

# THE TABERNACLE -- An Analogy of Stages in our Spiritual Growth

The fulfillment of our spiritual walk is knowing the abiding presence of God. This is represented in the tabernacle by the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.

## *THE ORIGIN OF THE TABERNACLE*

When the children of Israel were about to enter the promised land, they balked and drew back, doubting God's ability and faithfulness to enable them to defeat their enemies. As a result, God directed Moses to take the children of Israel into the wilderness, where they would wander for forty years until all those who had refused to enter the promised land had died. God used the forty years to prepare a remnant who would obey Him, and trust Him to overthrow their enemies. He did this by severe discipline and revealing His miraculous power to provide for all of their needs, even in the wilderness.

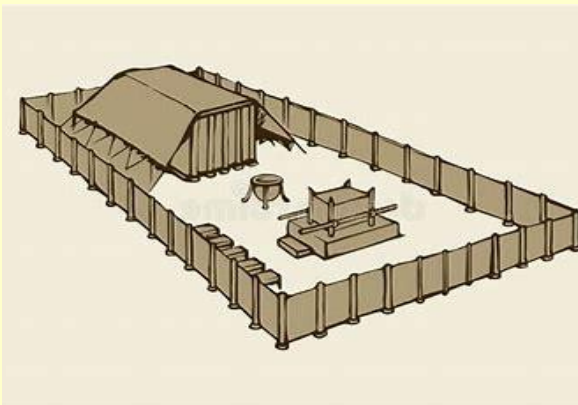
It was on this journey in the wilderness, that God instructed Moses to make a tabernacle, or meeting place, where He could instruct and train them. Moses was told to make the tabernacle according to the carefully detailed instructions given to him by God, which was a copy of a heavenly tabernacle.

**"... since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."** Heb 8:4-6.

After His crucifixion, Jesus was resurrected by the Holy Spirit to the heavenly tabernacle not made with Hands, where His blood was placed on the Mercy Seat as an atoning sacrifice for the sin of all mankind.

**"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."** Heb 9:11-13.

## *THE TABERNACLE OF MOSES*



The tabernacle was a portable place of worship, carried from one resting site to the next throughout their pilgrimage in the wilderness. Its design was given directly to Moses by God, to be constructed exactly as God had commanded, being an exact copy of the tabernacle in heaven. In the Tabernacle the presence of God was manifested with the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.

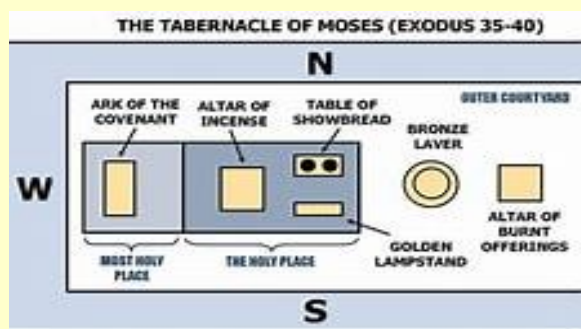
## *The Heavenly Tabernacle*

The tabernacle made by Moses on earth was an exact copy of one in heaven, not made by human hands, but by the Spirit of God. **“Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’”** Heb 8:5.

When Christ was resurrected by the Spirit, He entered the heavenly tabernacle through the rent veil of His flesh, rent when He chose to forsake the desire of the flesh to present His body to God as a living sacrifice. When His blood was placed on the heavenly altar, and His atoning sacrifice was completed, He was exalted and seated with God the Father on His throne.

Just as Jesus entered into the presence of God through the path of obedience and self-sacrifice, we likewise must take the same path. The way into the Holiest is the way of the rent veil – the path of the cross, willingly laying carnal self on the altar of the cross so that God can put it to death by the Spirit, and form Christ’s nature in us.

## **PLAN OF THE TABERNACLE AND ITS FURNISHINGS**



The tabernacle was divided into three sections, the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. Entering the gateway, and progressing through the Outer Court, Holy Place, and into the Holy of Holies, provides us with an analogy of our spiritual growth and progress into the abiding presence of God. This progress is made clearer when we look at the light source (a symbol of truth), of every compartment. The Outer Court was lit by natural light, which

represented truth that could be discerned by the natural mind of man. The Outer Court was open to all believers.

The light source for the Holy Place was from the golden Lampstand, which represented spiritual truth discerned by man’s spirit. Those entering the Holy Place have received spiritual enlightenment, enabling them to be kings and priests of the Lord.

The Holy of Holies had no physical light source, the light was from the presence of God Himself. Only the high priest could enter into the Holy of Holies once a year. This foreshadows those who have reached the climax of their pilgrimage of growth in spiritual holiness.

## **The Brazen Altar**



The first object which confronted a person entering the Outer Court was the Brazen Altar, on which animals were sacrificed daily as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people. The sacrificial animal with its shed blood, was a type of Jesus Christ, who willingly allowed Himself to be offered on the altar of the cross, becoming an atoning sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. The two most sacred elements associated with

the sacrifice on the Brazen Altar, were the body and blood of the animal which became a symbol of the sacrificed body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus said **“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, (or receive all of the blessings associated with) you have no life in you”** John 6:53-54.

In Psalm 100, we read, **“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.”** In approaching God in prayer, we should constantly praise and thank God for all of the blessings we have received from Christ, in particular, His sacrificed body and shed blood.

### ***The Challenge of the Brazen Altar***

Jesus was prepared to lay down His life and face the horrors of the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

**“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”** Phil 2:8.

If we desire to be disciples of Jesus Christ, we must be prepared to lay our self-lives on the altar of the cross to be put to death by the Spirit of God, so that Christ has a complete reign in us.

**“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross [the death of carnal self], and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”** Matt 16:24-26.

Many people enter through the gate of salvation, but fail to respond to the challenge of the Brazen Altar to lay carnal-self on the cross, to be put to death by the Spirit. They spend their whole lives in the Outer Court, satisfying the desires of the flesh, the mind, and the enticements of the world, but not growing spiritually.

### ***The Laver***



In our pilgrimage, the next object we encounter is the laver. It was used by the priests to cleanse their hands and feet after preparing the animal sacrifice, and before entering into the Holy Place to conduct further ministry. The cleansing ritual of the bronze laver points to our need to be baptised after making our salvation testimony. After becoming a Christian, we are made spiritually clean by the blood of Jesus, and the water of baptism.

**“For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”** Heb 9:13-14.

**“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we [our old man with its carnal nature] were buried with Him through**

**baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Rom 6:3-4.**

### ***Prerequisite for Entering into the Holy Place***

There is a danger for those who have received the Lord’s salvation, to settle into a state of spiritual stagnation. In the analogy of the tabernacle, they go no further than the Outer Court, attending fellowship meetings, endeavouring to live as good Christians by trying to overcome their shortcomings, praying forgiveness for their sins, but never seeking further spiritual enlightenment. They never go on to perfection, as advised by the writer of Hebrews - **“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection...”** Heb 6:1.

Some Christians may spend many years in the Outer Court, without endeavouring to grow further in knowledge of spiritual truth, or progress in purity and holiness. Earnest Christians seeking to grow spiritually, begin to realise that something is lacking. The Holy Spirit responds by placing in their hearts a yearning for more spiritual truth, and a desire to study the bible, and further directs them to those who have anointed ministries such as teachers and prophets. It is this quest for further spiritual truth, and the response of the Holy Spirit, that prepares the way for Christians to enter into the Holy Place to receive the spiritual enlightenment that will enable them to embrace further truth and growth.

## **FURTHER ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE HOLY PLACE**

The three articles of furniture in the Holy Place, were the Golden Lampstand, situated on the South side of the Holy Place, the Table of Showbread on the North side, and the Altar of Incense, which was situated in front of the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

### ***The Seven Branched Lampstand***



The lampstand was made of pure gold. It had a pedestal supporting a main stem, on which was a central lamp. From either side of the main stem, three branches extended to outside lamps. The main stem and the branches were capped with lamps, and were intricately decorated with ornate almond flowers.

### ***The Symbolism of the Lampstand***

Gold symbolises the presence of God, and being made of gold tells us that God was the source of its light, which in turn, symbolises spiritual truth.

The olive oil that fuelled the lamps symbolised the Holy Spirit. The olives used to create the oil were beaten with rods, rather than being crushed, hence producing a purer olive oil. This indicates that the truth dispensed in the Holy Place was unblemished.

The adornment of almond blossoms relates to the almond rod in the Ark of the Covenant, that had miraculously budded to verify Aaron's priesthood. This shows us that the Holy Place is a place of spiritual regeneration.

In biblical numerology, the number seven symbolises completeness. Like the bible, the seven branched candlestick represents a complete spiritual enlightenment of the truth. Jesus issued a warning not to add to it, or subtract from it. Much truth presented in the Church is a mixture of truth blemished by the intrusion of the flesh. The apostle Paul warned the Corinthian Church,

**“For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it!”** 2 Cor 11:4.

The lampstand was serviced regularly by the priests, telling us that those in the Holy Place have a continual source of enlightenment.

### ***FURTHER SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT***

From Genesis to Revelation, Scriptural truth is often shrouded in figurative language, in which symbols, types, analogies, prophecies and parallel prophecies etc., have to be revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Place represents a progression from mere intellectual understanding, to that revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. Growth in spiritual enlightenment is a never-ending process.

#### ***Further Truth About the Brazen Altar***

Entering into the Holy Place gives us further enlightenment about the spiritual relevance of the Brazen Altar in the Outer Court, pointing to the fact that the carnal man has to be incorporated in Christ's death, before there can be a new creation, united with Him in His resurrection, with a renewed mind that can be guided by the Spirit. Consequently, the new man has the capacity to perceive and understand spiritual truths that were previously beyond his understanding. **“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”** 1 Cor 2:14.

The daily death of the sacrificial animal offerings shows us that if we desire to be a disciple of the Lord, we must daily lay our carnal man on the altar of the cross, so that it can be put to death by the Spirit.

**“For if you live according to the flesh you will die [spiritually]; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live [made spiritually alive].** Rom 8:13. Jesus said,

**“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.”** Luke 9:23-24.

The sacrifice of the animal represented a life sacrificed to God, and the smoke of the burnt offering was a sweet-smelling aroma to Him. **“Then the priest shall bring it all and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.”** Lev 1:13. Similarly, the daily surrendering of our lives for the use of the Lord is precious in His sight.

### ***A Constant Need to Appeal to the Blood of Jesus***

After the daily sacrificial animal was slain, some of its blood was placed in a bowl, and deposited by the finger of the priest on every piece of furniture in the tabernacle, even to the Mercy Seat above the Ark of the Covenant by the High Priest, once every year. This shows that at every stage of our spiritual pilgrimage, we need the appeal to the blood of Jesus to maintain our accredited righteousness in God’s sight.

The nearer a person draws closer to abiding in the holy presence of God, the more he is made aware of his continual need to know his accredited righteousness through the blood of Jesus, for without Christ’s imparted righteousness, we cannot abide in God’s holy presence. As a result of our spiritual progress, we are prone to attacks by Satan, and it is more and more necessary to rely on the efficacy of the blood of Jesus to know our righteousness, and for it to be a covering of protection over us.

### ***Further Enlightenment About the Laver***

The daily physical cleansing by the laver in the Outer Court foreshadows further understanding of our need to be cleansed daily from the defilement of sin. Our prayers for forgiveness of sins should naturally be followed by receiving cleansing from defilement by the blood of Jesus. **“...if we walk in the light [of spiritual truth] as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”** 1 John 1:7.

Cleansing in the laver leads to further understanding of spiritual cleansing in the ordinance of baptism **“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”** Acts 22:16.

It is not the water that cleanses us, but the understanding that our old carnal man, laden with sins of our past life, is buried in the baptismal water, and those past sins are done away with forever.

## ***SPIRITUAL WARFARE***

As we draw closer to God in the Holy Place, Satan’s kingdom is threatened, and we are confronted by much spiritual warfare to hinder our progress.

### ***The Name of the Lord Jesus Christ***

Jesus has entrusted us to use the authority of His name, which has the power of the kingdom of heaven behind it.

**Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:9-11.**

When it says that God has given him a name above every name, it means that when one wields the name of Jesus, (with the initiation and faith of Jesus), everyone must obey what has been commanded. We can be assured that Jesus has given us that authority to use His name against all of the power of Satan.

**“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions [symbols for demon spirits], and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” Luke 10:19-20.**

## ***OUR SPIRITUAL WEAPONS***

### ***The Word of God***

In the Nineteenth Chapter of Revelation, we are presented with a figurative account of Christ on a white horse, going forth to make war with His enemies.

**“He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood [of His enemies (Isa 63:2-3)], and His name is called The Word of God.” Rev 19:11-13.**

This tells us that Christ’s chief weapon in overcoming Satan’s attacks on the saints is the word of God, passed on to them by His prophets and teachers. When Satan has used lies and deceptions to captivate people, causing trauma, and preventing their further spiritual growth, his opposition may be counteracted by a testimony to the word of God. When Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven to the earth, and began to war against the saints, this proclamation came from heaven:

**“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” Rev 12:10-11.**

### ***The Blood of Jesus***

The **“blood of the Lamb”** is presented in Revelation as a chief weapon in overcoming Satan’s attacks, but to be made effective, it must be incorporated in a word of Scripture, some examples of which are shown in the readings below.

*Redemption and Forgiveness of sins:* **“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins...” Eph 1:7.**

*Continual cleansing:* **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9.**

**“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” I Jn 1:7-10.**

*Justification:* “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” Rom 5:9.

*Sanctification:* “Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?” Heb 10:29-30.

*Cleansing our Consciences:* “...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Heb 9:14.

*Peace:* “...and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” Col 1:20.

*Victory over Satan:* “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” Rev 12:10-12.

### *The Word of our Testimonies*

The Word of our Testimonies is the use of Scripture to negate Satan’s lies and accusations. It is the Word of our Testimonies that activates the power of the Holy Spirit in overcoming Satan’s attacks. For instance, if we have committed a grievous sin, and are being accused by Satan, we can negate his accusations by testifying to a Scripture like, ‘I have confessed my sins, and the word says, “**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,**” and “**the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses [me] from all sin.**”

### *Binding and Loosening*

Jesus told us, “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Matt 18:18.

By the authority of the name of Jesus, we may bind the operation of Satan’s interferences, thereby overcoming his actions. Jesus told us that before our ministering, we should first bind the strong man, or Satan, from interfering with our ministry.

**“No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.”** Mark 3:27.

In this following reading, it states that we may bind and cast down the thoughts and arguments that Satan has implanted in a person to prevent him from receiving the gospel truth. This prepares the way for a fruitful ministry.

**“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity [by binding it] to the obedience of Christ...”** 2 Cor 10:4-6.



The spirit of the Antichrist has used preconceived ideas and worldly concepts to impart strongholds of deception into the minds of some people, and they have to be cast down by the name of Jesus Christ before a person is open to receive truth.

### ***PARTAKING OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF JESUS***

Jesus stated that if we were to experience His life in us, we must eat His flesh, and drink His blood, that is, receive all of the blessings that He acquired for us by His sacrificial death on the cross.

**“Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him”** John 6:53-57.

Receiving the blessing of His shed blood, means that we believe that Jesus paid the full penalty for our sins on the cross, and that we are now righteous before God, and our eternal salvation is secure in heaven.

In the following discourse, Jesus tells us that His body may be compared with living bread, recalling the manna that came down from heaven to give life to the Israelites. Receiving the blessing of His sacrificed body, means that by faith, we embrace the attributes and power of His indwelling life. Furthermore, we have the assurance that Jesus dwells in us, and we in Him.

**“I am the bread of life... from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.”** John 6:45-57.

### ***THE PATH OF THE CROSS***

By faith, we believe that in baptism, our carnal man was incorporated in Christ’s death and burial, and that we are resurrected with Christ to start a new life united with Him. This process is reinforced in our morning prayers, in which we put off our carnal man, and put on Jesus Christ, so that we may live in union with Him throughout the day.

**“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”** Eph 4:20-24.

In embarking on this new path, we are usually motivated to rid ourselves from all faults in our characters, for God has said,

**“...but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”** 1 Peter 1:15-16. And **“...let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”** 2 Cor 7:1.

It is at this point that most of us are taught a profound lesson. No matter how hard we try, and ardently we set our wills, we fail to conquer our faults, and they reappear over and over again. Eventually we are shown that it is only God who can reform us, for we are His workmanship. **“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,...”** Eph 2:10. We are shown that after putting off the old man in our morning prayers, our responsibility is, to relinquish that old man into God’s hands, to be put to death by His workmanship, and to be replaced by a new man created in the image of Jesus Christ.

**“...since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him [God] who created him...”** Col 3:9-10.

God undertakes a refining work that is a lifelong process that requires us to totally relinquish the work into His hands. When we try to overcome things by the power of our flesh, God withdraws until we exhaust ourselves in failure, and return the work into His hands. It is only through this pathway of suffering and refinement, generally known as the ‘path of the cross’ that we can reach our destination of fulfillment.

Where does this pathway lead us, and what is our fulfillment? We have said that it is by knowing the abiding presence of God, but how does this happen? Jesus said, **“The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”** Luke 17:20-21. When the reign of our carnal man is negated and replaced by the reign of God in us, we become more and more aware of His presence, and cooperate with His will for us. So complete is God’s work, that Paul could say that Christ was now his life. **“For you [your carnal nature] died, and your [new] life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”** Col 3:3-4.

When we are prepared to surrender our whole life into God’s hands, trusting Him to remake us in the image of Jesus Christ, He will undertake a lifelong work of putting to death our carnal nature, and replacing it with that of Christ. However, before we make such a commitment, we should understand that suffering is involved in the process. Refinement through suffering is often rejected as a teaching by many, who declare that Jesus bore all necessary suffering for us on the cross. Christ’s suffering on the cross paid the debt for our sins, paving the way for our salvation. The refining suffering is to break the power of carnal desire, leading to the restoration of our souls, so that they might be rightly subjected to our spirit. Peter wrote, **“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin [perpetual sinning] ...”** 1 Peter 4:1.

The prophet Malachi asked, **“who can endure the day of His [the Lord’s] coming? And who can stand when He appears? “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi [those with ministries], and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.”**

**“Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem [the Church] will be pleasant to the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years.” Mal 3:2-4.**

### ***WE ARE MADE KINGS AND PRIESTS***

**“And You, [Jesus Christ] have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” Rev 5:10.**

**We have been made kings:** We have not been allotted a kingdom, but have been given authority to reign with Christ. In union with Christ, we have been given the authority to use His name in delivering the oppressed from demon spirits, casting down strongholds of Satan, in short, destroying the works of Satan.

**Priests:** A priest ministers the blessings of God to the people - in this case is used by the Lord to carry on His commission stated in Isaiah 61.

**“To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord [now is the day of salvation], and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion [for the state of the Church], to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness [depression]...” Isa 61:1-3.**

Not all Christians are kings and priests, but only those prepared by God. The following reading illustrates how they are prepared.

**“Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded [the headship of their soul removed] for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years [the Church age].” Rev 20:4-5.**

John’s attention was focused on their souls, because it was their souls that were ‘beheaded,’ or had their headship dismantled. Jesus could now reign through them without the interference of their carnal natures, which are manifested through man’s soul. In God’s will, the soul’s rightful position in man is that of being subservient to his spirit, which is used by God to guide man, and act as his conscience.

**“To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Rev 1:5-6.**

### ***THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD or The Bread of the Presence***

The Table of Showbread, as with the rest of the furniture in the Tabernacle, was made of acacia wood, which symbolised man’s humanity, overlaid with gold, symbolising the presence of God. Twelve loaves were placed on the Table of Showbread every Sabbath, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, and by present connection, the whole of Christendom. Every Sabbath, the loaves were eaten by the priests, and any remainder was offered to God as a burnt offering.

For Israel, the Table of Showbread represented the presence of God in their midst, with His constant provision. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David wrote,



**“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.” Ps 139:7-10.**

An alternative title for the Table of Showbread is ‘The Bread of the Presence,’ referring to the presence of God, and in our case as Christians, His presence in us. As our carnal man is dealt with and diminishes, the kingdom reign of God the Father, and the Lord

Jesus Christ increases as our consecration is perfected. Our personal relationship with the Lord, and the knowledge of His presence become more real to us, and we become more in harmony with His will.

#### ***HOW DO WE KNOW IF GOD IS DWELLING IN US?***

The following Scriptural readings assure us that God abides in us, and so we may accept this fact by faith, because we can trust the truth of the Scriptures.

**“Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”** 1 John 2:24. If we have a heart and mind to keep God’s commandments, we abide in Him, and He in us. Secondly, if we have the Holy Spirit, we know that He abides in us.

**“And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him [God the Father] who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ.”** 1 John 5:20. He is in Jesus Christ who abides in us.

**“At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.”** John 14:19. In that day means when we have received the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

**“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”** John 14:23. If we love the Lord and endeavour to obey Him, Jesus and the Father will dwell in us as their home.

**“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”** Col 2:9-10. We are told that in Jesus is the fulness of the Godhead, which means that with Him being in us, we have potentially, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in us, enabling us to do all things through Jesus Christ.

**“I do not pray for these alone [the Apostles], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”** John 17:20-22. This is a last prayer of the Lord before He departed, asking God the Father to unite us together in Him.

Although we have Father, Son, and Holy Spirit indwelling us, very few are aware of their presence, or know them personally. It is Jesus who reveals them to us gradually as our carnal natures are eliminated, and He becomes our life.

**“All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”** Matt 11:27.

Paul testified to his willingness to suffer the loss of all his former natural achievements **“...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, [the death of his carnal nature] if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead [to perfection in Jesus Christ]. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.** Paul then advises us to walk in the state we have entered into, without trying to be something better. **Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus... Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.”** Phil 3:10-16.

### *Jesus is the Living Bread in us*

Jesus said that He was the living bread from heaven, and that anyone who ate of this bread, and received of its fulness, would experience His abiding presence, and the spiritual life and blessings associated with it.

**“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”** John 6:51.

**“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”** John 6:56.

### *We are to be Partakers of the Living Bread*

The bowls or cups on the Table of Showbread, are thought to be receptacles for wine, which was partaken of by the priests in conjunction with the bread, foreshadowing the Christian taking of bread and wine at the Communion sacrament. Jesus said that **“... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”** John 6:53. In eating the bread and drinking the wine in the Communion Sacrament, we are receiving by faith, an appropriation of the life of Jesus into our living experience. As we receive the life of Jesus more and more in our practical experience, we become more dependent on His life instead of our own, and our life becomes submerged in His. **“When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”** Col 3:4.

In our continual appropriation of the life of Jesus, we are steadily growing in our personal relationship with Him. An obvious way the Lord makes His abiding presence plain to us, is in His engagement with us in our ministry to fellow Christians, and in overseeing our using gifts of the Spirit.

**“Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.” Acts 14: 3.**

**“And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.” Mark 16:20.**

We see another way in which Christians are blessed in their personal relationship with the Lord in the Lord’s blessings of the overcomers in Rev 2:17.

**“To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”** In this reading, hidden manna represents hidden truths that the Lord reveals to those close to Him. A white stone was sometimes given as a winner’s trophy, and also a token of innocence after a trial. It symbolises personal acceptance and favour. In Isaiah we see that God upholds and supports His children **“Who confirms the word of His servant, And performs the counsel of His messengers;...”** Isa 44:26.

### ***THE ALTAR OF INCENSE***

#### **Altar of Incense**

The Altar of Incense was a wooden altar, overlaid with pure gold (Ex. 30:1-10; 37:25-28). It is 3 feet high, and 1.5 feet long and wide (1 m x 0.5 m x 0.5 m). It stood in the Holy Place before the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. It was transported by means of wooden poles which were overlaid with gold and inserted through rings attached to the sides of the altar.



The Altar of Incense was also made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. It was situated at the end of the Holy Place, with only the veil separating it from the Ark of the Covenant. Incense was offered on the altar morning and evening, symbolising the daily prayers of the people ascending to the throne of God. The fragrance of the incense passed through the veil to the presence of God in the Ark of the Covenant.

In our spiritual pilgrimage, our prayer life undergoes considerable change. When we first enter into the Holy Place, our prayers are mainly governed by our intellects and earnest, but soulish, zeal. As we embark on the path of the cross, we become influenced more and more by the Holy Spirit, who puts to death the deeds of our flesh, which is gradually replaced with our union with Christ and His reign in us. Our carnal mind is laid on the altar of the cross, and gradually replaced by the mind of Christ. Our spirits gradually become set free from soulish interference and are able to reign. The

prayers of those who have been prepared by God to enter into His presence and abide in Him, are prayers of spirit and truth, pleasing to Him.

**“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:23-24.**

It is also important to understand that our progression from one plane of spiritual growth to the next is a gradual process. There are usually times in which we may drift back and forth from the various planes - from the Outer Court to the world, from the Holy Place to the Outer Court, and so forth, until we are strengthened in faith by the Holy Spirit to our rightful position in each plane. One of the blessings of the 'overcomers' in Christ's letters to the Churches, is that **"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more..."** Rev 3:12.

In their ministerial service, the priests placed blood from the Brazen Altar of sacrifice, onto the horns of the Altar of Incense as a continual testimony to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. Blood from the Brazen Altar was placed on every article of furniture in the Holy Place, showing us our need to know our righteousness before God by daily testifying to the blood of Jesus as the basis for our righteousness. In each phase of spiritual pilgrimage, it is vital we understand that we cannot bypass our need to testify to the blood of Jesus in knowing our righteousness before God.

***True Praise and Worship Proceeds from our Spirits, Empowered by the Holy Spirit***

Prayers of praise and worship that are pleasing to God, are those proceeding from our spirits empowered by the Holy Spirit, rather than those proceeding from our carnal minds. God manifests His presence in response to true praise and worship.

**"But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel."** Ps 22:3.

This stresses the importance of our daily consigning of our carnal man to the altar of the cross, so that it can be put to death by the Spirit, and walk in the new man governed by the Spirit. Before we can experience the life of Jesus, we must have willingly consigned our carnal man to the altar of the cross to be put to death by the Spirit. We cannot experience the power of the Lord's life, until we have accepted His death. It is a law of nature that resurrection life must be preceded by death. This death/life process is the basic experience of the path of the cross. Paul said, **"... Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day"**. 2 Cor 4:16.

In the following reading, Paul stated his willingness to forsake all worldly attainments and reliance on his carnal man, that he might be raised in union with Christ to be a partaker of His life and fullness. This is not talking about physical death and life after death, but losing his carnal self-life so that he might be a partaker of Christ in this life on earth.

**"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."** Phil 3:7-11.

Because the Path of the Cross eliminates carnality, and establishes the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ in us, it is a necessary preparation that enables us to experience God's abiding presence. We enter through the rent veil in Jesus Christ, by the virtue of His sacrificed body and shed blood.

## THE HOLY OF HOLIES

### *The Ark of the Covenant*



By its presence with its contents in the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant was synonymous with the presence of God amongst His people, and to enter into the Holy of Holies was equivalent to entering into the knowledge of the presence of God.

The Ark of the Covenant was a chest made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits in width and height. The ark had golden rings on each side through which rods were inserted, enabling it be carried throughout their journeys. On the top of the ark there was a golden lid which was called the Mercy Seat. A gold border extended above the

top of the Ark to keep the lid stationary. On the ends of the Mercy Seat there were two gold cherubim facing each other, with outstretched wings that met in the middle. Inside the Ark were two stone tablets on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments, a gold pot filled with manna, and Aaron's rod that budded.

**The Cherubim** with outstretched wings that overshadowed the Ark, symbolised a covering of protection over God's holiness and glory, and furthermore, God's faithful protection of those who **"abide under the shadow of the Almighty."** Psalm 91, which further states, **"Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield."**

### **The Mercy Seat - a Type of Christ**

On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest sprinkled the Mercy Seat seven times with blood, symbolising the reconciliation of God with His people, through the blood of Jesus. The whole picture of the Ark and the Cherubim was a representation of the throne of God. The Mercy Seat shows us that it is only through God's mercy and the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and our belief in the efficacy of His shed blood, that we can enter into God's presence.

**"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed..."** Rom 3:23-25.

On the **two stone tablets** were the Ten Commandments engraved by the finger of God. They represented a brief of the whole law of God - a testimony of what God desired from His children.

**The manna** – The food that was provided for the Israelites in the wilderness, is a testimony to God's faithfulness and trustworthiness. He is 'Jehovah Jireh' – '*He who provides*'. The manna



proves that in all unlikely circumstances, God can still meet all our needs. Antichrist has combatted this by imparting on man his 'mark of the beast', which persuades man that he is dependent on money for his provision.

**The almond rod that budded** (Numbers 17) was used by God to verify Aaron's priesthood. It indicates that all valid ministries are by God's election and anointing, and not by worldly qualifications.

### ***ENTERING INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES THROUGH THE RENT VEIL***

#### ***Having Boldness Through the Blood of Jesus.***

The writer of Hebrews counsels us to enter boldly through the rent veil to the abiding presence of God by the way Jesus prepared for us, through His rent flesh and shed blood.

**“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”** Heb 10:19-231.

Some people are reluctant to enter boldly, being conscious of their sinfulness and unworthiness in giving way to the desires of the flesh and the world. But our worthiness and boldness should rely on our acceptance of the efficacy of Christ's sacrificed body and shed blood, which has paid the full penalty for our sins. The second reason for our confidence is that Jesus is now our High Priest, representing us before the throne of God, and we now have His invitation to appropriate what He has procured for us. We have the call to come out of a life of anxiety and uncertainty, and enter into God's rest, knowing an overall peace and security.

At what stage in our spiritual walk can we enter through the rent veil into the abiding presence of God? We may enter through the veil even as a young Christian, but actually experiencing the blessing of God's abiding presence depends on our entry onto the path of the cross, and how much of our flesh has been dealt with. God cannot have fellowship with carnal flesh, and so the degree that flesh has been eliminated, is the degree of our experiencing the abiding presence of God.

The following reading shows us our reliance on two essential beliefs that enable us to enter through the rent veil into the abiding presence of God. They are our understanding and accepting of what the blood of Jesus, and His sacrificed body have acquired for us spiritually.

**“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh...”** Heb 10:19-20.

#### ***By His Blood***

When Moses consecrated the first tabernacle, he **“sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”** Heb 9:21-22.

This tells us that in whatever stage of spiritual growth we have attained, we cannot rely on our own piety or righteousness to enable us to abide in God's presence. It is only our appeal to the righteousness we have acquired by the blood of Jesus - His life blood poured out to pay the penalty for our sins. Without the blood of Jesus, we have no access to the abiding presence of God.

### ***By His Rent Flesh***

What is the veil that prevents us from entering into the Holy of Holies, and experiencing the abiding presence of God? The veil that separated man from God was, and still is, the flesh - the carnal nature that entices a person to cater to the desires of the body, the mind, and emotions, and to do what he wants to do without reference to God. Isaiah stated, **"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."** Isa 53:5-6.

Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He dwelt among us outside the veil, subject to like temptations. But instead of obeying the desires of the flesh, He yielded His will and life to God, even when facing the horror of the cross. He would have been well aware of the Scriptural prophecies of His suffering and agonising death, like this one given to David by the holy Spirit.

**"But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!'... Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; you have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. they look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots."** Ps 22:6-18.

In the Garden of Gethsemane prior to His crucifixion, He was overwhelmed with the reality of the horrific suffering that was facing Him, and He prayed, firstly what His flesh desired: **"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me..."** But this was followed but a denial of His flesh, **"nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."** Matt 26:39. The veil of His flesh was rent, and the entry of man through the rent veil was secured. Our entry through the rent veil is the same - the denial of the flesh, placing it on the altar of the cross to be put to death by the Spirit.

## **FULFILLMENT OF OUR SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE**

### **THE NEW JERUSALEM -- The Bride of Christ**

Some people think receiving salvation is the culmination of their Christian search, but in reality, this should be the starting point of a lifelong pilgrimage of spiritual growth, leading to perfection in holiness, and consecration to the Lord.

The reading below gives three titles to states of spiritual perfection that are essentially synonymous.

1. **Mount Zion**, which symbolises our personal knowing the abiding presence of God.
2. **Heavenly Jerusalem**, which is also called 'New Jerusalem.' This is another title for the perfected Church, which consists of an invisible membership of those perfected in holiness by God's refining hand.
3. **Just men made perfect**. Another name for those who have been perfected by God's refining hand is 'the bride of Christ.'

**“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect [the bride of Christ], to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”** Heb 12:22-24.

Some people think that the bride of Christ is the whole Church resurrected at the end of the age, but in the parables of weddings, and this reading from Revelation, there are the Lord and His bride, accompanied by those who are called or invited to the marriage supper. **“Blessed are those who are called [or invited] to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”** Rev 19:9. The marriage supper of the Lamb will take place after we are resurrected to our heavenly existence.

The bride of Christ consists of people who, down through the ages, have stepped on the path of the cross, and daily laid their carnal natures on the altar of the cross to be put to death by God's refining workmanship. This involves a lifelong process that gradually eliminates carnality, and replaces it with the nature of the Lord.

### *Our Pilgrimage to Mount Zion*

In the next reading our pathway to spiritual perfection in knowing the abiding presence of God, is referred to as our pilgrimage to Zion.

**“Blessed is the man whose strength is in You whose heart is set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca [weeping or trouble], they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.”** Ps 84:5-7.

There are a number of illustrations in the Scriptures, that present a symbolic representation of those who have accepted God's refinement, and reached the status of the bride of Christ.

### *The One Hundred and Forty-Four Thousand on Mount Zion*

**“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads...These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first-fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”** Rev 14:1-5.

**standing on Mount Zion:** Mount Zion represents the presence of God amongst His people, and that by their standing on Mount Zion, shows that the one hundred and forty-four thousand had reached fulfillment in their spiritual pilgrimage to know the abiding presence of God.

**one hundred and forty-four thousand:** This is not a literal number. In biblical numerology, twelve symbolises divine government, and one hundred and forty-four, the complete reign of God, in this case, in those who have reached the status of the bride of Christ. This means that God can express His reign in and through those standing on Mount Zion.

**having His Father's name written on their foreheads:** the name of God is the seal of God's ownership. They had been brought to perfection in obedience, and presented to Jesus Christ, who stands with them on Mount Zion. The seal on their foreheads means that their carnal minds have been put to death and replaced with the mind of Christ.

**they are virgins:** they are not physical but spiritual virgins, meaning that they were entirely consecrated to God. In the scriptures the opposite to virginity is harlotry, like engaging with sinful nations in idolatry, as portrayed in this reading. **“You also committed harlotry with the Egyptians, your very fleshly neighbours, and increased your acts of harlotry to provoke Me to anger.”** Ezek 16:26.

**who follow the Lamb wherever He goes:** they are totally obedient to Jesus, and accept His reign over whatever He wants them to do, and wherever He wants them to minister.

**redeemed from among men, being first-fruits to God and to the Lamb:** Spiritual growth in holiness and perfection is an ongoing process occurring here on earth, and in our heavenly existence. The one hundred and forty-four thousand have been perfected by God here on earth, and so they are called first-fruits of God's work.

**without fault before the throne of God:** They are not without sin, but they are perfect in their obedience to the pathway allotted to them, allowing God to continue refining them and reshaping their lives.

### ***THE SONS OF ZADOK – Representing the Bride of Christ***

At the time of the following prophecy, Israel had been defeated by Assyria, and scattered amongst surrounding countries, ceasing to exist as a nation. Although addressed to Israel, this prophecy has a more general application to those with ministries in the modern Church. It addresses two types of ministers – the Levites (descendants from the Levitical Priesthood) who went astray from God's will, and the **“Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me.”** God now passes His judgment on those with ministries who did not keep His charge.

**“And the Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who strayed away from Me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, as gatekeepers of the house and ministers of the house... And they shall not come near Me to minister to Me as priest, nor come near any of My holy things, nor into the Most Holy Place...Nevertheless I will make them keep charge of the temple, for all its work, and for all that has to be done in it.”**

This passage is relevant to those with ministries in the modern Church, who have neglected presenting the truth of the necessity of our old or carnal man being united with Jesus in His death - to accept suffering refinement that we might be **“heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”** Rom 8:17. Without the death of the ‘old man,’ there is no union with Christ in His death, or resurrection in Him to live a new life in union with Him. Nevertheless, these ministers are not entirely condemned. They are still trusted with keeping the charge of the activities of the Church.

**“But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood,”** says the Lord God. **“They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge.”** Ezek 44:10-16.

The second group are called ‘the sons of Zadok,’ the Levitical priests entrusted by David to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. These ‘Sons of Zadok’ were faithful to God when others of Israel had gone astray. They represent those in the church, through history and today, who are faithful to God in yielding themselves to God’s refining hand. Consequently, they are fulfilled in knowing the abiding presence of God, and being His bond servants.

**“...and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood:”** The fat in the body is a reserve of energy for future need. The blood symbolises the totality of their lives - **“for the life of the flesh is in the blood”** Lev 17:11. To offer to God the fat and the blood, is to relinquish the totality of our provision, and the fulfillment of our lives into God’s hands.

**“...they shall come near My table to minister to Me:”** The table represents knowing God personally, enabling them to minister in complete harmony with his will.

**“And it shall be, whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house. They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat.”** Ezek 44:17-18. Sweat symbolises self-effort, or the works of the flesh, which are offensive to God because they hinder God’s true works.

### ***THE OVERCOMERS -- WHAT THE SPIRIT SAYS TO THE CHURCHES***

In Chapters 2 and 3 in Revelation, Jesus addressed the seven Churches in Asia, revealing to them their spiritual state. At the end of each of Christ’s address to the Churches, there is an instruction from the Holy Spirit, addressed to Overcomers: **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”**

Whereas Christ’s address is likened to types of Churches down through history, the Spirit’s address to the Overcomers presents stages of spiritual growth of Christians.

#### **Ephesus**

**“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ‘To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.’”** Rev 2:7.

To partake of the tree of life is to receive the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be a recipient of everlasting eternal life.

### **Smyrna**

**“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”** Rev 2:11.

The second death is eternal damnation in hell.

**“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”** Rev 20:15.

### **Pergamos**

**“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”** Rev 2:17.

These overcomer blessings refer to entering into a closer relationship with the Lord. The manna, often referred to as the ‘bread from heaven,’ provided sustenance to the children of Israel in the wilderness. On the earth, Jesus was sustained by the life of the Father, and the words spoken to Him.

**“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.”** John 6:48-51 & 56-57.

The hidden manna refers to the invisible abiding presence of Christ’s life in us. The white stone was presented to winning athletes, and as a token of innocence in a trial. Overall, this blessing to overcomers refers to entering into a personal relationship with the Lord.

### **Thyatira**

**“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations — He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels’ — as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”** Rev 2:26-29.

He who overcomes will be given authority to use the power of the name of Jesus, to cast down the strongholds of the nations, or the opposition of those controlled by Satan. The morning star is a title given to Jesus. He will instigate and empower their ministries according to their legitimacy.

### Sardis

**“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”** Rev 3:5-6.

A person may lose his salvation if he rebels against the lord and denies his deity. He who overcomes, his salvation will be kept intact. He will be given white garments, which show that his works are not tainted by the flesh, but being done with the Lord’s initiation and empowering.

### Philadelphia

**“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”** Rev 3:12-13.

**“I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God”**: a pillar is a structural item of support. This overcomer will be a person to whom people turn to for support and strengthening.

**“He shall go out no more”**: he will not revert back to a lower stage of growth.

**“I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God”**: New Jerusalem is another title for the bride of Christ. He will have reached the status of the bride of Christ, and God will set His seal of ownership on him.

### Laodicea

**“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”** Rev 3:21-22.

**“I will grant to sit with Me on My throne”**: he will be invested with power to reign with Jesus, as He initiates and empowers his ministry.

### ***THE NEW OR HEAVENLY JERUSALEM***

Whereas the previous readings presented the individual attributes of the bride, this reading reveals an overall view of the bride, couched in the symbology of a city.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that in the culmination of the pilgrimage, we are united with **“the spirits of just men made perfect [the bride of Christ].”**

Jerusalem symbolises the true Church, and heavenly Jerusalem the perfected Church, manifested here on earth and in our heavenly existence. In the next reading, heavenly Jerusalem, also called ‘New Jerusalem,’ is referred to as ‘the bride, the Lamb’s wife’ – also known as ‘the bride of Christ.’

**“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.” Rev 21:9-11.**

The bride of Christ, or perfected Church, descends from heaven, clothed with the glory of God. We see from this that the individual members of the bride of Christ have been refined and perfected in holiness by God’s workmanship.

Whereas other Scriptures present figurative pictures representing aspects of a single bride of Christ, the following reading uses an image of a city to reveal the general attributes of the bride of Christ as a whole. John was taken to a great high mountain to view the city, showing that it was a spiritual image that could not be viewed from an earthly perspective.

**“Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west”. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb...The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits...The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones... The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. Rev 21: 12-18.**

Parts of the city-image illustrate attributes of the perfected Church.

**Twelve gates:** The names of the twelve tribes of Israel were inscribed on the gates. This reminds us that God chose Israel to present His covenant, His commandments, and to host Jesus Christ, the founder of our Church. Because of our debt to Israel as a foundation, they are pictured as the gateway into Christianity.

**Its dimensions.** In this vision, the dimension of the city precluded it from being an actual physical city, being 560 kilometres in length, width, and height.

**It was in the shape of a cube:** The Holy of Holies was also cubical, the cube symbolising God’s ultimate control in every direction.

**The foundations:** the foundation stones of the city are inscribed with the twelve names of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. The twelve apostles were called ‘the apostles of the witness,’ having been given the responsibility of expounding and recording the teachings of Jesus, which are the foundation of the Christian Church.

**Each individual gate was of one pearl:** Pearls are formed when an irritant, such as a grain of sand becomes trapped in an oyster’s mantle. To protect itself, the oyster secretes successive layers of aragonite and conchiolin, which eventually form into a pearl. This is a pattern of how a person is



refined through sufferings directed by God, which burn out soulish self-centred attributes of our natures until a Christ-like nature is formed. A person cannot enter into a bride status without going through this refining process.

**The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass:** Gold represents the presence of God's Spirit, and the transparent glass, its purity and freedom from contamination.

The description of the city is extended further in Chapter 22, where water, symbolising the Holy Spirit, flows out of the city from the throne of God and the Lamb, bringing spiritual healing and life to the unsaved nations of the world. We see from this reading that members of the bride, or New Jerusalem, will have an important role in bringing new spiritual life and truth from the Holy Spirit to those who need salvation.

**“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.”**  
Rev 22:1-5.

#### ***NEW JERUSALEM OR BRIDE OF CHRIST ON THE EARTH TODAY***

There has been a manifestation of New Jerusalem or perfected Church in every generation throughout the ages, consisting of individual members who have reached the status of the bride of Christ. This means that there is a present-day existence of New Jerusalem, the perfected Church, or bride of Christ.

This perfected Church has no earthly organisation, its members are not recognised by other Church members, for spiritually, their lives are hidden away in Christ in God. **“For you [their carnal man] died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God...”** Col 3:3-4. In Christ's eyes, these hidden-away ones have a super important role in being used by Him in the restoration of His Church, and His kingdom reign.