

The Tabernacle: God's Calendar

The tent of meeting used in the wilderness wandering was structured around seven furnishings. Each of these seven articles mystically parallel with the seven Levitical feasts prescribed by God to Moses. Which, in turn, parallel future Messianic events.

It never ceases to amaze me— just when I think I've squeezed all the juice out of a particular portion of scripture, God drenches me with another cup of refreshing insight. For several years now I have been studying a fascinating structure called the tabernacle. Designed by the Almighty God, as dictated to Moses, this structure may have more purpose in its design than just a model of heavenly activity. It may be a prophetic calendar as well.

SEVEN FURNISHINGS

Those who have studied the book of Exodus and Leviticus, know that there are seven major pieces of furniture used within the tabernacle. In the courtyard of the tabernacle is the bronze altar upon which clean animals were slain to atone for sin.

The next furnishing after the bronze altar was the bronze laver. Before entering the holy place, the priest washed at the laver as a ceremonial cleansing.

There are two similarities in these two furnishings; the first is that they are both made of bronze which is an idiom for judgement. The second similarity is that both furnishings are physically located outside the holy place.

Located *inside* the holy place was the gold covered table of shewbread. Freshly baked loaves of bread were stacked on this table as a symbol of life and sustenance.

Across from the table of shewbread is a seven branched lampstand called the Menorah or the Vine and Branches. This lampstand was fashioned by taking pure gold and beating it to form almond branches and bowls. Olive oil was poured in these bowls as fuel for the lamp wicks. This was the only source of light in the Holy place.

A multi-colored veil separates the Holy place from the Holy of holies. In front of the veil is seen the golden altar of incense. This altar was to be maintained day and night by the priests.

Like the two outer furnishings, these three pieces also have two similarities; the first is that they are each made of gold. The second similarity is that both furnishings are physically located *inside* the holy place.

Passing through the veil brings us into the Holy of holies. Inside we find the gold covered ark of the covenant. The lid of this chest-like structure, called the mercy seat, is made of solid gold. It sits upon the ark with two cherubim covering the surface with their wings. It is here that we see a representation of the throne of God.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Ref. Psalm 99:1

SEVEN FEASTS

For God's calendar to appear, we must first have a quick refresher course in the seven feasts given to Moses in Leviticus 23.

The first of these feasts, Passover, was celebrated on the 14th of Nisan. This feast commemorated the day when, in Egypt, the death angel passed over the home with a cross of lambs blood stained upon the door. On this day a lamb without spot or blemish was slain to atone for the sins of the people. This same day, the 14th of Nisan, Jesus was slain as *the* Lamb of God on a cross.⁸⁹ It is through His shed blood that we can have all our sins washed away.

The next day was the feast of Unleavened Bread. After the death angel passed through Egypt, God knew that the pharaoh would let the children of Israel leave the land. This exodus would have to take place quickly, so God instructed them to bake unleavened bread for the coming journey. The bread was made without leaven (or yeast) because it took too long to rise and they did not have the time. Leaven is symbolic of sin⁹⁰ because it puffs up the dough through internal decomposition. Unleavened bread thus became a symbol of the sinless Christ being broken and swallowed into the belly of the earth for three days and three nights.⁹¹

The end of the third day was a Sunday and the Feast of Firstfruits was to be celebrated. On this day the people were to present the firstfruits of their harvest unto God. Jesus said a corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die before it can raise up and bring forth fruit.⁹² The resurrection occurred on the very day that the Feast of Firstfruits was to be celebrated.⁹³

From that Sunday you were to count 50 days unto the Feast of Pentecost or The First Trump. This day is different from the rest of the feasts; on this day you were to bake your bread *with* leaven. This "un-Jewish" ingredient to the bread thus points to the gentile nations. It was on this feast day that the gentile church was born.⁹⁴

The next feast is called Rosh HaShana, The Feast of Trumpets or The Last Trump. It was a day of rest pivoted at the blowing of the rams horn or the *shofar*. It is postulated that on one of the days of this 10 day feast, the rapture will most likely occur.⁹⁵

Separated by seven days of personal affliction, we come to the feast of Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement. It was on this day alone that the high priest was to enter the Holy of holies to atone for the sins of the people. The seven days represent the seven years of Jacobs Trouble that will end with the second coming of Christ.

The last of the seven is the Feast of Tabernacles. It is upon this day that Messiah will sit as King of kings in Jerusalem and we will live and reign with Him as kings and priests.⁹⁶

89 Ref. John 1:29

90 Ref. Luke 12:1

91 Ref. Matt. 12:40

92 Ref. John 12:24

93 Ref. 1 Cor. 15:20

94 Ref. Acts 2:1

95 Ref. 1 Cor 15:52

96 Ref Zech. 14:16

JUXTAPOSITION

To see God's calendar in the tabernacle, let us look again at the order of the seven furnishings:

Bronze Altar		
Bronze Laver		
Gold Table of Shewbread		
Gold Lampstand		
Gold Altar of Incense		
Gold Ark of the Covenant		
Gold Mercy Seat		

Now let us review the order of the feasts:

	Feast of Passover	
	Feast of Unleavened Bread	
	Feast of Firstfruits	
	Feast of Pentecost	
	Feast of Trumpets	
	Day of Atonement	
	Feast of Tabernacles	

Let us also list the seven events that these feasts commemorate. Notice that the first three prophesy Messiah's first coming; the last three His second coming; and the middle feast for the church:

		Messiah Slain as <i>the</i> Passover Lamb
		Body of Messiah broken and buried
		Messiah raised from death as firstfruit
		Birth of the church
		Rapture of the church body
		Second coming of Messiah for Israel
		Beginning of Millennial reign

Placing these three lists in juxtaposition; we see the calendar begin to take shape.

Bronze Altar	Feast of Passover	Messiah Slain as <i>the</i> Passover Lamb
Bronze Laver	Feast of Unleavened Bread	Body of Messiah broken and buried
Gold Table of Shewbread	Feast of Firstfruits	Messiah raised from death as firstfruit
Gold Lampstand	Feast of Pentecost	Birth of the church
Gold Altar of Incense	Feast of Trumpets	Rapture of the church body
Gold Ark of the Covenant	Day of Atonement	Second coming of Messiah for Israel
Gold Mercy Seat	Feast of Tabernacles	Beginning of Millennial reign

Starting at the bronze altar, our calendar shows this to be the time when the passover lamb was to be slain for the sins of the people. So also was Jesus slain for our redemption.

The bronze laver showed the judicial cleansing that was given by the broken and buried body of the Christ. Both of these events took place *outside* the city of Jerusalem;⁹⁷ this parallels itself with the altar and laver located outside of the tabernacle. These two events were also moments of judgment symbolized by the altar and laver being made of brass.

Stepping inside the Holy place enters us into the calendar area of the church. We see this with the Table of Shewbread and its twelve loaves of bread made from the firstfruits of grain offered to the priests by the people. The corn of wheat that died, is raised to create a multiplied harvest and is formed and baked into sustaining bread. Upon His resurrection, Jesus became the firstfruit of those who were to be raised from the dead.⁹⁸

The multitude born of the single grain is the church. It is seen in the body of the menorah. Jesus pointed to the body of the church as being the light of the world.⁹⁹ We see the Menorah displayed visually in Acts 2:3, Revelation 1:20 and illustrated by Jesus in John 15:5,

I am the vine, you are the branches (the menorah). He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

The end of the church period is marked by the golden altar. The coals upon this altar rise up as incense unto God.¹⁰⁰ Let us stop for a moment and take a look at an interesting discrepancy surrounding the placement of the golden altar.

⁹⁷ Hebrews 13:12

⁹⁸ Ref. 1 Cor. 15:20

⁹⁹ Matt 5:14 - Cross Ref. Eph. 5:8, 1 Thess. 5:5

¹⁰⁰ Ref. Rev. 8:3-4

THE INCONGRUITY

It has been suggested by my teachers that apparent “contradictions” found in the pages of scriptures, are not contradictions at all, but rather hidden specifics that create detailed types or similes. One interesting example is found within the placement of the golden altar of incenses. In all of the diagrams I have seen of the tabernacle; the golden altar is positioned *outside* of the Holy of holies. This is because of the placement instructions given by God in Exodus 40:26,

He put the gold altar in the tabernacle of meeting in *front* of the veil.

This location is also verified by the fact that Aaron was to burn new incense every morning.¹⁰¹ Since the high priest could only enter the Holy of holies once a year,¹⁰² it would be impossible for Aaron to accomplish this task. This brings us to the apparent incongruity. In Exodus 40:5 the golden altar was to be placed *inside* the Holy of holies,

You shall set the altar of gold for the incense *before the ark of the Testimony*, and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle.

This is confirmed by the description given in Hebrews 9:3-4

...and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, *which had the golden altar of incense* and the ark of the covenant...

The actual location for the golden altar is a mystery. The rapture of the church is also a mystery; as illustrated by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:51,

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at *the last trumpet* (feast of trumpets). For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

The Temple Institute in Jerusalem has documented the procedure around this incongruity. When the High Priest is to enter the Holy of holies, he uses a gold shovel and scoops up some of the coals from the golden altar. After passing through the veil, the High Priest sprinkles incense upon the coals thus filling the Holy of holies with the sweet smelling savor. This same procedure can be found in Leviticus 16:12-13,

Then [Aaron] shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire *before the LORD*, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die.

¹⁰¹ Ref. Exodus 30:7

¹⁰² Ref. Lev. 16:34 and Hebrews 9:7

It is interesting to note that this same procedure given to Aaron is paralleled in Revelation 8:3,

Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was *before the throne*.

I had mentioned earlier that the golden altar of incense aligns with the Feast of Trumpets and the end of the church age. Since the end of the church age is marked by the sudden occurrence of the rapture; I find it extremely curious that at some unknown time, before the day of atonement, the High Priest was to scoop up the burning coals from the inside area of the tabernacle and carry them into the very presence of God! This passage through the veil can be seen in the movement from the terrestrial door of Revelation 3:8 to the heavenly door of Revelation 4:1 by our High Priest.¹⁰³

Within this inner presence is found the chest portion of the Ark of the Covenant that commemorates the end of the seven year tribulation on God's calendar with the second coming of Jesus Christ. This coincides with the day of atonement, or the end of the days of personal affliction in the Jewish community.

Finally, the Millennial reign of Messiah is marked by the Mercy Seat covering the Ark. The Mercy Seat represented the place where God would meet with Moses, face to face. This aligns with the feast of tabernacles when we too will meet with God face to face in the millennial kingdom.

Here we come to the end of the plan of God foreshadowed in the design of this mighty structure.

WE: THE GOLDEN ALTAR

If, by your own careful study of this presentation, you find that— yes, God's calendar can be seen in the tabernacle; then trace back to where we are presently located on His schedule. It is my strong conviction that we are moments away from the rapture. Soon, our High Priest will scoop us up and move us through the veil of the heavens and into the very presence of God. It is here we will fall upon our faces and let our prayers rise as incense before Him:

You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.¹⁰⁴

It is our task to be ready for His coming. Let Him each of us as a hot burning coal ready for scooping into His Holy of holies.

¹⁰³ Ref I Thessalonians 4:13

¹⁰⁴ Revelation 5:9 - spoken by the twenty four elders symbolizing the raptured Church.