Exodus Chapter Twenty-Five

Overview of Exodus 25

The subject of Exodus chapter 25 is the tabernacle, which symbolized God’s dwelling among His people (25:8; 29:45). It was the place where the Lord met the leaders of the Israelites (29:42) as well as its citizens (29:43). The glory of the Lord was on display in the tabernacle and was the center of worship in Israel. The tabernacle prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ, who John 1:14 says “tabernacled” among His people. The tabernacle was the place where the Yahweh, the pre-incarnate Christ met with Moses and the children of Israel.

The tabernacle itself and its furniture portray the different aspects of Christology and Soteriology. It was designed to teach the Israelites about the Lord and how they as sinners could have a relationship and fellowship with Him. The tabernacle was patterned after the heavenly tabernacle, which is located in the third heaven and was created before the foundation of the world. The tabernacle built by Moses and the Exodus generation was constructed after the pattern shown to Moses by Yahweh on Mount Sinai (Exodus 25:9; 26:30).


In the book of Exodus, Moses uses four different terms to describe the tabernacle, which emphasize one of its purposes: (1) miq·dāš (םיקדש) (mik-dawsh) (noun), “sanctuary” (Exodus 25:8): The word means “place of holiness” and emphasizes the transcendence of God. (2) miš·kān (םישקן) (mish-kawn) (noun), “tabernacle” (Exodus 25:9): The word means “dwelling place” and emphasizes God’s purpose of dwelling with His people. (3) ʾō·hēl (אוהל) (o′-hel) (noun), “tent” (Exodus 26:36; 29:42-43; 35:21): Emphasizes the imminence of God. (4) miš·kān hā·ʾē·dūt (םישקנןְהָאֶדועת), “tabernacle of the testimony” (Exodus 38:21): Indicates that the structure was the repository of the Ten Commandments.

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The entrances to the court and to the tabernacle structure were from the east. The prescribed order for the building of the tabernacle is given in Exodus 25:10-27:19, beginning with the Ark and proceeding outward, whereas in 36:8-38:31 there is a description of its construction, pursuing the reverse order.

The materials are listed in Ex. 25:3; 35:4: (1) Gold (2) Silver (3) Bronze (4) Blue (5) Purple (6) Scarlet (7) Fine twined linen (8) Goat’s hair (9) Dyed rams’ skins (10) Goatskins (11) Acacia Wood (12) Oil for lamps (13) Spices for the anointing oil and the fragrant incense (14) Onyx stones (15) Stones for the ephod and the breastpiece. The earthly tabernacle in Israel was composed of the following: (1) Court (2) Bronze Altar (3) Bronze Laver of Water (4) Holy Place (5) Holy of Holies. The court contained: (1) Bronze Altar (2) Bronze Laver of Water. The following pieces of furniture were contained in the Holy Place: (1) Golden Lampstand (2) Table of Showbread (3) Altar of Incense.

The only piece of furniture contained in the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant. The entrances to the court and to the structure were from the east. First was the altar of burnt offering in the court, then the laver; inside the Tabernacle, farthest west, stood the holy of holies, or the most holy place, hidden by a veil or curtain, and which housed the ark of the covenant.


The Levitical priests conducted the sacrifices in the Tabernacle. The High Priest conducted the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement in the Holy of Holies.

There were three branches in the tribe of Levi which were not of the Aaronic line which were responsible for the various articles of furniture: (1) Kohathites (2) Gershonites (3) Merarites.

The Levitical priesthood officiated over the various offerings: (1) Burnt offering (2) Gift offering (3) Peace offering (4) Sin offering (5) Trespass offering.

The tabernacle was erected at Sinai in the second year after the Exodus, two weeks before the Passover (Exodus 40:2, 17). When the congregation journeyed, the Ark was covered with the veil (Num. 4:5). The Ark and the two altars were carried by the sons of Kohath, a descendant of Levi, under the supervision of the high priest (3:31-32; 4:15). The rest of the disassembled structure was carried in six covered wagons, given by a prince (Num. 7:7), each drawn by two oxen. Others must have been used for the heavier materials.

The Tabernacle was composed of two parts: (1) The Tabernacle proper (Hebrew: mishkan) (2) The “tent over the tabernacle” (ohel, Ex. 26:7).
The Tabernacle proper consisted of boards of acacia wood, each 10 cubits long by one and a half broad (26:16); their entire surface was plated with sheets of gold.
Twenty of these formed each side wall (verses 18, 20), each board having two
tenons at its foot to enter the socket. There were eight rear boards (verse 25), six of
which were of the same dimensions as those on the side, thus making nine cubits.
As the width of the Tabernacle was probably the same as its height, ten cubits, thus
making the Holy of Holies a perfect cube (Eph. 3:18), this would leave one cubit of
space to be filled by the two corner boards.

There is nothing in the Hebrew to indicate the breadth of these two boards, and
we assume that they were only one-half cubit wide. If, now, the rear boards were
placed within the sideboards, so as to be flush with the end, each corner board
would rest on two sockets, and we have the sixteen sockets demanded. This will
oblige us to count the rear socket of the sides, as is done with the posts of the
courts. The meaning seems to be that as you look at each side, forty sockets are
seen; whereas if you look at the rear, sixteen are in view. In order to keep the
boards in line, three series of bars were provided, made of acacia wood overlaid
with gold, to pass through rings of gold on the outside of the boards (26:26-29;
36:31-34). Of these, five were on each side and five on the rear, the middle bar
reaching from end to end; the upper and lower ones were divided, their ends being
fastened (as Josephus suggests) with dowels. They were probably of different
lengths, to prevent the break being in the center.

The whole structure was, doubtless, kept in place with cords, one end fastened
to the knobs to which the tent cloth was attached and the other end to pins driven
into the ground. The boards were covered on the outside with a double blanket of
skins, probably suspended from the knobs mentioned above, thus keeping the wind
and dust from entering between the boards and also protecting the gold sheeting.
The inner blanket was of “porpoise skins” (26:14; 36:19) but may have been of the
Angora goat. This was probably hung with the hair turned inward toward the
boards, while the other blanket (of ram skins dyed red) was hung with the hair on
the outside, to shed the rain.

The roof (Hebrew: ‘ohel, “tent”) of the Tabernacle was made of goats-hair
canvas, i.e., camlet, such as is still used by the Arabs, generally looking like a fox
skin of black or brownish color (Song of Sol. 1:5). It consisted of an inner covering
and a fly. The material was woven in 11 pieces, each thirty cubits long by four
wide (Ex. 26:7-9; 36:14); five of these pieces were joined so as to make the inner
tent, and six formed the fly. This sixth breadth, being thirty cubits long, would
allow itself to be double across the front and single across the rear of the
Tabernacle (26:9, 13). The lower edge of each sheet was buttoned over certain
knobs on the boards by means of fifty loops attached to their selvedge. The tent
extended one cubit over the sides (verses 10-13). The roof was sustained by posts,
one of them being an extension of the central front doorpost, their heads probably
rounded so as not to tear the roof canvas.
The entrance to the Tabernacle was closed with a screen like that of the court, supported by five pillars, covered with gold; their hooks were of gold, and their “bands” (curtain rods) were covered with gold; their sockets were of bronze (Ex. 26:36-37; 36:37-38). If these pillars were arranged so as to leave six spaces, each space would have been a little more than thirty inches wide. Evidently the curtain rods had rings in their ends, which slipped down over hooks in the tops of the posts and on the boards.

Each wall drapery consisted of five pieces of cloth woven of the same material as the door screen, four cubits wide and twenty cubits long. These pieces were sewed together at the ends and hung by loops of blue cord to the gold knobs on the inside of the boards (Ex. 26:1-6; 36:8-13).

Special dignity was given to these side curtains, compared to that of the door screen, by their embroidery of “cherubim, the work of a skillful workman” (26:1; 36:8), instead of the simple tracery on the latter. As will be seen, the hangings were each twice as wide as the entire circuit of the walls, therefore they must have been gathered into some manner of festoons.
The veil (Hebrew: paroket, a “separation”), particularly described in Ex. 26:31-33; 36:35-36, was the screen between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. It was of the same material as the door screens but was embroidered with cherubim. It is thought that there were two, their extended wings touching each other.

The veil, like the other hangings, was suspended upon pillars and, probably, “bands” (curtain rods), though the latter was not mentioned. These pillars (and bands) were covered with gold, the hooks were of gold, and the sockets of silver. For the veil four pillars were used, and as no one of them ran up to the peak, it did not, therefore, need to be in the center. The upper corners of the veil were fastened to the gold hooks in the boards. If we follow the proportions of the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place in the Temple, we must suppose the latter in the Tabernacle to have been square and the former to have been twice as long as broad. This will fix the dividing line between the two rooms at two-thirds of the width of the seventh board from the rear; the presumption is that the pillars were wholly within the Most Holy Place.

In Exodus 19:1-23:33, we saw the Lord presenting the stipulations which must be agreed upon and practice by the Israelites in order to enter into a covenant agreement with Him. These stipulations would include the Ten Commandments and various ordinances, which were to govern the conduct of the nation.

These commandments and ordinances would serve as the nation’s constitution. It bestowed upon the Israelites the wonderful privilege of worshipping and serving God as well as representing Him by reflecting His perfect, holy standards before the Gentile world.

Now, in Exodus 24, we saw the people ratifying the covenant by agreeing to do all that God required of them. Now, immediately upon this ratification by the Israelites, we see the Lord requiring the Israelites to worship Him in the manner prescribed by Him. He instructs them where they should worship Him, how they were to do so and by whom and with whom they were to worship Him.

Exodus 25:1-9: Instructions Regarding Donations for Tabernacle

Exodus 25:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution. 3 This is the contribution which you are to raise from them: gold, silver and bronze, 4 blue, purple and scarlet material, fine linen, goat hair, 5 rams’ skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, 6 oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 7 onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and for the breastpiece. 8 Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. 9 According to
all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the
pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.” (NASB95)

The NET Bible writes “Now begin the detailed instructions for constructing the
tabernacle of Yahweh, with all its furnishings. The first paragraph introduces the
issue of the heavenly pattern for the construction, calls for the people to make
willing offerings (vv. 2–7), and explains the purpose for these offerings (vv. 8–9).
The message here is that God calls his people to offer of their substance willingly
so that his sanctuary may be made.”¹

This pericope records the Lord instructing Moses to go to the Israelites and take
up a voluntary offering for Him in order to procure materials for the building of the
tabernacle. Notice the Lord says that this offering was for Him even though the
offering was to procure material for the building of the tabernacle, which makes
clear that this tabernacle was symbolically God’s dwelling among the Israelites,
thus intrinsically His property.

Exodus 25:2 teaches a basic principle of giving, namely that offerings to the
Lord are to be voluntary and spontaneous. The Hebrew text reads literally, “whose
heart urges him to give.” Wanting to is still basic in dedicating anything to the
Lord. This principle is emphasized in 1 Chronicles 29:5, 1 Corinthians 9:17, 2
Corinthians 9:7 and 1 Peter 5:2.

Grace giving is a demonstration and expression of the love of God in our lives.
God demonstrated His love for us by “giving” His Son (John 3:16; Galatians 2:20).
God is the greatest giver because He is the greatest lover (Eph. 2:8-9; John 3:16;
Rom. 8:32; 1 Tim. 6:13; James 1:5). God gives to mankind on the basis of His
grace policy, which means that no one earns or deserves blessing from God, it is on
a non-meritorious basis (Eph. 2:8-9).

The Lord Jesus Christ commanded believers to give generously (Matt. 5:42;
10:8; Luke 6:30, 38). The apostle Paul taught that the church age believer is to
contribute to the needs of the royal family of God (Rom. 12:13). He reminded
pastor-teacher’s at Pastor’s conference to help members of the royal family of God
in need and then reminds them of our Lord’s doctrinal teaching on the subject of
giving (Acts 20:35).

The Macedonians obeyed the command to give generously and therefore,
demonstrated their divine love for the Body of Christ and thus for the Lord since
He is the Head of the Body (2 Corinthians 8:1-6).

Robert Rodenmayer said, “There are three kinds of giving: grudge giving, duty
giving, and thanksgiving. Grudge giving says, “I hate to,” duty giving says, “I
ought to,” thanksgiving says, “I want to.” The first comes from constraint, the
second from a sense of obligation, the third from a full heart. Nothing much is

conveyed in grudge giving since “the gift without the giver is bare.” Something more happens in duty giving, but there is no song in it. Thanksgiving is an open gate into the love of God.”

We are to give purposefully from careful and prayerful planning. “Let each one do just as he has purposed (planned beforehand) in his heart” (2 Cor. 9:7).

Scripture has a tremendous amount to say about money or material possessions. Sixteen of the thirty-eight parables of Jesus deal with money. One out of every ten verses in the New Testament deals with this subject. Scripture has 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but over 2,000 verses on the subject of money.

Money is an extremely important issue because a person’s attitude toward it is so determinative of his relationship with God, on fulfilling his purpose in this life, and on his character.

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:2 instructs the believers in Corinth in the manner in which they were to give.

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. (NASB95)

Regularly: “On the first day of every week” helps promote diligence and disciplined giving. This creates a consistency and regularity that translates good intentions into actions (1 Cor. 16:2).

Personally: “Let each one of you” brings out the need for every believer to take giving as a personal responsibility for which God holds us each responsible (1 Cor. 16:2).

Systematically: “Put aside and save” brings out the need to have a method or system whereby money for the Lord’s work is specifically set aside, stored up for giving, so that it is not used for other things (1 Cor. 16:2).

Proportionately: In the New Testament, giving is to be in proportion to how God has prospered you (1 Cor. 16:2).

Who do we give to so that we can demonstrate the love of God in our lives? The Local Church: “And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches” (Gal. 6:6; cf. also 1 Tim. 5:17-18).

1 Corinthians 9:14 So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. (NASB95)

If the local church is to form a solid home base for other ministries of outreach, it is only logical that it should become a first priority for our giving. This would include missions, para-church groups and individuals who are involved in these ministries (3 John 5-8). It would include one’s fellow believers in need meaning those unable to support themselves or who have faced serious problems are to be helped as we are able.
Those who refuse to work are not to be supported (1 John 3:17; Jam. 2:15-16; Gal. 6:10; Heb. 10:33-34; 13:1-3 with 2 Thess. 3:6-10). Our first priority is to those who are of the household of faith, but we are also to reach out to others in need as we are able (Gal. 6:10).

The Scriptures teach that there are at least four areas of stewardship: (1) The stewardship of time—redeeming it for eternity. (2) The stewardship of talents—discovering and developing our spiritual gifts and natural talents for the blessing of others and for God’s glory. (3) The stewardship of God’s truth—multiplying ourselves through evangelism and discipleship. (4) The stewardship of our treasures—laying up treasures in heaven through financial faithfulness.

At the Bema Seat, the believer’s service, as expressed through their stewardship in these four areas, will be evaluated by the Lord Jesus Christ to determine if they were a faithful and profitable steward in these four areas or not. If they were a faithful and profitable servant and steward with their time, spiritual gift, truth and finances that were given to them by the Lord as trusts, they will receive a reward from the Lord and if they were not, they will not receive a reward.

Therefore, the Christian’s stewardship of treasure will also be evaluated by the Lord at the Bema Seat. The believer also must be a good steward with money.

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Financial planning is biblical and is a means to good stewardship, to freedom from the god of materialism, and a means of protection against the waste of the resources God has entrusted to our care (Proverbs 27:23-24; Luke 14:28; 1 Corinthians 14:40).

Financial planning should be done in dependence on God’s direction and in faith while we rest in Him for security and happiness rather than in our own strategies (Proverbs 16:1-4, 9; Psalm 37:1-10; 1 Timothy 6:17; Philippians 4:19).

Financial faithfulness ultimately flows out of the recognition that everything we are and have belongs to the Lord (1 Chronicles 29:11-16; Romans 14:7-9; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Life is a temporary sojourn in which Christians are to see themselves as aliens, temporary residents, who are here as stewards of God’s manifold grace. Our spiritual gift, time and finances are all trusts given to us by God which we are to invest for God’s kingdom and glory (1 Peter 1:17; 2:11; 4:10-11; Luke 19:11-26).
One of God’s basic ways to provide for our needs is through work meaning an occupation through which we earn a living so we can provide for ourselves and our families (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; Proverbs 25:27). The money we earn is also to be used as a means of supporting God’s work and helping those in need, first in God’s family and then for those outside the household of faith (Galatians 6:6-10; Ephesians 4:28; 3 John 5-8).

Believers must have discipline with regards to saving money. The first principle with regards to this is that the believer must maintain a proper view of ownership. Remember, all his wealth ultimately belongs to God. We are managers, not owners (1 Chronicles 29:11-16; Luke 16:12). Also believer must maintain a proper view of our security. We are to put our trust in the Lord and not in our investments (1 Timothy 6:17).

The Christian must beware of impure and unbiblical motives, priorities, and reasons for saving such as anxiety and hoarding as a result of insecurity or covetousness (Matthew 6:25-33; Luke 12:13-31). He or she must make decisions concerning future investments by going to the Father in prayer in order seek His will (James 4:13-15). They must never use money in saving/investment programs that God desires be used for giving. This occurs when savings or investments become extreme and for the wrong reasons as seen above (Luke 12:16-21; 1 Timothy 6:18-19; 1 John 3:17). The Christian must avoid high-risk investments or get-rich-quick schemes (Proverbs 21:5; 28:20, 22; 1 Timothy 6:9). Lastly, the believer must watch his priorities in the sense that they are to make the kingdom of God his number one investment (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31; 1 Timothy 6:18-19).

The Christian is required by the Word of God to evaluate purchases according to Biblical principles. They must ask themselves, “Can I pay cash or will the purchase put me in debt?” They ask, “Do I have complete peace about this purchase with no doubt?” (Romans 14:23; Colossians 3:15)

We must be careful and understand that our sin nature can make us rationalize a purchase that we shouldn’t make. The believer must ask “Is it a real need or a matter of greed?” (1 Timothy 6:9; 1 John 2:15) They must ask “Will it be profitable to my family, our spiritual growth, our health, our ministry, the Lord’s reputation, and will it increase our love for the Lord or could it hinder it?” (1 Timothy 3:4: 5:8; 1 Corinthians 6:12). They should also ask “Is my lifestyle adequate or more than adequate?” or “Do I need to reduce my spending by lowering our expected standard of comfort?” (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:15, 23; Proverbs 15:16-17; 16:8; Ecclesiastes 5:10-11).

God favors lending (investing) over borrowing because it promotes freedom and wise stewardship (Deuteronomy 15:5-6). The Bible teaches that unwise borrowing can put us in a position of servitude (Proverbs 22:7). It also teaches us
to use credit wisely and avoid it whenever possible. Though not prohibited by Scripture, credit is generally mentioned in a negative sense.

Romans 13:8 is often used as an absolute prohibition against borrowing, but it does not necessarily forbid the use of credit. It simply teaches the necessity to pay one’s obligations whether physical or spiritual as they come due.

Concerning credit there are two basic alternatives: (a) Buy now on credit and pay the installments with interest. (b) Save now and buy later with cash and save the interest.

Remember that interest adds to the cost of living and consequently reduces our capacity for wise stewardship. If we must borrow, we should seek low interest for short terms. We must be aware of the fact that credit can be risky because it can place people in bondage to creditors and to their own desires rather than to God’s will. It makes impulsive buying too easy.

Satan’s cosmic world system depends heavily on impulsive buying to cover over a bored, frustrated life. Credit can be used as a substitute for trusting God or to get what we want in place of waiting on Him. Sometimes people use credit to prevent themselves getting into a situation where they have to depend on God. They do this because they are afraid He won’t give us what we want when we want it (Ps. 37:7-9, 34; 147:11; Matt. 6:30-34; Phil. 4:19).

Another important principle to remember is that credit reduces our ability to give to God and to those in need. The use of credit is often nothing more that a failure to be content with what we have (Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:6-8; Heb. 13:5). A materialistic person is never content with what he or she has but the spiritual person learns to be content with what he has or doesn’t have. When it comes to borrowing, we must not purchase something on credit if it will jeopardize our financial freedom. We must never go into debt today based upon a future event like a raise or a potential sale. This is nothing more than presuming upon the Lord and His sovereignty.

Another principle is that we are never to go into debt for a house before we have secured a source of income (Prov. 24:27). We are never to finance daily needs, living expenses, or pleasure items.

A Christian should never finance items that depreciate quickly, except on very short terms (i.e., 30-90 days). On appreciating items, such as a house or for business investments, the Christian should never borrow beyond their ability to cash out of the obligation through sufficient collateral plus the value of the item, should it be necessary to sell.

A believer must never allow debts (excluding mortgage) to exceed 20 percent of their take-home pay. They must seek after ten percent or less. They must never allow a mortgage payment (including insurance and taxes) to exceed 25 or 30 percent of their take-home pay.
In regards to borrowing the believer must always ask himself or herself the question, “Do I really need this?” or “Have I asked the Father for it in prayer and waited long enough for Him to supply it?” or “Am I impatient and seeking immediate gratification?” or “Is God testing my faith, values, or my motives?” The believer should ask himself or herself, “Did I wrongly spend the money God provided for this item or have I violated God’s financial principles?” or “Am I guilty of being stingy?”

In Romans 13:8, Paul prohibits the Roman Christians to owe nothing to anyone meaning that they are to fulfill their financial obligations to everyone, thus he is teaching by way of implication that they are to be good stewards with their finances.

Romans 13:8 All of you continue making it your habit to owe absolutely nothing to anyone except to continue making it your habit of divinely loving one another because the one who, at any time does divinely love the other person fulfills the Law. (My translation)

In Exodus 25:1-9, the Lord specifies exactly what He wants from the Israelites. The four metals to be used in the construction of the tabernacle were gold, silver and bronze. The materials to be used in the construction were blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen as well as goat hair, rams’ skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood, oil for lighting, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones and setting stones for the ephod and breastpiece.

The blue refers to dye made from shellfish and had a dark blue or purple-blue, almost violet color. The purple was a dye made from the shellfish or snail and was imported from Phoenicia. The scarlet was made from the eggs and bodies of the worm coccus ilicus, which is found with the holly plant. The powder made from the dried maggots produces a bright red-yellow color.

The fine linen was Egyptian that had more delicate strands than ordinary linen. The goat’s hair was spun into yarn (35:26) and was used to make the material for the first tent over the tabernacle. It was loosely woven and would allow breezes to pass through whereas the fibers expand and prevent water from seeping through when it rained.

The materials for the tabernacle are categorized according to type. The metals are first (verse 3), then the fabrics are listed (verse 4), then the skins and wood (verse 5), which is followed by the lamp oil, the fragrant anointing oil ingredients (verse 6), which were to be used on the breast piece of the high priest (verse 7).

The metals would be used for covering the wooden framework of the tabernacle and for covering the altars, the table and the ark. Some would be used for the solid gold rings that held the ark poles (verse 12), the gold plates, dishes, bowls and pitchers (verse 29), the lampstand (verses 31ff.) as well as the mercy seat on the ark (verses 17-22).
The fabrics would be used for the curtains (26:1ff.) and for the garments for the priests (28:2ff.). The skins would serve to shield the tabernacle from the elements (26:14). The wood would be used for the framework for anything that needed to have strong spans such as the rafters of the tabernacle, the table, altar surfaces and legs for the ark (25:10ff.), the table (25:23ff.) and the altar (27:1ff.).

The oil would be used as fuel for the oil lamps of the tabernacle lampstand (25:3ff.; cf. 27:20-21) as well as the main ingredient of the anointing oil, which was to be used on a regular basis by the priests (30:22ff.). The incense was compounded into a formula for the exclusive use of the tabernacle from the ingredients donated by the Israelites (30:34ff.).

The gemstones would adorn part of the ephod (28:6ff.) as well as the breast piece of the high priest (28:15ff.). They would represent each of the twelve tribes of Israel when they were symbolically brought into the presence of the Lord regularly by the high priest. They would be over his heart.

Hannah writes “The L ORD described to Moses the materials to be assembled for building the tabernacle. The Israelites were to bring a voluntary offering …
from each person whose heart prompted him to give. The metals to be used in the construction were gold, silver, and bronze. Gold was listed first probably because it is the most precious. After the three metals four materials are listed: three colors of yarn and also linen. Fine linen translates šēš, from an Egyptian word. “Egypt excelled in the production of linen, especially twined linen, where every thread was twisted from many strands. The Hebrew slaves must have learned many Egyptian arts and crafts … during their stay in Egypt” (R. Alan Cole, Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary, p. 189). Next was goat hair, ram skins … and hides of sea cows. “The sea cow ( dugong dugong ) is a herbivorous mammal native to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, and to this day the bedouin make sandals from its skin” (Ronald F. Youngblood, Exodus, p. 114; see Ezek. 16:10, where the word “leather” is the same as that for “sea cow” in Ex.). The wood of acacia trees, common in the Sinai Peninsula, is good for construction purposes. Other items to be brought included olive oil … spices, and precious stones. The gold, silver, and linen probably came from the Egyptians (cf. 12:35-36). Some of the other materials could have been from spoils in Israel’s defeat of the Amalekites (17:8-16) or through trade with bedouins.2

Stuart writes “Some materials, mainly wood, were available in the vicinity—most notably acacia wood, from the acacia trees that grow so abundantly and hardily in both Africa and Asia Minor and specifically the Sinai peninsula. Even so, the harvesting and rough shaping of the wood would have to be done by individuals in preparation for their donating it as requested in v. 5. Other materials would have been found already in the possession of the people themselves. Thus was the appropriateness of a general call to all willing Israelites to surrender some of their valuables, most of which they had taken as spoil from the Egyptians a few months earlier, so that out of these items and what they found locally could be made the tabernacle and its furnishings.”3

The materials listed in Exodus 25:1-9 would not normally be owned by slaves, which the Israelites were in Egypt. However, the Israelites plundered the Egyptians when they left Egypt according to the Lord’s promise. These high cost luxury items mentioned in verses 1-7 would not have been available to the Israelites while living in Goshen as slaves. Now, here in Exodus 25, we have the Lord inviting the Israelites to contribute a portion of the items they received from the Egyptians in order to construct a dwelling place for Himself.

Exodus 12:35-36 record a fulfillment of prophecy since the Lord predicted in Exodus 3:21-22 that the Israelites would find favor with the Egyptian people because of the plagues so that the former would not leave Egypt empty-handed.

The Lord predicted that every Israelite woman would ask from the Egyptians silver and gold and clothing and will put them on their sons and daughters and would thus plunder the Egyptians. These verses also fulfill the prophecy that the Lord gave to Abram in Genesis 15:13-14 that the Israelites would leave Egypt with many possessions after four hundred years in that country.

In Exodus 25:8, the Lord tells Moses that these materials must be used by the Israelites in constructing a sanctuary for Him to dwell among them. It must be emphasized that the Lord was not demanding that they build this dwelling for him since they were to donate materials on a voluntary basis only. This indicates that the Lord did not want to dwell with His people unless they invited Him. The Lord did not need the building since He is omnipresent. However, He did desire to dwell with the Israelites. But He would not dwell with them unless they invited Him by building a dwelling place for Him according to His requirements.

I.D. Campbell writes “As we have seen, the theme of holiness is prominent in Exodus. According to the song of Moses in 15:11, God is ‘majestic in holiness’. The nation of Israel was to be a ‘holy nation’ (19:6). Where God is, is holy. The essential teaching here is brought out in 29:43, where we read, ‘[the tabernacle] shall be sanctified by my glory’. The presence of the holy God, which caused the mountain to quake, sanctified the tabernacle and the people. Thirdly, the Tabernacle is referred to as a ‘tent’—the ohel mo’ed, or ‘tent of meeting’. In Exodus 40:2, Moses was commanded to construct ‘the tabernacle of the tent of meeting’. This phrase is also used in 29:42, ‘… at the door of the tent of meeting before the LORD’. The word tent is also used to describe the Tabernacle in Numbers 9:15, where we are told that ‘on the day that the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony [or witness] …’. The tent was not only the place where the congregation of Israel assembled, but was also a witness to the Lord, since the Ark of the Covenant was there. The concept of the tabernacle as a ‘tent’ is important, and reminds us of two things. First, the Tabernacle was a moveable and temporary structure. It was not fixed in any one location, and was constructed so that it could be carried about easily. This meant not only that the presence of God was among his people wherever they were; it was also a reminder that something permanent was necessary. But, secondly, there was in the Tabernacle an identification of God with his people. They, too, dwelt in tents, as Hebrews 11:9 puts it, writing of Abraham, who, by faith, ‘sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac, and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God’ (AV). The presence of God in the Tabernacle was thus not only a symbol of God being among his people, but among
them in a way that reflected his complete sympathy with them, and his identification with them.”

In Exodus 25:9, the Lord emphasizes that this sanctuary must be built according to the specifications that He prescribed. Exodus 35-40 presents Moses carefully executing the divine plans. Exodus 25:10-27:21 and 30:1-6 give the reader the details of those directions (cf. Hebrews 9:23-24).

Hebrews 8:5 makes clear that the “pattern” mentioned in Exodus 25:9 indicates that the tabernacle the Lord wants the Israelites to build for Him was to be a copy of the heavenly tabernacle, which is located in the third heaven. It was created before the foundation of the world. Thus the reason why the Lord demanded that the Israelites follow precisely His instructions was to produce in the Israelites a desire for heaven as well as a confident expectation of heaven. It was to produce a desire in them to live with Him forever.

Hebrews 9:11-12 teaches that there is a tabernacle in heaven, which Jesus Christ entered into upon His ascension and session at the right hand of the Father. This passage teaches that He entered by means of His substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths on the cross, which are referred to as “His blood.”

The NET Bible has the following comment, they write “The expression ‘the pattern of the tabernacle’ (תַּבְנִית הַמִּשְׁכָּן, tavnit hammiskan) has been the source of much inquiry. The word rendered ‘pattern’ is related to the verb ‘to build’; it suggests a model. S. R. Driver notes that in ancient literature there is the account of Gudea receiving in a dream a complete model of a temple he was to erect (Exodus, 267). In this passage Moses is being shown something on the mountain that should be the pattern of the earthly sanctuary. The most plausible explanation of what he was shown comes from a correlation with comments in the Letter to the Hebrews and the book of Revelation, which describe the heavenly sanctuary as the true sanctuary, and the earthly as the copy or shadow. One could say that Moses was allowed to see what John saw on the island of Patmos, a vision of the heavenly sanctuary. That still might not explain what it was, but it would mean he saw a revelation of the true tent, and that would imply that he learned of the spiritual and eternal significance of all of it. The fact that Israel’s sanctuary resembled those of other cultures does not nullify this act of revelation; rather, it raises the question of where the other nations got their ideas if it was not made known early in human history. One can conclude that in the beginning there was much more revealed to the parents in the garden than Scripture tells about (Cain and Abel did know how to make sacrifices before Leviticus legislated it). Likewise, one cannot but guess at the influence of the fallen Satan and his angels in the world of pagan religion. Whatever the source, at Sinai God shows the true, and instructs that it all be done

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without the pagan corruptions and additions. U. Cassuto notes that the existence of these ancient parallels shows that the section on the tabernacle need not be dated in the second temple period, but fits the earlier period well (Exodus, 324).” 5

Interestingly, there are several articles of furniture within the tabernacle, which are described in Exodus 25:10-40 before the tabernacle itself (Exodus 26). The reason for this is that these articles are greater in importance since the tabernacle served to protect this furniture. The most important piece of furniture in the tabernacle is mentioned first, which is the ark.

Exodus 25:10-22: Instructions Regarding Construction and Use of the Ark

Exodus 25:10 “They shall construct an ark of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, and one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high. 11 You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and you shall make a gold molding around it. 12 You shall cast four gold rings for it and fasten them on its four feet, and two rings shall be on one side of it and two rings on the other side of it. 13 You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. 14 You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides

of the ark, to carry the ark with them. 15 The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it. 16 You shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you. 17 You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. 18 You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends. 20 The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat. 21 You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. 22 There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.” (NASB95)

The ark was the most important and sacred object of Israel’s worship. Verses 10-15 provide the reader the instructions for building it. Verse 16 presents instructions for placing the Ten Commandments in it. In verses 17-21, we have the instructions for the mercy seat and verse 22 the meeting above it.

“Ark” is the noun ʾãrôn (אֲרֹן) (aw-rone’), which was a chest or ornate box containing sacred artifacts of worship. The ark was the only piece of furniture within the Holy of Holies. It was called the “Ark of the Covenant” (Hebrew: ‘aron berit, Num. 10:33), or “Ark of the Testimony” (Hebrew: ‘aron ha`edut, Ex. 25:22), from the law that was kept therein. It was made of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits broad, and one and a half cubits high (external dimensions) and was plated inside and out with pure gold.

Running around each side was a gold border extending above the top of the Ark, so as to keep the lid from moving. This lid was called the “mercy seat” (Ex. 25:20, 22, Hebrew: kapporet, a “covering”), and was the same size as the Ark itself, and was made of acacia wood covered with gold.

The ark was transported by means of two gold-covered poles run through two gold rings on each side, from which they were not to be moved (25:15) unless it might be necessary to remove them in order to cover the Ark when the Tabernacle was moved (Num. 4:6). Upon the lid, or mercy seat, or at the ends of the ark, as in the temple, were placed the cherubim, probably figures beaten out of gold, as was the lampstand. In shape they were probably human, with the exception of their wings, though some authorities think they were of the same complex form as the cherubim mentioned in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:5-14). They were no doubt the normal or full height of a man and are always spoken of as maintaining an upright position (2 Chronicles 3:13). They stood facing each other, looking down upon the mercy
seat, with their wings forward in a brooding attitude (Ex. 25:20; cf. Deut. 32:11). The golden censer, with which the high priest once a year entered the Most Holy Place, was doubtless set upon this lid.

The ark contained the two tables of stone on which Yahweh wrote the Ten Commandments, or rather those prepared by Moses from the original, broken by him when he heard of Israel’s idolatry (Ex. 31:18-34:29; Deut. 9:10-10:4); and the copy of the law, written by Moses (31:26), presumed by some to be the Pentateuch in full, and thought to be the same as was afterward discovered in the time of Josiah (2 Kings 22:8).

The law must, in the meanwhile, have been removed, together with all the contents, because in the days of Solomon the ark contained the two tablets only (1 Kings 8:9). The ark also contained a golden jar of miraculously preserved manna (Ex. 16:33-34) and “Aaron’s rod which budded” (Heb. 9:4; cf. Num. 17:10).

The materials, contents and employment of the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10-22) were significant. In its materials, acacia wood and gold, the ark was a type of the humanity and deity of Christ. The ark portrays the Lord Jesus Christ in
hypostatic union as the God-Man, in other words, undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever.

Acacia wood grew in the desert and fittingly portrayed Christ’s humanity as a “root out of parched ground” (Isaiah 53:2). The fact that the Ark was overlaid with pure gold (Ex. 25:11) suggested deity in manifestation.

The employment of the ark, particularly the mercy seat, typified the divine throne. It was transformed from a throne of judgment to a throne of grace as far as the sinner in Israel was concerned by the blood of the atonement that was sprinkled upon it. The blood sprinkled on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement typified the substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths of Jesus Christ on the Cross, which propitiated the holy demands of the Father.

The cherubim with outstretched wings guarded the integrity or holiness of the mercy seat. One cherubim typified the righteousness of God and the other cherubim typified the justice of God. Therefore, the cherubims typified the integrity of God which cannot compromise with sin but has been perfectly dealt
with and satisfied by the voluntary substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths of Jesus Christ on the Cross, which was typified itself by the blood of the animal.

Hannah writes “Apparently these golden cherubim were to resemble winged angels in God’s presence (cf. 1 Sam. 4:4; Pss. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16). Cherubim were also woven into the curtains that covered the tabernacle itself (Ex. 26:1-6) and into the curtain between the holy place and the most holy place (26:31-33).”

The Ark was the commencement of everything in the tabernacle symbolism. It was placed in the Holy of Holies, showing that God begins from Himself in His outreach toward man in revelation (John 1:18; Heb. 1:3). On the other hand, in the human approach the worship begins from without, moving toward God in the very center of the holiest place. Man begins at the bronze altar, that is, the cross, where atonement is made in the light of the fire of God’s judgment.

Hannah writes “The ark was to be a rectangular chest (23” wide, 39” long, and 23” high, based on the cubit as 18”) made of acacia wood and overlaid inside and

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out with … gold. The chest was to be mounted on four legs and was to have four rings for two gold-covered poles by which the ark would be carried. In the chest Moses was to place the two stone tablets, with the Decalogue (or Testimony) written on them (Ex. 25:16, 21), which he was to receive on the mountain (31:18). According to Hebrews 9:4-5 the ark also contained a jar of manna (cf. Ex 16:33 and see comments on 2 Chron. 5:10) and Aaron’s rod (see comments on Num. 17:10).”

Stuart writes “Although it might seem more systematic to begin with a description of the design of the tabernacle and then to address the particular furnishings that fit within it, the importance of the ark as the item that would symbolize God’s presence among his people far outweighs such considerations, and its design therefore was described first, even before that of the tabernacle that would house it. The passage reveals the two special purposes of the gilded chest known as the ark. First, this ornate portable box/chest would house the ‘Testimony,’ the two tablets of the Ten Words/Commandments written by God

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himself, one copy as his and one copy as Israel’s, stored together as a symbol of their covenant agreement (see also comments on 24:12; 31:18; 34:1–4, 29). Second, the lid of the ark would serve as the so-called ‘mercy seat’ (v. 17 nrsv), an elaborate pure gold sculpture that symbolized a place for God to stand (rather than to sit; see comments on v. 17) as a contact point for the Lord of Glory and his earthly people and a location from which to continue to reveal divine truth to the Israelites (v. 22).”

Exodus 25:10 says that the ark was to measure two and a half cubits by one and a half cubits. The cubit is the Egyptian royal cubit equal to approximately 20.625 inches and the common estimate for the cubit is 18 inches. A cubit was the distance from the tip of a man’s middle finger to the end of his elbow when his hand was held flat and straight in the plane of his forearm, which is about 18 inches.

Constable writes “The ark was the throne of Yahweh where He dwelt in a localized way and met with the Israelites through their high priest. It was the seat of His sovereignty but also the place where He met with His people (v. 22). This is why directions for its construction come first. The testimony (Ten Commandments, vv. 16, 22) lay inside the ark, which was a box. God's dwelling among His people and His relationship with them thus quite literally rested on the Ten Commandments. The mercy seat (v. 17) was the ‘lid’ of this box and was solid gold. It was there that the high priest offered sacrificial blood once a year to atone for (cover) the sins of the Israelites as a nation. This offering made propitiation (satisfaction) for their sins for one year (cf. Lev. 16).”

Stuart writes “Verse 11 emphasizes the importance of having all visible surfaces, inside and out, gilded. In addition there must be a gold trim (“molding”) at the edges so that the ark was not merely a plain box but something more elegant. The exact nature and size of this molding trim is nowhere specified, but moldings have the effect of “dressing up” stark, straight structures. The moldings around the ark probably protruded from the edges, as moldings of boxes typically do, on a plane medial to the planes formed by the sides meeting to make the edges. Thus the ark was a small but very elegant (fancy) chest.”

Verse 12 makes clear that the ark was not to touch the ground since it would have feet. Only the bottom of the feet could touch the ground. The feet had rings attached to them. One ring protruded to the side from each of the feet. This was so a gilded acacia wood pole could be run through the rings on each side (verses 13-14). The ark was lifted by the ends of the poles and thus transported.

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9 Notes on Exodus, 2003 Edition, Dr. Thomas Constable; page 131; Published by Sonic Light; www.soniclight.com/
The special quality of the ark was protected by having the rings in the feet and not in any other part of the ark. Thus, only the feet would be scratched. The poles were to remain in the rings of the ark to minimize the possibility of damage as well as wear and tear to the poles.

The ark symbolized God’s presence as well as His holiness and in addition His covenant blessing upon the Israelites who were to respect this symbol, which portrayed the reality of God’s presence.

The Shekinah glory appeared in the Tabernacle in Israel (Exodus 33:9-11, 18-23; 40:34-38). Between the cherubim was the Shekinah (Hebrew: shekina, “residence”), the cloud in which Yahweh appeared above the mercy seat (Ex. 25:22; cf. Lev. 16:2). It was not the cloud of incense (16:13), but the manifest appearance (pre-incarnate appearance of Christ or theophany of Christ) of the divine glory. Yahweh manifested His essential presence in this cloud; therefore, no unclean and sinful man could go before the mercy seat. Not even the anointed high priest could go before it of his own pleasure or without the expiatory blood sacrifice or he would be killed by the Lord instantly.

However, the ark not only had a symbolic value but also a practical value as well in the sense that it held something extremely important, namely the Ten Commandments.

“Testimony” is the noun ʿēḏūṯ (ʾāy-dōoth), which is the Decalogue or Ten Commandments according to Exodus 24:12; 31:18 and Deuteronomy 4:13; 9:9 as well as 1 Kings 8:9. This word identifies the Ten Commandments as the witness or affirmation of God’s commandments belonging to His covenant with Israel. It also expressed God’s will and the duty of the Israelites. In other cultures important documents were put at the feet of the gods in the temples.

“Mercy seat” is the noun kāpōrēṯ (kō-pō’reth), which means “covering” and was a lid on top of the Ark of the Testimony and was the place where sins were forgiven. It was the same size as the Ark itself, and was made of acacia wood covered with gold.

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament commenting on the Hebrew term kapporeth, state the following, “is not related to mercy and of course was not a seat. The word is derived from the root “to atone.” The Greek equivalent in the LXX is usually hilasterion, “place or object of propitiation,” a word which is applied to Christ in Ro 3:25. The translation ‘mercy seat’ does not sufficiently express the fact that the lid of the ark was the place where the blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement. ‘Place of atonement’ would perhaps be more expressive.”

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The Greek equivalent of κάππορέθ is hilasterion, which is used by the apostle Paul in Romans 3:25 to describe Jesus Christ as a propitiatory gift. Paul uses this Greek noun to denote the mercy seat. The Septuagint translators employed hilasterion to translate κάππορέθ in Exodus 25:17. Thus, in Romans 3:25 Paul teaches that the mercy seat portrays Jesus Christ as a propitiatory gift.

Romans 3:21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed. (NASB95)

“Propitiation” is the accusative neuter singular form of the adjective hilasterion, which means, “propitiatory gift.” It is related to hilasterios and belongs to a group of words, which includes the verb hilaskomai, “to make propitiation for,” and the noun hilasmos, “propitiatory sacrifice.”

In classical Greek, “propitiation” refers to the act of appeasing the Greek gods by a sacrifice and was an effort to, as Wuest writes, “to buy off the anger of the gods and buy his love.”

Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of the New Testament has this remark, “Hilasmos includes various cultic acts such as prayers, sacrifices, purifications, dances and games. These may be repeated annually. Since the deities are the guardians of order, of law and morality, offences against demand hilasmos (propitiation) of the deity.”

Of course, this is not the case with the God of the Bible since His justice must be satisfied before He can do anything for us.

The LXX uses the word hilasterion 22 times for the Hebrew kapporeth, which functions as a technical term for the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant in both the LXX and NT. The mercy seat was the golden lid of the Ark of the Covenant.

Now, in Romans 3:25, Paul’s use of the adjective hilasterion, “propitiation” recalls the “gift offering” in Leviticus chapter two and not the “burnt offering” in Leviticus chapter one. The reason this is the case is that the word refers to the fact that Jesus Christ is the “propitiatory gift” from the Father whose spiritual death satisfied the demands of His holiness, which required that human sin be judged.

There were five Levitical offerings authorized by the Mosaic Law (Lev. 1-6). The “burnt offering” taught propitiation with emphasis on the work of Christ (Lev. 1) whereas the “gift offering” taught propitiation but this bloodless offering portrayed the perfect Person of Jesus Christ (Lev. 2). The “peace offering” called
for the shedding of blood and taught the doctrine of reconciliation (Lev. 3). The “sin offering” taught the forgiveness of unknown sins, which John calls in 1 John 1:9, “all unrighteousness.” The “trespass offering” taught the confession of known sins (See 1 John 1:9; Psalm 32:1-5).

Therefore, *hilasterion*, “propitiatory sacrifice” corresponds to the gift offering in Leviticus 2:1-16, which emphasizes the Person of Christ. The “grain” offering in Leviticus 2:1-16 is really a gift offering since it is mistranslated in the NASB. The word in the Hebrew is *minchah*, which is from *manach*, “to give.” *Manach* is used in secular contexts of gifts to superior persons particularly kings and conveyed the attitude of homage and submission to the king. The spiritual use of the term derives its meaning from the secular, thus, *minchah* is a gift of grain.

The gift offering viewed propitiation from the aspect of the Perfect Person of Christ. The *minchah* communicates the fact that it takes a perfect gift Jesus Christ, the God-Man to satisfy or propitiate a perfect Giver (God the Father). The significance of the gift offering is that it pictured approaching God on the basis of the merits of the promised Messiah.

In Romans 3:25, Paul’s use of the adjective *hilasterion* also recalls the one of the seven feasts of Israel called “the Day of Atonement.”

Israel was commanded by the Lord in the Old Testament to observe seven Feasts: (1) Passover (Leviticus 23:4-5; 1 Corinthians 5:7); (2) Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6-8; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8); (3) First Fruits (Leviticus 23:9-14; 1 Corinthians 15:23); (4) Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-22; Acts 2:1-4); (5) Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25; 1 Corinthians 15:52); (6) Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:26-32; 1 John 2:2); (7) Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-44; John 7:2).

The Feast of Atonement was a day of confession and will represent that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Messiah and represents the Second Advent (Documentation: Leviticus 23:24-32; Zechariah 12:10; 13:1, 6).

The Day of Atonement was a most solemn of these great Feasts (Lev. 16:26-32) and is derived from the Hebrew *Yom Kippur*. The Day of Atonement was the only day in which anyone was ever permitted to enter the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, or in the Temple. Only the high priest was permitted to enter it, and then only after he had brought an offering on behalf on his own sins (Lev. 16:13). Sacrificed on the Day of Atonement was a young bull (Lev. 16:6), which was for the sins of the high priest. Also, two goats were sacrificed for the sins of the people (Lev. 16:7-10; 15-16). The high priest sacrificed the bull on the brass altar as a sin offering for himself (Lev. 16:11).

The blood of the animal represented Christ’s spiritual death on the Cross and was collected in a basin and carried past the huge curtain into the Holy of Holies and then sprinkled on the mercy seat (*kapporeth*). The mercy seat was the golden
lid that fit over the top of the Ark of the Covenant, which contains the emblems of Israel’s sin.

The three items in the Ark: (1) A pot of manna that called to mind man’s rejection of divine provision (2) Aaron’s rod that budded that exhibited rejection of God’s plan regarding the authority of the Levitical priesthood. (3) Tables of the Law that were a reminder of Israel’s violations of the Law.

The Ark of the Covenant was overlaid with gold and stood in the Holy of Holies. The acacia wood of the box spoke of Christ’s humanity and the gold spoke of His deity. Together these materials represented Christ in hypostatic union or His uniqueness as the God-Man.

Now, on each end of the mercy seat stood the golden figure of a cherub with one representing God’s righteousness and the other His justice. Righteousness and justice looked down on sin (the emblems in the Ark) and condemned it. Once a year, the blood of the young bull was sprinkled on top of the mercy seat. When righteousness and justice looked down, they saw the completed work of Christ covering the sins of the high priest.

The high priest sacrificed one of the goats as an offering for the people. The live goat was sent off into the wilderness after Aaron had laid both of his hands on its head thus transferring the iniquities of the people to the goat (Lev. 16:20-22). The “scapegoat” represents that aspect of Christ’s work, which puts away our sins (John 1:29). The goat that was slain (the Lord's lot) is that aspect of Christ's death, which satisfies the demands of God’s holiness that required sin be judged.

Aaron took the goats blood and entered into the Holy of Holies a second time to sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat. This time the spiritual death of Christ on the cross was dramatized as covering the sins of all the people. God does not remember our sins for they were put away and paid for by our Lord’s spiritual death (Psa. 103:12).

The fulfillment of the Old Testament ritual came in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has obtained a much greater ministry than Aaron (Heb. 8:6) whose priesthood was a mere shadow of Christ’s Royal Priesthood (Heb. 8:1-6). Our Lord did not have to offer a sacrifice for Himself as the Levitical high priest had to for himself for He was without sin, impeccable (Heb. 9:26-27). Instead, the Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself up once as a sacrifice to pay for the sins of all mankind (Heb. 9:27; 9:28a).

The Tabernacle made on earth, which was made with human hands, was just a picture of the real one in heaven. The animal blood sacrifices were shadows or copies of the true sacrifice that was to take place on Calvary when our Lord died spiritually for our sins (Heb. 9:23-26). Our Lord’s sacrifice on the Cross-fulfilled completely the Mosaic sacrifices. His spiritual death paid for or covered our sins
permanently, as the blood on the mercy seat covered the sins of Israel temporarily (Heb. 9:12-14; 10:4).

The Lord Jesus Christ entered the real Holy of Holies and not the shadow one on earth (Heb. 10:24). The Lord Jesus Christ entered heaven one time and sat down at the right hand of God the Father (Heb. 10:12). The animal sacrifices in the Old Testament pictured the future sacrifice of Christ and were merely shadows of Christ’s work on the cross (Heb. 10:1).

The phrase in Romans 3:25, “sins previously committed,” teaches that the sins committed in the Old Testament were not paid for by the animal sacrifices but with our Lord’s sacrifice on the Cross at Calvary. The rituals performed in the Old Testament were not the reality. The reality or the sacrifice that propitiated God was the sacrifice of His Son on the Cross and not the animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:4-10). Ritual without reality is meaningless. The animal sacrifices were merely teaching aids to communicate the doctrines of propitiation, redemption and reconciliation to those who lived in OT dispensations. Christ’s spiritual and physical deaths satisfied the righteousness of God not the animal sacrifices (Hebrews 2:17-18). Hebrews 2:17-18 brings out that aspect of Christ’s substitutionary spiritual death, which was Godward. Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice was an act of righteousness and justice as well as an act of love.

1 John 4:10 In this is self-sacrificial love, not that we loved God, but that He self-sacrificially loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation (hilasmos, “propitiatory sacrifice”) for our sins. (NASB95)

The adjective hilasterion appears in only two passages in the Greek New Testament (Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5).

The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains lists the following meanings for the word: (1) The means by which sins are forgiven – ‘the means of forgiveness, expiation’\(^\text{13}\) (2) The location or place where sins are forgiven – ‘place of forgiveness, place where sins are forgiven’\(^\text{14}\)

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature defines the word, “that which expiates or propitiates, a means of expiation, gift to procure expiation; place of propitiation”.\(^\text{15}\)

Dr. Wuest gives this excellent comment, he writes, “The word hilasterion is used in Leviticus 16:14 (LXX) to refer to the golden cover on the Ark of the Covenant. In the Ark, below this cover, were the tablets of stone upon which were written the Ten Commandments which Israel had violated. Before the Ark stood the High Priest representing the people. When the sacrificial blood is sprinkled on this cover, it ceases to be a place of judgment and becomes a place of mercy. The

\(^{13}\) volume 1, page 504
\(^{14}\) volume 1, page 504
\(^{15}\) page 375
blood comes between the violated law and the violators, the people. The blood of Jesus satisfies the just requirements of God's holy law which mankind broke, pays the penalty for man, and thus removes that which had separated between a holy God and sinful man, sin, its guilt and penalty. This is a far cry from the pagan idea of propitiation which appeased the anger of the god and purchased his love. The words, ‘an expiatory satisfaction’ seems to be the words rather than propitiation to adequately translate *hilasterion*. *Hilasterion* is the place of satisfaction, *hilasmos* (1 John 2:2; 4:10) that which provides that satisfaction for the broken law. Thus, our blessed Lord is both the Mercy Seat and the Sacrifice which transforms the former from a judgment seat to one where mercy is offered a sinner on the basis of justice satisfied.”

A.T. Robertson commenting on the usage of *hilasterion* in Romans 3:25, writes, “The only other New Testament example of this word is in Heb 9:5 where we have the ‘cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat’ to *hilasterion*. In Hebrews the adjective is used as a substantive or as ‘the propitiatory place.’ But that idea does not suit here. Deissmann (Bible Studies, pp. 124-35) has produced examples from inscriptions where it is used as an adjective and as meaning ‘a votive offering’ or ‘propitiatory gift.’ Hence, he concludes about Rom 3:25: ‘The crucified Christ is the votive gift of the Divine Love for the salvation of men.’ God gave his Son as the means of propitiation (1 John 2:2). *Hilasterion* is an adjective *hilasterios* from *hilaskomai*, to make propitiation (Heb 2:17) and is kin in meaning to *hilasmos*, propitiation (1 John 2:2; 4:10). There is no longer room for doubting its meaning in Rom 3:25.

Many expositors consider *hilasterion* as functioning in Romans 3:25 as a substantive rather than as an adjective, thus effecting their interpretation and translation of the word. Thus, they translate *hilasterion*, “the place of propitiation” or “mercy seat” referring to the fact that Jesus Christ is the “place of propitiation” or the fulfillment of the “mercy seat” in the Old Testament. They substantiate this interpretation and translation on the basis that the word is used in the Septuagint to translate *kapporeth*, which referred to the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant. However, as Robertson pointed out, citing Deissmann and even Scofield suggested *hilasterion* should be translated as an adjective meaning “propitiatory gift,” or “the gift which procures propitiation.”

This indicates then that Jesus Christ is the “propitiatory gift” from the Father whose spiritual and physical deaths on the Cross satisfied the demands of God’s holiness, which required that human sin be judged. Therefore, the noun *hilasmos* in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 refers to the “propitiatory sacrifice” of Jesus Christ.

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*Hilaskomai* in Hebrews 2:17 refers to the act of propitiating the Father through Jesus Christ’s spiritual death. Whereas *hilasterion* in Romans 3:25, refers to the fact that Jesus Christ is the “propitiatory gift” from the Father.

In Hebrews 9:5, the adjective *hilasterion* should be translated as a substantive since it is clearly referring to the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant in Old Testament Israel. However, in Romans 3:25, the adjective should not be translated as a substantive but rather as an adjective since the verb *protithemi* in this same passage means, “to offer publicly,” thus indicating that God the Father gave His Son as a “propitiatory gift” to sinful mankind.

The adjective “propitiatory” means “serving or intended to propitiate.” Therefore, Jesus Christ was a gift from God the Father to sinful mankind whose purpose was to serve mankind by propitiating the demands of God’s holiness that required that human sin be judged.

Therefore, we can conclude in Romans 3:25 that Paul is saying that God the Father offered His Son Jesus Christ publicly at the Cross of Calvary as a propitiatory gift in the sense that His spiritual and physical deaths on the Cross satisfied the demands of God’s holiness that required that human sin be judged.

The adjective *hilasterion*, “propitiatory gift” along with the words *hilasmos* and *hilaskomai* help to form the doctrine of propitiation and recall the Day of Atonement and the Burnt and Gift Offerings in the Leviticus 1 and 2.

Propitiation along with redemption and reconciliation form the “Finished Work” of Jesus Christ on the Cross. It is the Godward side of salvation whereby the voluntary substitutionary spiritual and physical deaths of Christ satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God that the sins of the entire world—past, present, and future be judged.

Propitiation means that our Lord’s spiritual death on the Cross “satisfied” God’s holiness, which demanded that the sins of the entire human race be judged. Remember Paul teaches in Romans 1:18-3:20 that God’s wrath or righteous indignation is against all men due to sin. The wrath or righteous indignation of God needed to be satisfied and Christ and His spiritual death did just that. Christ’s spiritual death satisfied God’s righteous indignation against human sin.

The fact that Jesus Christ’s spiritual and physical deaths satisfied the demands of God’s holiness, which required that human sin be judged, permitted God to extend grace to the entire human race, enabling Him to offer to the entire human race the gift of salvation through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Once God’s righteous indignation towards human sin had been satisfied by our Lord’s spiritual and physical deaths on the Cross, God was free to extend grace to the entire human race the offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

The fact that Jesus Christ’s spiritual and physical deaths on the cross propitiated the demands of God’s holiness, which required that sin be judged provided the
following: (1) Basis for the unlimited atonement (1 John 2:2; 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Pet. 3:9). (2) Basis for the forgiveness of sins (2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12-15). (3) Basis for the imputation of divine righteousness (Rom. 3:25-26). (4) Basis for justification (Rom. 3:28; 2 Cor. 5:21). (5) Basis for reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 1:20-21).

**Exodus 25:23-30: Instructions Regarding Construction and Use of the Table**

Exodus 25:23 “You shall make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long and one cubit wide and one and a half cubits high. 24 You shall overlay it with pure gold and make a gold border around it. 25 You shall make for it a rim of a handbreadth around it; and you shall make a gold border for the rim around it. 26 You shall make four gold rings for it and put rings on the four corners which are on its four feet. 27 The rings shall be close to the rim as holders for the poles to carry the table. 28 You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, so that with them the table may be carried. 29 You shall make its dishes and its pans and its jars and its bowls with which to pour drink offerings; you shall make them of pure gold. 30 You shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times.” (NASB95)

In these verses, we have another piece of furniture which would be placed in the tabernacle. In addition to the ark would be a table, which the Israelites were to set the bread of the Presence on.

In verse 23, the Lord instructs Moses to construct a table which is to measure two cubits long and one cubit wide and one and a half cubits high. In our day and age this would measure three feet long, one foot six inches wide and two feet three inches in height. In verse 24, Moses was instructed to overlay it with gold and make a gold border around it. In verse 25, the Israelites were to make a surrounding frame for the table about three inches broad and they were to make a surrounding border of gold for it. So the table had two moldings with one at the bottom edge of the top of the structure and the other just inches above it, at the top edge of the top.

Stuart makes the following comment he writes “Verse 25 requires ‘a rim a handbreadth wide’ with ‘a gold molding on the rim.’ Although we know that a handbreadth is about four inches wide, we cannot discern from this description whether the four-inch rim was (1) a decorative edging around the circumference of the table lying in the same plane as the top of the table and thus simply having the effect of widening the top; (2) a four-inch decorated barrier extending straight up from the edges of the table all around so as to provide an open-topped four-inch deep box at the top of the table, thus allowing things to be stacked tightly on the table without risk that they would fall off the edge; (3) a four-inch decorated
barrier extending diagonally out from the top edge of the table, providing less depth to the top ‘box’ but actually greater length and width to the area of containment, if things were placed in such a way to overlap the top proper; (4) four-inch side rails extending down from the top, either between the legs or inside or outside of the legs, providing stability to but not actually extending the dimensions or holding capacity of the top. Although we cannot discern which of these options represented God’s intent for his table, the description was undoubtedly sufficient for Bezalel to construct it (see comments on 31:1ff.) because of the standards for tables extant at the time and/or God’s knowledge of Bezalel’s inclinations. Some freedom may have been intended for Bezalel to interpret the general order according to his own artistry since nothing is said about a number of matters, including the thickness of the legs or the top, the means of joining the wood pieces, the thickness of the gold overlay, the dimensions of the carrying rings, the thickness and length of the carrying poles.  

In verses 26-28, we have information with regards to the rings and carrying poles for the table which parallels verses 12-14, which provide information with regards to the rings and carrying poles of the ark. The only contrast between the two is that the poles used to carry the ark were fixed whereas the poles for the table were more than likely removable. Verse 27 makes clear that the carrying rings were not to be too low on the legs, which would have given it a high center of gravity and made it difficult to carry upright. Thus, by having the rings high on the table legs, most of the height of the table would be carried below the poles, hanging. This would use gravity to stabilize the table in an always upright position when it was transported. This would be important since the tabernacle was to travel along with the Israelites throughout their wilderness journeys.

I.D. Campbell writes “There is a similarity between the Ark of the Covenant and the Table for Bread. Both were made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Both were of the same height (the only articles in the Tabernacle of which that was so). Both were surrounded and ornamented with a gold crown. Both had rings and staves for carrying. Both had something placed on them: the Ark had the mercy seat and the Table had the bread of the Presence. The Ark tells us of the ground of fellowship between God and man: atonement on the basis of righteousness. The Table speaks of the substance of that fellowship, and the effect of Christ’s atonement: communion and fellowship with God through our feeding upon life-giving bread.”

In verse 29, the Lord instructs Moses to make plates, ladles, pitchers and bowls, which were all to be made of gold which would make them fit for a king, which

the Lord was. However, the Lord would not be using these articles but rather those who served in the tabernacle. These utensils would be used by the priests who served the Lord in the tabernacle.

The Lord instructs Moses in verse 30 to place the bread of the presence on the table on a regular basis. “The bread of the presence” derives its name from the fact
that this bread was to always be in the presence of the Lord. This bread was symbolically offered to the Lord as His food.

The NET Bible has the following comment with regards to the phrase “bread of the presence,” they write “The name basically means that the bread is to be set out in the presence of Yahweh. The custom of presenting bread on a table as a thank offering is common in other cultures as well. The bread here would be placed on the table as a symbol of the divine provision for the twelve tribes – continually, because they were to express their thanksgiving continually. Priests could eat the bread after certain times. Fresh bread would be put there regularly.”

I.D. Campbell writes “The Table was the place where bread was placed in the presence of God. Leviticus 24 speaks of this. The ‘bread of the Presence’ or ‘bread of revelation’ consisted of twelve loaves made of fine flour, baked and then placed in two rows on the Table. Pure frankincense was then sprinkled on the bread, which remained in the presence of the Lord for seven days. Each Sabbath day the bread was renewed and eaten by Aaron and his sons, by the priestly family, in the Holy Place. Interestingly, just as the Sabbath pattern was established by the manner in which God created the world, so it was confirmed by the Lord in the wilderness. The manna was gathered each day, but not on the Sabbath. No bread came from God on the Sabbath, but bread had to be placed on the table before God in the Tabernacle every Sabbath. On the Sabbath day, the priestly family of Aaron ate the bread of that week. This was a remarkable provision for those who ministered before God.”

Interestingly, the old bread on the table was not removed until the new bread was ready for placement on the table (1 Samuel 21:6). By way of implication, the high priest more than likely replaced the twelve old loaves with twelve new ones loaf by loaf rather than removing all twelve at the same time and then putting down the new ones. This means that there was never a time when there was no bread on the table. So this offering was continual unlike the other offerings to the Lord, which were presented at certain times a year, week, month or day. This would teach the Israelites that the Lord was always present.

Also, Numbers 4:7-8 presents how the utensils were wrapped in a particular way with the showbread on the top of the table and then covered with protective hides. The Kohathites carried these utensils along with the table as a unit when the Israelites were moving from place to place. This would ensure that the bread of the presence never ceased from being in contact with the top of the table.

1 Kings 7:48 tells us that in the temple of Solomon, this practice of a bread of the presence table was employed. 2 Chronicles 4:19 refers to “tables” in the plural indicating that there were probably more than one table in the temple of Solomon.

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Actually, 2 Chronicles 4:6 says that the temple of Solomon had ten bronze lavers, 2 Chronicles 4:7 says that it had ten lampstands and 2 Chronicles 4:8 and 18 reveal that there were ten tables. However, 2 Chronicles 4 does not indicate that all ten tables were used for the bread of the presence. In fact, nine may have been employed for supporting shorter lampstands. But more than like likely with the expansion of the priesthood by Solomon and the temple worship, more bread may have been needed than when Israel wandered in the desert of Sinai with the tabernacle.

The table of the bread of the Presence (or showbread), the golden lampstand, and the altar of incense were located within the Holy Place. The table of the bread of the Presence, or showbread (Hebrew: shulhan lehem panim, “table of the face,” i.e., of Jehovah) was placed on the north, or right, side, facing the lampstand (Exodus 26:35; 40:22). Again, it was made of acacia wood, two cubits long (3 feet), one broad (1 foot, 6 inches, and one and a half high (1 foot, 6 inches). This proportion between the length and the height is accurately maintained in the sculptural form on the arch of Titus in Rome. The surface, or top of the table, rested on a frame a handbreadth deep; around it ran a rim with a border of gold
projecting above the top to keep articles from slipping off the table. The legs were apparently mortised into the sides (as is usual today), with rings near each corner for the carrying staves (25:23-30; 37:10-16).

The bread placed upon the table (Hebrew: “bread of the Presence”) was made of fine wheat flour (unleavened), baked in twelve loaves (cakes), each containing one fifth of an ephah of flour. These, according to Jewish tradition, as well as the dimensions of the table, would seem to have been placed upon plates in two piles of six each. They were renewed every Sabbath, were to be eaten by the priests exclusively (and that in the sanctuary only), and were then replaced by fresh loaves (1 Sam. 21:6), which had been prepared overnight by the Levites (1 Chron. 9:32). To each pile of loaves incense was added, probably placed in bowls beside the bread, for a “memorial portion for the bread, even an offering made by fire to the Lord” (Lev. 24:5-9).

The utensils belonging to the table were as follows: (1) Dishes for the showbread. (2) Pans or spoons for the incense. (3) Jugs or jars for making wine with a spout for pouring. (4) Cups of pure gold.

The table of the bread of the Presence, or showbread, was a reminder that God fed His people Israel. It was also a type of Christ as the Bread of Life, the Sustainer of each individual believer-priest (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6). The manna portrayed the life-giving Christ and the showbread of the Presence the life-sustaining Christ. Christ is the Bread that came down from heaven (John 6:33-58). The bread prefigured the “grain of wheat” (12:24) pulverized in the mill of suffering (cf. 12:27) and subjected to the fire of divine judgment for sin (12:31-33).

Exodus 25:31-40: Instructions Regarding Construction and Use of the Lampstand

Exodus 25:31 “Then you shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand and its base and its shaft are to be made of hammered work; its cups, its bulbs and its flowers shall be of one piece with it. 32 Six branches shall go out from its sides; three branches of the lampstand from its one side and three branches of the lampstand from its other side. 33 Three cups shall be shaped like almond blossoms in the one branch, a bulb and a flower, and three cups shaped like almond blossoms in the other branch, a bulb and a flower—so for six branches going out from the lampstand; 34 and in the lampstand four cups shaped like almond blossoms, its bulbs and its flowers. 35 A bulb shall be under the first pair of branches coming out of it, and a bulb under the second pair of branches coming out of it, and a bulb under the third pair of branches coming out of it, for the six branches coming out of the lampstand. 36 Their bulbs and their branches shall be of one piece with it; all of it shall be one piece of hammered work of pure gold. 37 Then you shall
make its lamps seven in number; and they shall mount its lamps so as to shed light on the space in front of it. 38 Its snuffers and their trays shall be of pure gold. 39 It shall be made from a talent (75 pounds) of pure gold, with all these utensils. 40 See that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain.” (NASB95)

In verse 31, the Lord instructs Moses to construct a lampstand of pure gold. The word “lampstand” is the noun מְנוֹרָה (menôrāh) (men-o-raw’), which was composed of a base, a stem-shaft and holder for the lamp. The lamplight symbolized to the Israelites that the Lord was home.

Leonard Coppes has the following comment with regards to this word, he writes “This mempreformative noun represents the stand upon which a lamp was placed (special “lamp place”). It usually signifies the lampstand in the tabernacle or temple (exception, II Kgs 4:10). It occurs forty-two times. The Lord directed Moses to put a lampstand holding seven lamps in the Holy Place. These seven lamps represent God’s perfect (PTOT, p. 362f.) leadership over his people. These ‘lights’ were to burn always being trimmed morning and evening (Lev 24:2). While they were being trimmed the attendant was to burn incense representing the prayers of God’s people (Ex 30:7–8; cf. qātar). In II Sam 21:17 (nēr; cf. I Kgs 11:36), David’s death is represented as the quenching of Israel’s lamp. Hence, he is viewed as the one who leads Israel into a blessed state (cf. nūḥ). David, in turn, confessed that Jehovah was his lamp (II Sam 22:29), i.e. the one who enlightened his path through darkness (cf. Jn 3:20–21) and led him into a state of blessedness nūḥ; cf. Prov 13:9; Job 29:3). Psalm 119:105 (cf. Prov 6:23) celebrates the word of God as the lamp to the feet of the godly. Christian readers will recognize this ‘leadership’ of ‘word’ and ‘light’ as a foreshadow of Christ (Jn 1:1–13). As KD shows, Ps 132:17 uses ‘lamp’ as a figure of the Messiah (it is parallel to the well-known figure ‘branch’). Thus, ‘lamp’ is a symbol of God’s personal leading (II Sam 22:29), through his word, through his chosen king and, ultimately, through his messiah. God’s leader was to lead his people as a priestly nation, i.e. a nation which was to lead all nations to God in worship. In Zech 4 the prophet speaks of a lampstand (i.e. the ot church; cf. KD) attached to an uninterrupted and unceasing supply of oil (i.e. the Holy Spirit: cf. KD). The interpretation (v. 6ff.) applies the figure to Zerubbabel (and his followers), but it seems obvious that the figure extends well beyond his day to the messianic era. indeed. cf. Rev 1:20. This symbolism underlies the nt statements that Christians are the light of the world (Mt 5:14) whose lamps are always to burn (Lk 12:35; Phil 2:15) and shine before men (Mt 5:16) leading the ungodly to God and basking in a state of blessed expectation of and preparation for Christ’s return. [That the lampstand stands for the church also in the nt must be granted (Rev 1:20). However, the symbolism of the lampstand apparently is double. Zechariah 4:6 strongly implies that the lampstand
symbolizes also the Spirit of God. Revelation 4:5 seems to build on this when it calls the lamps the ‘seven spirits of God’ (cf. Rev 5:6). That the seven spirits of God are not seven different spirits, but the one Spirit seven-fold in his perfection seems to be proved by the position of the seven spirits of God bracketed between the Father and the Son as a source of benediction in Rev 1:4. r.l.h.]”

Hannah has the following comment, he writes “The lampstand (menôrâh, hence the Eng. word ‘menorah’ for a Jewish candelabrum) was to be the most ornate piece of furniture in the tabernacle. Its decorative flowerlike cups, buds, and blossoms were formed from one solid piece of gold (vv. 31, 36). On each side of an upright shaft were three branches extended upward (v. 32). Each branch had three … almond flower-shaped cups (v. 33), and the center shaft had four such cups (v. 34). At the top of the center shaft and each of the six branches was a lamp (v. 37). The seven lamps in the lampstand provided light in the tent (v. 37). The lampstand, which was to burn continually, was serviced by the priests in the morning and at sunset (27:20-21; Lev. 24:3-4). The amount of gold required for this piece of furniture and its accessories—wick trimmers and trays (perhaps for oil)—was a talent, which was about 75 pounds (cf. NIV marg.). As the lampstand provided light for the priestly functions before God, so Christ today is the Light of the world (John 8:12), who reveals the way to God (John 14:6, 9).”

Campbell writes “The lampstand thus had two functions: to contribute to the splendour of the Holy Place (since it was made of gold) and to give light so that the priests could minister there.”

The description of the lampstand in verses 31-40 indicates that it was a floor-standing candelabra-like structure made of pure gold with six branches and a trunk made to resemble an olive tree, which is used in Scripture a designation for the nation of Israel (Jeremiah 11:16-17; Hosea 14:4-6; Romans 11:17-24). The trunk resembled an olive tree but had almond tree features. The lampstand not only provided light for the tabernacle but also symbolized that the nation of Israel was to be a light to the nations (cf. Zechariah 4:1-14; Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). It also typified Christ as the light of the world.

Verses 31-32 tell us that the lampstand was made of hammered gold all joined into a single piece with a base which gave it stability on the floor of the tabernacle. From the shaft arose decorated branches made to resemble tree branches. Three were on one side and three on the other and one branch in the middle.

Verses 33-36 describe the lampstand as having three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms on each branch. On the lampstand there were to be

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four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms with a bud under the first two branches from it and a bud under the next and so on. The buds and branches are to be one piece and all of it one hammered piece of gold.

The cups were to support the actual lamps that would hold the oil. The lamps were to sit cradled in each cup. The cups were to resemble almond flowers with each one having a bud. This would indicate that the oil lamps would sit in a gold flower on a gold tree. There might have been a total of twenty-two places where oil lamps could be placed since each branch had three flower-shaped cups and the shaft or trunk has four cups (see verse 34).

Verses 37-40 say that there were to be seven lamps which were to be made of gold. The purpose of the seven lamps was to give light to the area in front of it. The lamps were not to be directed at the holy of holies, which contained the ark but rather the Lord wanted these lamps to light the holy place for the benefit of the priests who would minister to Him. So the Lord was telling the Israelites that He didn’t need the light but rather those who served Him.

Stuart has an excellent comment with regards to the command in verse 40, he writes “Note the command in v. 40 that the lampstand and its accessories were to be constructed ‘according to the pattern shown you on the mountain’ (HCSB more explicitly bring out the present progressive tense, ‘according to the model [NRSV “pattern”] of them you have been shown on the mountain’). This implies two considerations. First, the verbal description given here and supplemented elsewhere in the Old Testament of the lampstand is only a summation. The actual pattern was being shown to Moses and was later surely communicated by him to Bezalel and the other craftsmen who built the lampstand. We cannot therefore know exactly what the lampstand was to be like; what we can know is generally its structure and motifs. The particulars were in the oral ‘blueprints’ Moses conveyed to the craftsmen from images revealed to him by God. Second, the lampstand, like the rest of the tabernacle, was intended to reflect precisely God’s design, not merely a human design from general guidelines (25:9; cf. Num 8:4). This theme receives considerable emphasis in the New Testament (Acts 7:44; and esp. Heb 8:5). The tabernacle, in other words, pointed to heaven—to the eternal home of God in which his redeemed people were intended eventually to dwell without distance from him (Rev 11:19) and as members of his own household (John 14:1–6). The tabernacle was, in other words, a training device for orienting the Old Covenant people toward their New Covenant heavenly home.”

The golden lampstand symbolized as the nation of Israel being a light to the nations and typified Christ as the light of the world, bringing to us the full radiance of divine life (John 8:12; 9:5). It is noteworthy that natural light was shut out from

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the Tabernacle. Only the Spirit of God can show us the things of Christ (1 Cor. 2:14-15). The Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us, as Jesus announced in His Upper Room Discourse (John 16:14-15).