

The Sacrificial System

By Doug Hamilton

Understanding the Importance of the Sacrificial System

Most Christians today tend to focus on the New Testament, for after all it is the Testament that brings us the gospel presentation of Christ, the beginnings of the church and the letters to the Christians whom were born into the kingdom. The New Testament is what teaches us of the realm of heaven, a structure of discipline for the saints and of the means of the covenant in which we enter Christ. What would we in the church do to better understand all this without the aid of the New Testament?

With that in mind I would like to pose a question: “How did the early Christians manage to acquire such a good understanding of this information without the benefit of the complete New Testament in their hands?” It is safe to say that the majority of the church members in the first century would have had at best only a few of the letters from the apostles, yet they clearly understood the basic teachings. Actually the church did not have an assembled New Testament in circulation for a couple of centuries, yet they clearly understood the elementary principles of their faith. How could this be without a New Testament? I am persuaded it was in their understanding of the Old Testament that they learned a deep meaning to what was being spoken of by the apostles.

- Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction...”
- Acts 17:2-3 And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.”
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

It was in the Old Testament scripture that the early church was able to find strength and understanding in the ways of Christ. They were able to understand more about the workings of God, His people and His heavenly domain. They held a New Testament perspective on the backdrop of the Old Testament.

This fact is heavily reflected in the very words of the NT. There are approximately 300 direct quotes in the NT from the OT. There are also more than 4,000 indirect allusions to the same. As one author put it, “Trying to appreciate New Testament Christianity without a clear understanding of the Old Testament is akin to watching only the second half of a movie.” We must make every effort to understand the first half of that movie called the Old Testament before declaring a good comprehension of Christ. Jesus fully endorsed the Old testament as His Bible.

- Luke 24:44-45 Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...”

In the mind of Jesus, there were three groups of writings from the Old Testament that pointed to Him in advance. They were the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. It was with these that He opened the apostle’s minds to better gain a deeper understanding of Him. It is in the foremost, the Law of Moses, that we will have our minds opened in order to gain a more meaningful understanding of our Savior.

The title of this series is ***The Sacrificial System***. The aim of it is to open our minds to four of the five neglected books of Pentateuch: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. It is called ***The Sacrificial System*** because it focuses on the Mosaic structure of the Law. This is what Jesus was referring to. I am absolutely

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convinced that these four books possess the power to reveal the greatest understanding of Christ and His relationship to His church.

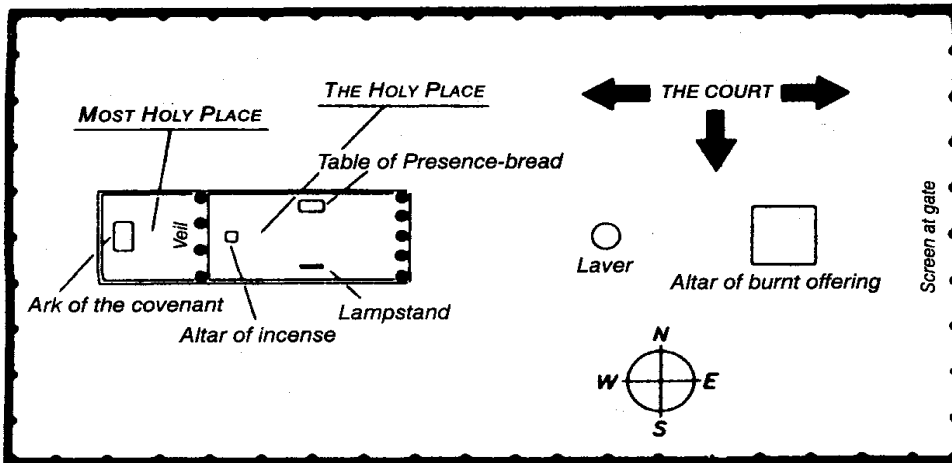
Let us begin.

The Foreshadowing Concept

In Heb 8:5, the Hebrew writer refers to the Sacrificial System as a “...a copy and shadow of the heavenly things...” In Heb 9:24, he refers to the same as “...a {mere} copy of the true one...” He again touches on it in Heb 10:1, calling it “...a shadow of the good things to come {and} not the very form of things...” What does all this mean?

The Hebrew writer is discussing a concept called “Foreshadowing”. Like prophecy, this is a method of revealing a glimpse of something yet to come. Have you ever been at a ballgame and see a shadow in the shape of a baseball moving toward your head? Even though you did not see the ball directly, you knew that it was coming. That is why we cover our head, for we know we will likely be hit with what was connected to that shadow. This is what the “foreshadowing” concept does, allowing us to observe the shadow of that which was to come from a past perspective. In the case of the Hebrew writer, foreshadowing allows us to see a perspective of Jesus typically would be overlooked in studying the NT alone.

I) The Tabernacle Courtyard



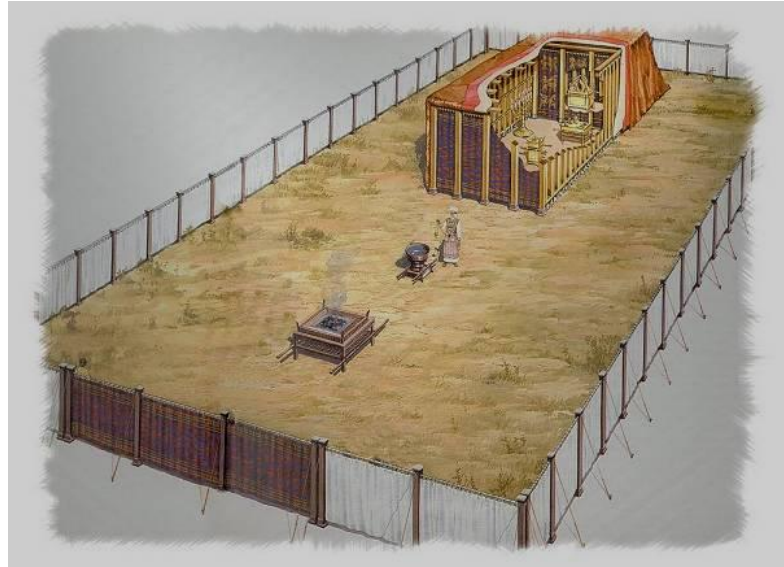
Exodus 27:9-18 “You shall make the court of the tabernacle. On the south side *there shall be* hangings for the court of fine twisted linen one hundred cubits long for one side;¹⁰ and its pillars *shall be* twenty, with their twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands *shall be* of silver.¹¹ “Likewise for the north side in length *there shall be* hangings one hundred cubits long, and its twenty pillars with their twenty sockets of bronze; the hooks of the pillars and their bands *shall be* of silver.¹² “For the width of the court on the west side *shall be* hangings of fifty cubits *with* their ten pillars and their ten sockets.¹³ “The width of the court on the east side *shall be* fifty cubits.¹⁴ “The hangings for the *one side of the gate shall be* fifteen cubits *with* their three pillars and their three sockets.¹⁵ “And for the other side *shall be* hangings of fifteen cubits *with* their three pillars and their three sockets.¹⁶ “For the gate of the court *there shall be* a screen of twenty cubits, of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen, the work of a weaver, *with* their four pillars and their four sockets.¹⁷ “All the pillars around the court shall be furnished with silver bands *with* their hooks of silver and their sockets of bronze.¹⁸ “The length of the court *shall be* one hundred cubits, and the width fifty throughout, and the height five cubits of fine twisted linen, and their sockets of bronze.

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The Courtyard of the Tabernacle

- The courtyard was 75 X 150 ft (about half the size of an American football field). The entire courtyard was not large enough to hold a big crowd; therefore most of the people stood outside, especially on the Day of Atonement.
- It was framed by posts set upon bronze bases (twenty on each of the long sides and ten on each of the short).
- Each base had a 7½ foot high bronze pillars that would mount perpendicularly into it.
- With silver hooks and bands for mounting, quality twisted linen was hung like a curtain on the pillars, enclosing the entire courtyard.
- It had a 30 foot wide entrance on the east side. There was scarlet-blue linen that served as a covering for this entryway.
- The courtyard contained the altar of burnt offering, the laver of water for washing and the tabernacle building with the holy furniture.
- This was assembled at God's ordering to facilitate the religious system of the culture. For forty years they would be traveling in the desert and seeking their identity in Jehovah prior to the entering of the Promised Land. The tabernacle was in essence their portable church building.
- Centuries later when Solomon became King, there was the permanent structure erected called the Temple. It was modeled after the tabernacle as directed by God (1 Kings 5-8).
- It was also the pattern for the Temple that Herod spent decades to make during the life of Jesus (John 2:19-21).



The Tabernacle was a Copy and Shadow of the Church

Copy and Shadow: God wanted the tabernacle built so that He could dwell among the Jews.

- Exodus 25:8 “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.”
- Exodus 29:45-46 “I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶ “They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.”

Reality: God creates Christians as a temple to dwell among them.

- 2 Corinthians 6:16-18 “...For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. ¹⁷ “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. ¹⁸ “And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty.
- 2 Peter 1:13-14 I consider it right, as long as I am in this *earthly* dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴ knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

God cleansed the Christian of their sins with the blood of Jesus Christ because He wanted to dwell with you and in you. 2 Corinthians 13:5 “...Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you...?” The reality is that God wants to be involved in every moment of our lives! He is our God and we are His people.

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Copy and Shadow: God expected reverence from the Jews concerning the tabernacle.

- Leviticus 10:1-2 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

The Reality: God expects reverence in the lives of the Christians.

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.
- 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Copy and Shadow: The Tabernacle identified citizenship

- Exodus 35:22-29 Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women, came *and* brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and bracelets, all articles of gold; so *did* every man who presented an offering of gold to the LORD. ²³ Every man, who had in his possession blue and purple and scarlet *material* and fine linen and goats' *hair* and rams' skins dyed red and porpoise skins, brought them. ²⁴ Everyone who could make a contribution of silver and bronze brought the LORD's contribution; and every man who had in his possession acacia wood for any work of the service brought it. ²⁵ All the skilled women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun, *in* blue and purple *and* scarlet *material* and *in* fine linen. ²⁶ All the women whose heart stirred with a skill spun the goats' *hair*. ²⁷ The rulers brought the onyx stones and the stones for setting for the ephod and for the breastpiece; ²⁸ and the spice and the oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense. ²⁹ The Israelites, all the men and women, whose heart moved them to bring *material* for all the work, which the LORD had commanded through Moses to be done, brought a freewill offering to the LORD.

The Reality: The church identifies our citizenship.

- Ephesians 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.
- Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

Sanctuary

Lord, prepare me to be a Sanctuary
Pure and holy, tried and true
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living
Sanctuary for You

It is you, Lord, Who came to save
The heart and soul of every man

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It is you, Lord, Who knows my weakness
Who gives me strength with Thine own hand

Lead me on, Lord, from temptation
Purify me from within
Fill my heart with Your Holy Spirit
Take away all my sin

Lord, prepare me to be a Sanctuary
Pure and holy, tried and true
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living
Sanctuary for You

In closing:

Over the many lessons to come in this series, we will systematically cover the copy/shadow pattern of the Sacrificial System and link it to the reality that we have in Christ. Our goal is to take what we are already familiar with in the New Testament and place it on the background of the culture that Jesus and the apostles were most familiar with. In doing so, we will be able to better understand our own Christianity and draw closer to the Father. If you want to better understand your New Testament Christianity, then study the Old Testament Sacrificial System.