

LIVING AS PRIESTS

AS KEEPERS OF THE TABERNACLE AND THE OFFERINGS

Dear Brother, Dear Sister:

Who is a Priest? A priest is one who serves in the temple of God, carries out the ordained sacrifices and offerings, and teaches the law of God to people. Hebrews 5:1 says: “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins:”. Meaning, a priest is a person chosen by God to serve God for the interest of men, and to serve men for the interest of God, and the service involves offering sacrifices unto God in the temple. Revelation 1:6 tells us that Christ “... has made us kings and priests to His God and Father ...” **This means that we have a responsibility to serve in the temple of God, carry out the ordained sacrifices and offerings, and teach the word of God to people.**

What temple are we to serve in? 1 Corinthians 3:16 says “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” As such, unlike the Old Testament priests who served in physical external temples, we ourselves are the living temples that we are to serve in. 1 Corinthians 6:19 make it clearer saying: “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you...?” Meaning, just as God

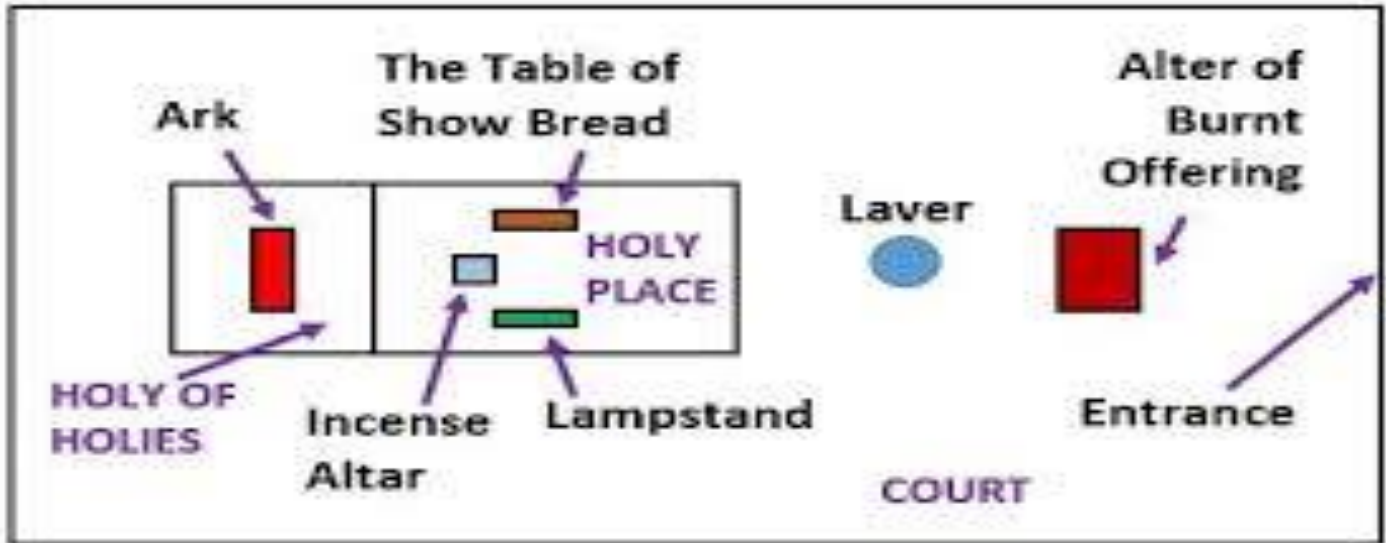
was present in the physical temple in the Old Testament, God has decided to be present in us and live in us as His temple – His tabernacle – His house.

As such, since we are the temple of God, **then it is in us we are to carry out the ordained sacrifices and offerings**, just as the Old Testament priests carried out the offerings inside the temple.

Now, just as there are different items in the physical temple in the Old Testament, likewise, those items are symbolically present in us, and we are to serve God in terms of those items as part of our daily priestly living, just as the Old Testament priests served God by servicing each of the items in the temple.

What are the items in the temple? They are: the bronze altar, the bronze laver [basin], the golden lampstand, the table of showbread, the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant. The following diagram shows where each item is positioned in the temple:

THE TABERNACLE



As priests of God, we have daily duties to fulfill at each of these temple items.

THE BRONZE ALTAR:

It is here, at the bronze altar, that the priest carries out the sacrifices and offerings. But irrespective of the sacrifice offered, God commanded that the priest **burn wood on this altar every morning**, and that **the fire of this altar must never go out**. For us, wood represents the unsanctified earthy nature which is dishonorable in the sight of God [2 Timothy 2:20-21]. As priests, God wants us to burn aspects of this earthy nature daily. So, everyday, as the light of God's word dawns on an aspect or aspects of our earthy nature, we are to submit that nature or habit to be burned by the fire of God, and we do this by simply obeying God to stop that habit. Doing this **daily** sustains the fire of God burning in us so that it never goes out. Refusing to burn wood [the earthy nature] **daily** can lead to the fire of God [His

zeal, His love and His faith] going out in us. It is our priestly duty and service to do as God has instructed – **to burn wood daily to keep the fire burning.**

Now, as outlined by God, there are five offerings that the priest is to carry out at the bronze altar, and since we are priests of God, we would need to carry out these five offerings [though symbolically]. They are:

1. The sin offering
2. The trespass offering
3. The peace offering
4. The grain or meal offering
5. The burnt offering

The Sin Offering and The Trespass Offering: The trespass offering is also a sin offering of a sort, so we have chosen to discuss them together. God gave instruction for these offerings in Leviticus 4 and 6:24-30 [sin offering], and Leviticus 5 – 6:7 and 7:1-10 [trespass offering].

For the sin offering, God instructed that the person who needed his/her sin taken away should lay his hand on the animal to be used for sacrifice and confess his sin over the animal, so that the animal takes his place. Then the animal should be killed and its blood collected. The blood is to be taken into the holy place and sprinkled seven times on the veil that divides the holy place

from the holy of holies. And the blood is also to be put on the four horns of the altar of incense [another item in the tabernacle which we will discuss later]. The remaining blood is to be poured at the base of the bronze altar. Then the fat is to be taken, just as it is taken for the peace offering, and burnt on the altar unto God. The rest of the animal is then taken outside the tabernacle, to the place where the ashes of the burnt offering are poured, and burnt there. This is the sin offering. But what do these mean?

For us, it means that before we can have our sin taken away, we need to produce a sacrifice that can take our place. Obviously, it cannot be a sacrifice of bulls and goats as Hebrews 10:4 says “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.” Rather, a human sacrifice is required. But not just any human. The one standing in our place must not have sin of his own. It is our sin that is to become his own, so that he can truly take our sin and die in our place. But there was no such human on earth, until God in His mercy sent His Son into the world. 1 John 4:10 says “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Propitiation means “to appease” or “to expire” or “to pay for” our sins. God, our Father, in His love for us, sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to do this for us, so that we didn’t have to die for ourselves and He loses all of us. And as an assurance that He

accepted our Lord Jesus's sacrifice on our behalf, He raised Him up from death.

Now that He has died and shed His blood for us, we can use His blood as instructed. That is, we can sprinkle it seven times on the veil that divides the holy place from the holy of holies. What does this mean? When a priest enters the physical tabernacle, that is, into the holy place, what he sees in front of him is the veil and the altar of incense. Behind the veil, in the holy of holies, is where God's glory was revealed to the High Priest once a year, so we can think of the holy of holies as where God is. As such, sprinkling the blood on the veil is so that when God looks through the veil at the priest who came in, He will see the blood. And that blood means any sin of that priest has already been paid for, and so the priest can operate without guilt or risk of judgment. So, for us, this means that we are to approach God by faith in the blood of Jesus. Sprinkling, for us, simply means consciously applying the blood of Jesus by faith, in any situation, knowing that it frees us from guilt and judgment as we approach God, because all our sins have been paid for. Seven is the number of perfection. God created the world in seven days. So sprinkling the blood seven times for us means we should keep applying the blood of Jesus consciously by faith, that it cleanses us and frees us from guilt, **until we become perfect**: until His work in us is complete: until we are resurrected into His glory.

Next, we are to apply the blood on the horns of the altar of incense. The altar of incense is where incense is offered to God. Incense for us represents our prayers, thanksgiving, songs of worship and praise unto God. Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4 show this. Revelation 5:8 says “Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” As such, the altar of incense represents our daily devotion to communicating with God in prayers, thanksgiving, worship and praise. Horns represent strength. The horns of an animal are an expression of its strength. The altar of incense had four horns carved on its four corners. These horns represent the “strength of the altar”. For us, applying the blood on the “strength of the altar” means that the blood of Jesus should be the strength, or the basis, or the confidence with which we are able to pray to God, thank Him, praise Him and worship Him. We should not have confidence to communicate with God only when we feel holy, or when we feel we have done a good work. Rather, at all times, the genuine strength and confidence for which we are able to communicate with God must be the blood of Jesus. It must always be that we feel confident to communicate with God because our Lord Jesus died for us and took away our sin. That must be the strength of our offering of prayers [incense] unto God.

After anointing the horns of the altar of incense with the blood, the priest is to pour the remaining at the base of the bronze altar of burnt offering. For us, this means that we are to apply the blood of our Lord Jesus to the root [to the foundation] of our lives. This is to deal with deep rooted natures, habits or tendencies of sin that plague us. This is something we are to do by faith, and it is effective in bringing us deliverance the more we believe and diligently prophesy the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus into our lives [particularly the aspects where we desire deliverance].

Then we are told that the fat of the animal is to be taken and offered as a peace offering unto God. This is something our Lord Jesus did for us. In taking our place and paying the price for our sin, He offered all of His “fat” unto God – everything that made Him lovely, He yielded in submission. In fact, at one point, in Gethsemane, in Matthew 26:53-54, He said: “Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?” These riches in glory and even security is part of what we understood fat to represent when we discussed the peace offering [we may wish to review it]. But our Lord Jesus offered it all, as required, while being a sin offering for us.

Finally, the rest of the animal is to be taken outside the camp and burnt completely as a kind of burnt offering. But for us, Hebrews 13:11-13 explains saying: "For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore, let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach." He [our Lord Jesus] has already done this for us. He has suffered outside the gate, at Golgotha. What we are to do now is to go out of our comfort and meet Him, bearing His reproach, by speaking boldly of Him to people, even if they look down on us for doing so.

This is a summary of how we keep the sin offering, to deal with the deep-rooted nature of sin within. And we are to keep similar principles [as a trespass offering] anytime we do something wrong and become aware of it. The trespass offering is also a sin offering.

The Peace Offering: God gave instruction for this offering in Leviticus 3:1-17 and 7:11-21. For this offering the main ingredients are the fats and the kidneys. They were to be taken out and burnt on the altar as an offering made by fire unto God.

For us, what does it mean to offer our fat and kidney to the Lord? We first of all need to know what their function in the body is.

When we research, we'll find out that fat provides energy, backup energy, when the body needs it. It is a storage of excess food, which can be used later to produce energy. This fat is usually stored in areas of the body that makes a person look more attractive, especially the ladies. Fat also helps to absorb and store certain key vitamins: A, D, E, K, all of which are essential to proper functioning of the body. Fat is one of the main structural components that make up the brain. Fat helps to maintain body temperature, and is also stored as a layer under the skin. It helps to protect the vital organs of the body from shock due to sudden movement or hard impact. Fat is also responsible for making hormones which put one in a love mood. As for the kidney, it is generally understood among the Hebrews as the metaphorical seat of emotions, and figuratively, the mind. The interpretation of the original Greek word "kilyah" shows this.

Knowing these, we can understand that when God asks us [as New Testament priests] to sacrifice our fat and kidneys [symbolically speaking], He means that we should give Him our energy [serve Him with our strength]. He means that we should give Him all the things that make us feel secured [all the things we feel we can always fall back on if something happens], which may include our money, our skills, and even our time. He wants us to give Him all the things that make us attractive or admirable, which may include our talents and more. He wants

us to give Him our virtues [our vitamins: the things that make us function as the people we are]. He wants us to give Him our mind [our understanding and intellect]. That is, He wants us to use them for Him [to think on Him and His Word, and to communicate Him and His gospel to all around us]. He also wants us to give Him our emotions and our desires. He wants us to feel for Him and tenderly desire Him above all else.

The New Testament summary of the law captures this offering well, saying: “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with **all thy heart**, and with **all thy soul**, and with **all thy mind**, and with **all thy strength**: this is the first commandment.” [Mark 12:30, KJV]

The grain or meal offering: God gave instruction for this offering in Leviticus 2:1-16 and 6:14-23. For this offering, the primary ingredient is corn grains beaten into fine flour. The fine flour is to be mixed with oil and frankincense. Then a handful burned on the altar as an offering of sweet aroma to God while the remaining can be eaten by the priests. The fine flour can be baked into cakes before being offered but it must not contain leaven. The grain offering must not contain leaven. Leaven must not be burnt on the altar to God. God also instructed that every grain offering must be seasoned with salt. The salt must not be lacking in the grain offering.

What do these mean for us? First, we are to be that grain of corn beaten into fine flour. In John 12:24 our Lord Jesus said "... Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Here, our Lord was referring to Himself as a grain corn and that as He sacrifices Himself He'll produce us into grains of corn too. So, we see that we are that grain of corn that is to be offered. But to be offered we need to be beaten into fine flour. It is an unpleasant process but we need to go through it. Therefore, as part of offering the grain offering, we need to submit ourselves [and hold on in faith] in those situations that God takes us through to beat us into fine flour. Rather than revolt or murmur in those situations, we should allow Him to produce the fine character He wants to produce.

Next, we are to mix the fine flour with oil and frankincense. Oil represents the anointing – the enabling grace of Christ. It is what is poured on the head of kings and priests to empower them with the Spirit of God for service. Such anointing comes on us as yield to the beating experience of being formed into fine flour, because naturally speaking, oil is also gotten from grains by beating [threshing] them. So, as priests, it is part of our service to hold on to God in faith, allowing Him to form His fine character and produce His anointing in us.

Frankincense is a white incense with sweet aroma. It is also known to burn for a long time with a steady flame. When added, and burnt as part of the grain offering, it makes the ascending smoke white and of sweet aroma, and it maintains this whiteness and aroma for a long time. This is what God wants. For us, frankincense represents something that produces whiteness in the sight of God and a pleasant aroma when He perceives us. In scripture, whiteness is a symbol for righteousness. Revelation 19:7-8 says "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." This helps us see that righteousness is represented as white. Adding frankincense to our grain offering therefore means that, as priests of God, we are to maintain righteousness throughout the situations God uses to produce His character [fine flour] and His anointing [oil]. Righteousness means right standing with God through faith. Romans 4:3 says "For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." But His faith was not without works. His faith was demonstrated by the actions of obedience that He took, just as James 2:26 says "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also". Therefore, adding frankincense to our grain offering means that, in the trying situations God takes us through to produce His character and

anointing, we are to maintain faith towards God and demonstrate that faith through continued obedience to Him. Hebrews 10:35-38 says “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise... Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” We must not draw back. Instead, God should have pleasure in the aroma of the frankincense in our grain offering.

Finally, the grain offering must be seasoned with salt. In our everyday cooking, we know that salt adds a pleasant taste or flavour to a meal. Likewise, salt represents virtues in us that please God when He tastes them [as He relates with us]. In Mark 9:50, our Lord Jesus said “Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.” Here, one of such virtues that pleases God is mentioned – having peace with one another. Another popular virtue that pleases God is faith. Hebrews 11:6 says “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” This shows that if the salt of faith is not present in our lives, our offering will not taste good to God. There are many other virtues, but the greatest of them is love, which includes peace and faith in it. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 says that though we are able to do many mighty works, if we do not

have love, then it is useless or tasteless and not pleasurable to God. Love is a principal salt which we must have in ourselves. It must be present for us to taste good to God. It is part of our reasonable priestly service.

The burnt offering: God gave instruction for this offering in Leviticus 1:1-17 and 6:8-13. For this offering, God commanded that the animal being offered should be killed, flayed [deskinsed] or defeathered [if a bird is used], cut open, its inner parts and legs should be washed with water, and then it should be placed on the altar, in the fire of God, to be totally consumed and transformed into a form [a vapour of aroma] that ascends heaven, to God.

For us, we are to be that animal. We are to die daily. Our Lord Jesus in Matthew 16:24 said "... If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

We are to be flayed. This means we are to strip away our skin. To flay means to strip something off oneself. Our skin could symbolize our individuality: our unique appearance or expression in the sight of men. God wants us to strip it off if we are to be a burnt offering to Him. In addition, Deuteronomy 10:16 says "Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and

be stiff-necked no longer.” As we deskin our hearts, we drop our own thinking and mindset and stop being stiff-necked [stubborn]. We instead are to be obedient to God’s will, as part of our priestly worship.

We are to be cut open. Hebrews 4:12 says: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

We are to allow the word of God pierce into us and cut us open. And being cut open, we are to have our inner parts [our heart and mind] washed with water. Ephesians 5:25-26 says “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word” We are to have our inner parts [our hearts and minds] washed with the water of God’s word by reading it, listening to it and meditating on it daily.

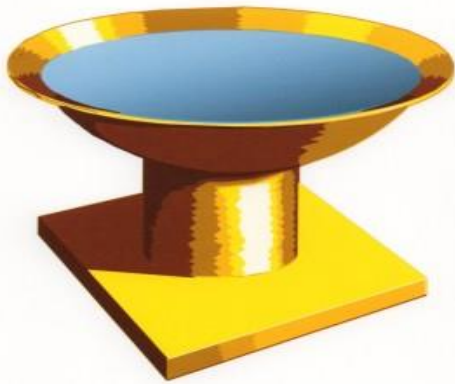
We are then to be placed in the fire of God to be totally consumed into a vapor of aroma that ascends to God. This involves submitting everything we are to God to live for Him. Galatians 2:20 says “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me

and gave Himself for me.” And Isaiah 58:13 says “... not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words,” When we do this, submitting our will totally to God, just as our Lord Jesus did in Luke 22:42 saying “...not My will, but Yours, be done.”, then we will ascend to God in a transformed manner “as a vapour of aroma”, just as our Lord Jesus ascended to God in a transformed heavenly nature. That is, when we are totally sold out to God, doing only His will and not ours, then we become transformed into a heavenly personality, one that abides in His heaven daily, even while still living on earth. Just as our Lord was on earth, yet He said He is in heaven [John 3:13].

Finally, God gave three options of animals to be used for this burnt offering: a bull, a sheep or goat, or a turtledove bird. This was to account for the different financial capacities of each person, so that everyone could offer a burnt offering to God if they were willing. For us, this means that any child of God can offer a burnt offering to God regardless of his/her spiritual capacity. No one should say they have not reached the level of offering the burnt offering. As priests of God, it is part of our reasonable service. So, Paul in Romans 12:1 says: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

We will now move on to discuss the next item in the tabernacle as we continue to learn what it means for us to live as New Testament priests unto God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE BRONZE LAVER:



This is the second item that a priest comes across when he enters the tabernacle. It was made from the mirrors [looking glasses] of the women of Israel. Exodus 38:8 says “And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the lookingglasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”

The brazen laver was like a wash hand basin. It was used to hold water so that the priests could wash their hands and feet before going in [Exodus 30:18-21]. And since it was made from the looking glasses of the women, whenever a priest went to wash himself at the laver, he could also observe how he looked to know where he needed to wash and how long more he needed to keep washing with water.

Ephesians 5:25-26 and James 1:23-25 help us understand what these mean for us as New Testament priests. Ephesians 5:25-26 says: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the

church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the **washing of water by the word.**” This passage shows us that the word of God is like water that washes away the stains of wrong character. The word of God does this by showing us our faults and giving us direction on how to overcome those faults. As such, the word of God is more effective in washing away our wrong characters and habits the more we are obedient to Him.

In addition, James 1:23-25 says: “For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; **for he observes himself**, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who **looks into** the perfect law of liberty **and continues in it**, and is not a forgetful hearer but **a doer of the work**, this one will be blessed in what he does.” From this scripture, we see that when a person hears the word of God, it is as though he is looking into a mirror. This is because the word of God shows the person the way he is in comparison to the way he should be.

We can therefore understand, using these two scriptures, that for us, making use of the brazen laver means that we should expose ourselves to the word of God and make diligent effort to obey all He teaches. We expose ourselves to the word of God by studying the Bible and meditating on it, on our own, as a family, and as a church.

THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK:



The golden candlestick is one of three items located in the Holy Place of the tabernacle. The other two items are the table of shewbread and the golden altar of incense.

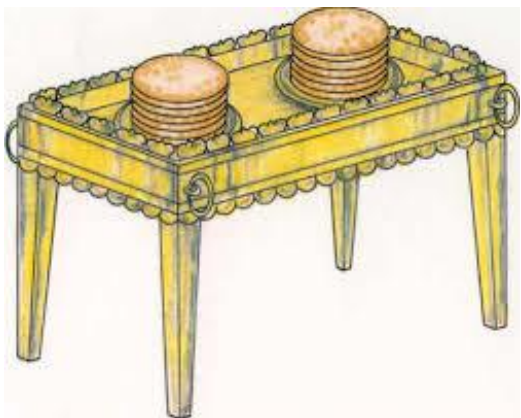
This golden candlestick served as the light for the priest to carry out his priestly duties in the holy place. As such, he was required to trim it morning and evening so that it keeps burning brightly. The description of this candlestick can be found in Exodus 25:31-37.

For us, the candlestick represents the Holy Spirit. Revelation 4:5 shows us that the seven lamps represent the seven spirits of God. And Isaiah 11:2 mentions these seven spirits of God: “**And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.**” Of these seven, the main one is the Spirit of the LORD [the Holy Spirit]. It is from the Spirit of the LORD that the other six branch out in pairs, just as in the structure of the candlestick, there is one main piece [the center piece], and from it the other six branch out in pairs. So Isaiah 11:2 is telling us that the Spirit of the LORD is the Spirit that gives wisdom and understanding, gives counsel

and might, and gives knowledge of the LORD and the fear of the LORD.

Knowing this, we can understand that, as New Testament priests, we make use of the golden candlestick by yielding to the leading of the Holy Spirit in us. This leading of the Holy Spirit is light and it is given to us through the word of God [and other means like visions, inner witnesses, words of prophecy, etc, all of which must still be in agreement with the word of God]. We make use of this light by obeying the leadings He gives us daily in all situations. And just as the Old Testament priests had to trim the lamp [and remove every burnt chaff from it] to keep it shining bright, likewise we need to clean our hearts regularly by taking away every chaff of the day's activity from our hearts so that we can hear God clearly when He speaks to us. It is as we hear God clearly and receive the light of His guidance that we are able to serve Him faithfully at the other two items in the holy place: the table of shew bread and the golden altar of incense.

THE TABLE OF SHEW BREAD:



This is the second item located in the holy place. The main purpose of the table was to have the shewbread placed on it. God gave instructions for this shewbread in Leviticus 24:5-9. There were to be twelve loafs of bread on the

table, arranged in two rows, with six loafs in each row. God also instructed that pure frankincense was to be put on each row, for a memorial. Every Sabbath, the twelve loafs were to be changed with a new set. God said it was meant for Aaron and his sons, and that they were to eat the loafs, in the holy place, after the loafs had been set before Him for seven days.

For us, our Lord Jesus said in John 6:48-51 **“I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”** So our Lord Jesus is the bread we are to eat of. How do we eat of Him? John 1:1-14 explains that our Lord Jesus is the Word of God. As such, we eat of Him simply by reading, hearing and doing the Word of God. **This is how we, as New Testament priests, eat the shewbread, by receiving and living according to the Word of God.**

However, we should note that the shewbread represents a level of the Word of God that is higher than that of the water in the brazen laver, in the outer court. This is because, the water in the brazen laver could be seen using the natural surrounding light of the day [as it is located outside in the outer court], but the shewbread could only be seen by the light of the golden

candlestick [as it is located inside in the Holy Place], which [the golden candlestick] we have understood to represent the Holy Spirit. This means, **the shewbread is the Word of God that we can receive only as the Holy Spirit reveals it to us.** We can simply call it the revealed Word of God – such that is received when we wait on the Lord.

God told the priests that the shew bread were to be twelve in number. This is because there were twelve tribes in Israel. As such, a loaf for a tribe. We may have read before in scriptures that originally the priests were to be the firstborns from every tribe. But since they did not yield themselves, God chose the Levites, and the house of Aaron from among the Levites to be the priests. As such, it would have been every priest representing each tribe would have had a loaf of bread on behalf of his people. The point being, God provided a loaf of bread for each tribe of His people, and in extension, He provided bread for all His people.

For us, God providing the twelve loafs for His Old Testament people represents God providing His revealed Word for every one of His New Testament people [believers in Christ Jesus] no matter their level or category. It is thus a point of encouragement, so that no one should say the Lord does not reveal His Word to me. There is a loaf of the revealed Word of God available for everyone of the people of God. We should arise

as priests and enter into the Holy Place, by living Holy lives, and yield to the Holy Spirit to reveal the loaf of God's revealed Word to us.

God also instructed the priests to put frankincense on the loafs of bread. If we remember, the other time God asked the priests to use frankincense was in the meal offering. So that as the meal offering burnt on the altar it ascended with a white smoke. And we understood white to represent righteousness, which comes by faith in God.

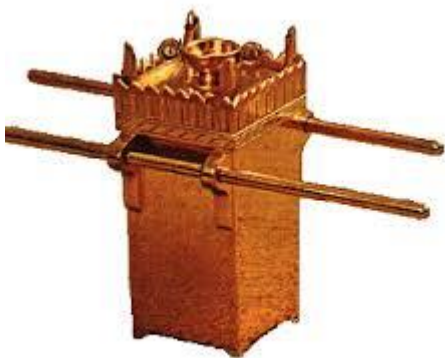
As such, adding frankincense on the shewbread represents receiving the revealed Word of God **with faith**. Faith is very important to gain anything out of the revealed Word of God. Hebrews 4:2 says "... **but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.**" This is a reason why we as priests of God need frankincense. We must mix the revealed Word of God [the loafs of shew bread] with faith, so that it can profit us.

In summary, we, as priests of God, **need** to feed on the revealed Word of God. We need to have a habit of waiting on the Lord daily and periodically to reveal more of Himself to us, so we can see, and be empowered to press towards such standard of life, character and power that we find in Him. We should not think that there is no Word for us, or that God does not reveal His

Word to us. We have seen that God has provided a loaf for everyone of His people. We need to wait on the Lord, and ask the Holy Spirit [the golden candlestick of light] to reveal the Word of God to us. And when He reveals it, we are to apply frankincense on it by mixing it with faith so that it can profit us.

God apportioned the shewbread to the priests, Aaron and his sons, for their own good. Likewise, Christ has apportioned deeper aspects of Himself to us [through His Spirit], for our own good, **if we wait on Him to receive it, and mix the revelation with faith**, so that we can be empowered and motivated to become more like Him.

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE:



This is the third item in the holy place, although it is also moved into the most holy place on the Day of Atonement, the day when the sins of Israel as a nation are forgiven. The main function of the altar of incense was to offer incense to God. For us, incense represents prayer. Psalms 141:2 says “Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” And Revelation 5:8 says “Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a

harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”

So we see that when we pray to God, at any time, we are actually offering incense to Him at the altar of incense inside us, the temple of God. The prayer includes the songs we sing in worship to Him, the words of adoration, thanks and appreciation we offer to Him, and the tongues we speak in Spirit. They are all incense ascending from us to God.

The sweetness of the incense aroma depends on the quality of attention we give to God while praying [not with a distracted mind], how sincere we are in our prayer [not deceiving ourselves, or hiding our sin], how much of His word we quote back to Him in place of using our own words [it demonstrates a heart that truly listens to His word], how much desire we truly have for His presence [not just doing it as a sense of duty], and most importantly, how much faith or confidence we have in Him, that He hears us and will do what've asked according to His will [not just praying or singing as a faithless religious routine].

One command that God gave concerning the offering of incense is that **it should be perpetual**. We can find this command in Exodus 30:1-8. Verse 8 calls it “... a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.” Meaning, as priests of God, **God wants us to always have incense burning on our altar**

of incense—it should be perpetual. Paul captures this instruction in the New Testament, in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 by saying **“Pray without ceasing.”** This is what God wants from us, His priests—**continuous prayer:** for His Kingdom, His Church, our brethren, our families, our selves—that His will be done in us as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

May the Lord help us to be faithful at the altar of incense in our respective temples [personal, family, and fellowship]. Amen.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT:

This is the final item in the tabernacle. It is located in the most holy place. God gave instruction about this item in Exodus 25:10-22. He said that it is here, at the Ark of the Covenant, that He will meet with the high priest **to commune with him on the commandments He wants him to give to His people.**

Now, unlike the Old Testament where it was only the high priest that could enter the most holy place and worship God at the mercy seat, in the New Testament, all priests of God, that is, all believers, have access to the most holy place by the blood of Jesus. Hebrews 10:19 echoes this saying:

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say,

His flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; **Let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

As such, we all, as priests of God in the New Testament, have access to the mercy seat and can worship God there, just as in all other items in the tabernacle. In Exodus 25:22, God said He'll meet the priest there, at the mercy seat, **to commune with Him on the commandments to be given to the people of Israel.** So we see that the mercy seat is a place of communion with God, similar to the altar of incense. However, the level of communion here, at the mercy seat, is higher—it is such that brings a person to a level of grace to administer the counsel of God to His people. The communion that begins at the altar of incense is to advance into this communion at the mercy seat, and perhaps that's part of why God instructed that when the priest comes into the most holy place, he must come along with incense burning in a censer to form a cloud over the mercy seat [Leviticus 16:12-13]. **It therefore shows that we can't advance into worshipping God in the most holy place, at the mercy seat, and receive counsel from Him for His people, if we are not faithful with our prayer life at the altar of incense.**

We, as new testament priests of God, can therefore tell when we have begun to fellowship with God at the mercy seat, by

observing the counsel and instructions we receive from Him to deal with different issues in and around us. These counsel and instructions may come through dreams, visions, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, prophecy, or **revelations from His word**. But they'll be sharp and clear—from God to the situation—from God to the individual—from God to His Church.

Everyone of us, as children and priests of God, have access to such communion with God. We only need to be faithful in serving God at all items in the tabernacle, and be particularly diligent at the altar of incense, which is the stepping stone to the communion at the mercy seat.

We thank God for teaching us on **serving Him faithfully** as priests at all the items in the tabernacle **till we are established** in communion with Him at the mercy seat—to always receive His counsel, whether for our personal needs or situations, or better still, for matters pertaining to the building of lives, the building of His Church, judgment on all activities of darkness and the establishment of His Kingdom in our lives and on earth.

May the Lord help us to indeed be faithful as priests of God, keepers of His tabernacle and offerings, and ultimately, **worshippers at His mercy seat**.

Amen.