the Lord to Moses for the tribe of Levi:

*The Lord made clear to Aaron: You, your sons, and your family are responsible for the sins against the sanctuary; likewise, you and your sons are responsible for the sins against your priesthood. Bring your relatives with you from the tribe of Levi, your father's tribe, so that by joining you, they may assist you when both you and your sons are in front of the tent containing the testimonial evidence. They shall discharge the obligations imposed by you and all the duties connected with the tent . . . Have them join you, that they may discharge the duties connected with the tent of meeting . . . You are to discharge the duties connected with both the sanctuary and the altar . . . Take notice that as a gift for you I have selected your relatives, the Levites, out of the nation of Israel to serve as custodians of the tent of meeting, seeing that they were given to the Lord; but you and your sons are to discharge your priestly duties . . . Be sure to perform it for the office of the priesthood is a gift which I am giving you. (Numbers 18:1-7- THE NEW BERKELEY VERSION)*

Aaron and his fellow Levites were joined together as one priesthood united in their service to the Lord and His house; however, the overall responsibility for any sin against the sanctuary, or in ministry, lay on Aaron's shoulders. He and his sons were responsible for the spiritual oversight of the house of God. Nevertheless, they could never fulfill their priesthood without their brother Levites. The same relationship in responsibility and function holds true for elders and deacons in a local church. There can only be a strong eldership in ministering the word and providing spiritual oversight, if there are men and women who are committed to those elders, and willingly responsible for the multitude of services that are necessary for the functioning of a spiritual church. They serve the assembly as a corporate deaconate, committed to each other and committed to serve.

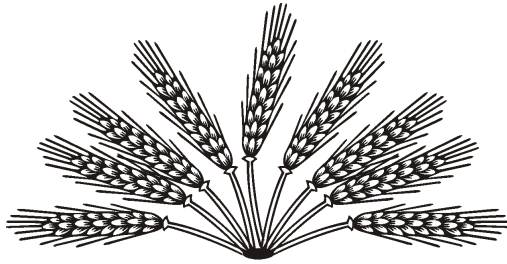
The garments that Aaron and his sons wore bore significance of their ministry. For example, on each of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, there was mounted an onyx stone, upon which was inscribed six of the twelve tribes of Israel. Over the heart, a pouch (breast plate) was fastened which had twelve unique stones set in it, one for each tribe. Within the pouch, the urim and thummin was carried by which God gave direction for the nation. This pictures for us the elders' responsibility to bear the burdens of those in the church, to minister to them from their hearts and to have the prophetic direction and guidance that is necessary for the church to move on in God. It is the elders' responsibility to guard the sheep from

error and harmful influences that would come among them. However, it is also their responsibility to move in obedience and initiate the bridges of trust and fellowship that the Lord would build between assemblies in a locality. It is necessary for them, more than anyone else, to know and follow the pattern of the Lord's house.

## The Centrality of Christ

The tabernacle has many other related types and shadows of “good things to come” for the church. These picture the blessings and truth we can experience today, as the Lord fulfills the reality of the commission given to Moses by building His house. Examples can be found in the various offerings and sacrifices, in the feasts, and in the clothing of the high priest. However, I will leave these to the reader to search out, and close with one final important observation. The tabernacle proper was not the wooden walls, it was a beautiful ten piece curtain of fine twisted linen. This curtain which was colored purple, blue and scarlet, had figures of cherubim woven into its texture. It was designed to cover each wall and the ceiling, and to blend with the curtains of the two entrances (Exodus 26:1-6). No matter where one stood in the Holy Place or in the Holy of Holies, the beauty of this curtain was apparent about and above them. Since the walls were very tall while the articles of furniture were relatively small, this curtain was always preeminent through its visible beauty. The curtain speaks to us of the central position Christ is to have in our life and growth. His righteousness is seen in the ten curtain pieces, which speak of the ten commandments that He upheld and fulfilled. He is always to be the center of our attention; it is not our experience or our growth, but our relationship to Him that is supremely important; it is not the body of Christ, but Christ Himself that we are to seek after with all our heart. Although He can be seen in the outer court in the form of the two curtains, the fulness of His beauty is only visible within the tabernacle. In the same way, it is only as we see Him manifest in each member of His body that we begin to fully appreciate His beauty. He is to be the center of everything in the church just as the ten piece curtain was visible in the tabernacle. As the Holy Spirit more clearly reveals the Christ of the bible to us, we are able to see the order and pattern of His handiwork in our life, and in the “one new man” that is being brought forth in the earth.

*I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.  
(Matthew 16:18)*



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