

## **TABERNACLE TRUTHS - VIII**

A PATTERN FOR REVELATION & RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST THROUGH WORSHIP & PRAYER



# **Tabernacle Truths**

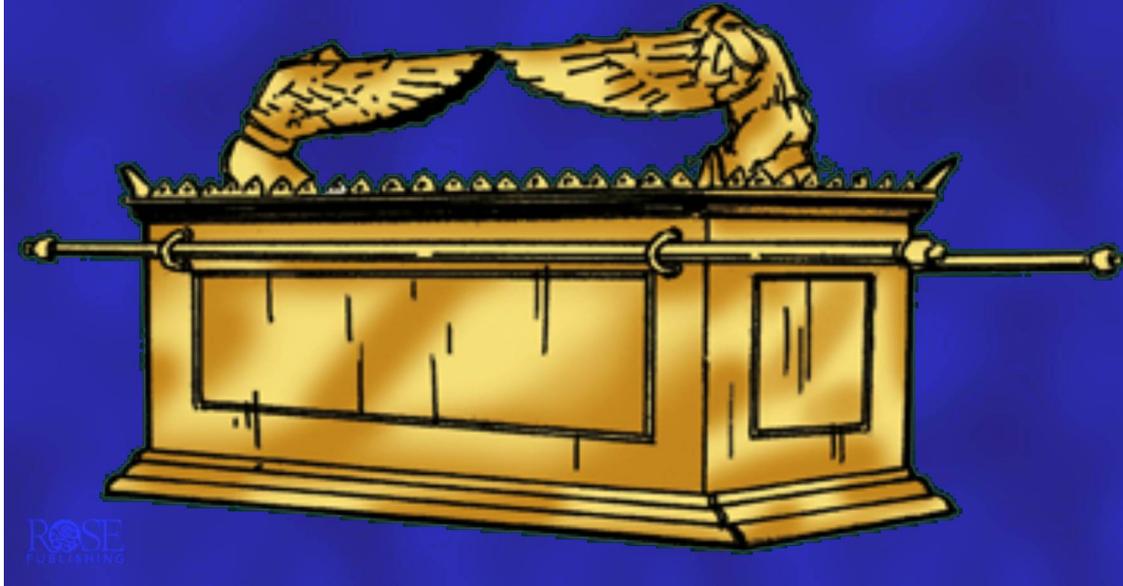
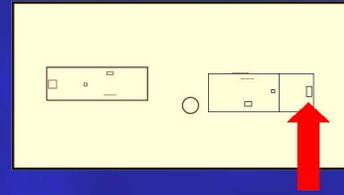
## **THE MERCY SEAT**

### **The Shekinah Glory**

**(The Manifest Presence of God)**

# The Ark of the Covenant

(Exodus 25:10-16)



## THE REVELATION OF CHRIST & RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST: **THE DIVINE NATURE** ETERNAL LIFE

Before moving on to the Mercy Seat and its Pattern for Worship and Prayer, I'd like to just touch on the other two items that were within the Ark with the Tablets of the Testimony which also speak of the Divine Nature that was within Christ. The Lord had directed that the Golden Jar with Manna<sup>1</sup> and Aaron's Staff<sup>2</sup> also be placed in the Ark.

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 16

<sup>2</sup> Numbers 17

It was called “The Ark of the Testimony” because it was built specifically to house the Testimony. It was only later, in the wilderness, that the Golden Jar with Manna and Aaron’s Staff were also put within the Ark. And after the wilderness, the Ark was the only piece of furniture transferred to David’s Tabernacle.<sup>3</sup> The Ark in Solomon’s Temple<sup>4</sup> did not contain the Golden Jar with Manna and Aaron’s Staff – only the Testimony – the most complete expression of the Divine Nature.

But in the Tabernacle of Moses, both the “Golden Jar with Manna” and Aaron’s Staff were indeed placed inside the Ark,<sup>5</sup> as both of these also represent an aspect of the Divine Nature, and that aspect is **Eternal Life, the Life of The Eternal One.**

**Eternal Life** sustains biological life, as it did for the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years when the Lord provided “manna from heaven”. As a memorial of this supernatural spiritual life, some of the Manna was kept in a Golden Jar as a testimony “throughout their generations”. This was a prophetic foreshadowing of Jesus, Who, when He came, declared: “I am the Bread of Life.... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has **eternal life.**”<sup>6</sup> The Manna was in the Golden Jar in the Ark was a prophetic foreshadowing of the “hidden

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Chronicles 15:1 & 16:1

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 8:9 & 2 Chronicles 5:10

<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 9:4; Numbers 17:1-13; Exodus 16:32-34

<sup>6</sup> John 6:48 & 54; also: 51, 57-58.

manna” promised to the “overcomer” in the Book of Revelation.<sup>7</sup>

**Eternal Life, the Life of the Eternal One**, includes Resurrection Life. When He came, Jesus declared: “I am **the Resurrection and the Life** ... he who believes in Me will have Eternal Life.”<sup>8</sup> **The Life of the Eternal One** has the power to bring that which is dead to newness of life. This is the power that was released upon Aaron’s Staff, merely a dead branch, when it was placed before the Ark overnight. The Scripture says that it “sprouted, and put forth buds, and produced blossoms, and bore ripe almonds”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Revelation 2:17

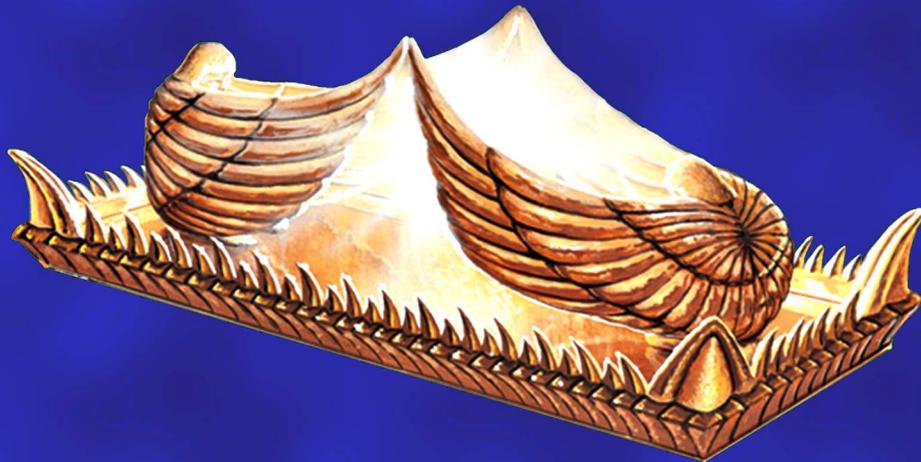
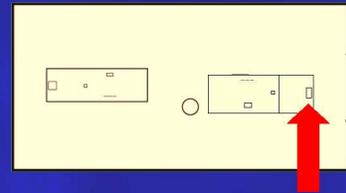
<sup>8</sup> John 11:25-26 (Paraphrased)

<sup>9</sup> Numbers 17:8

THE REVELATION OF CHRIST & RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST:  
**THE DIVINE NATURE**  
MERCY

## The Mercy Seat

(Exodus 25:17-21)



### EXODUS 25:17-22

<sup>17</sup> “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. <sup>18</sup> You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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.** <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> **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.”

The Mercy Seat was placed on top of the Ark.<sup>10</sup> **Mercy** is another major aspect of the Divine Nature.<sup>11</sup> We will see that because God has chosen to meet with us only in this prescribed place of Mercy<sup>12</sup>, **it is absolutely necessary to have a Revelation of His Mercy in order to carry on a Relationship with Him.**

The two Cherubim speak of two aspects of God’s nature: He is **holy**, and **merciful** – **The Holy Judge**, and **“The Father of Mercies”**.<sup>13</sup> Those who do not yet have a Revelation and Relationship with God see these two characteristics as contradictory. Psalm 85 is a prayer for God’s a prayer for God’s Mercy. It is about sin and salvation – acknowledging sin and receiving Mercy from God. It is also a Messianic Psalm of Christ within Whom these two seemingly contradictory aspects of God’s nature dwell together in unity and harmony in the person and the work of Jesus. Verse 10 of the Psalm reads: *“Mercy and truth have met together righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”* Regarding these two cherubim, we

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<sup>10</sup> Exodus 25:17-22

<sup>11</sup> Exodus 34:5-7

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 25:22

<sup>13</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:3

could say that their names are “Mercy” and “Truth” or “Righteousness” and “Peace” – and they are not contradictory. They are in unity and harmony, as it were, because they are “made of one piece with the Mercy Seat”.<sup>14</sup> They are “facing one another”, and they see “eye to eye”, as they look upon and agree upon the blood of the Lamb of God sprinkled on the Mercy Seat for the forgiveness of sin<sup>15</sup>.

### **Romans 3:23-26**

<sup>23</sup> ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

<sup>24</sup> being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

<sup>25</sup> whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation (which is just another word for “Mercy Seat”) in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

<sup>26</sup> for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would **be just and the justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

We could also say that the names of these two cherubim are “**Just**” and “**Justifier**”. “Just” – “The Holy Judge” - and “the Justifier” – “The Father of Mercies”.

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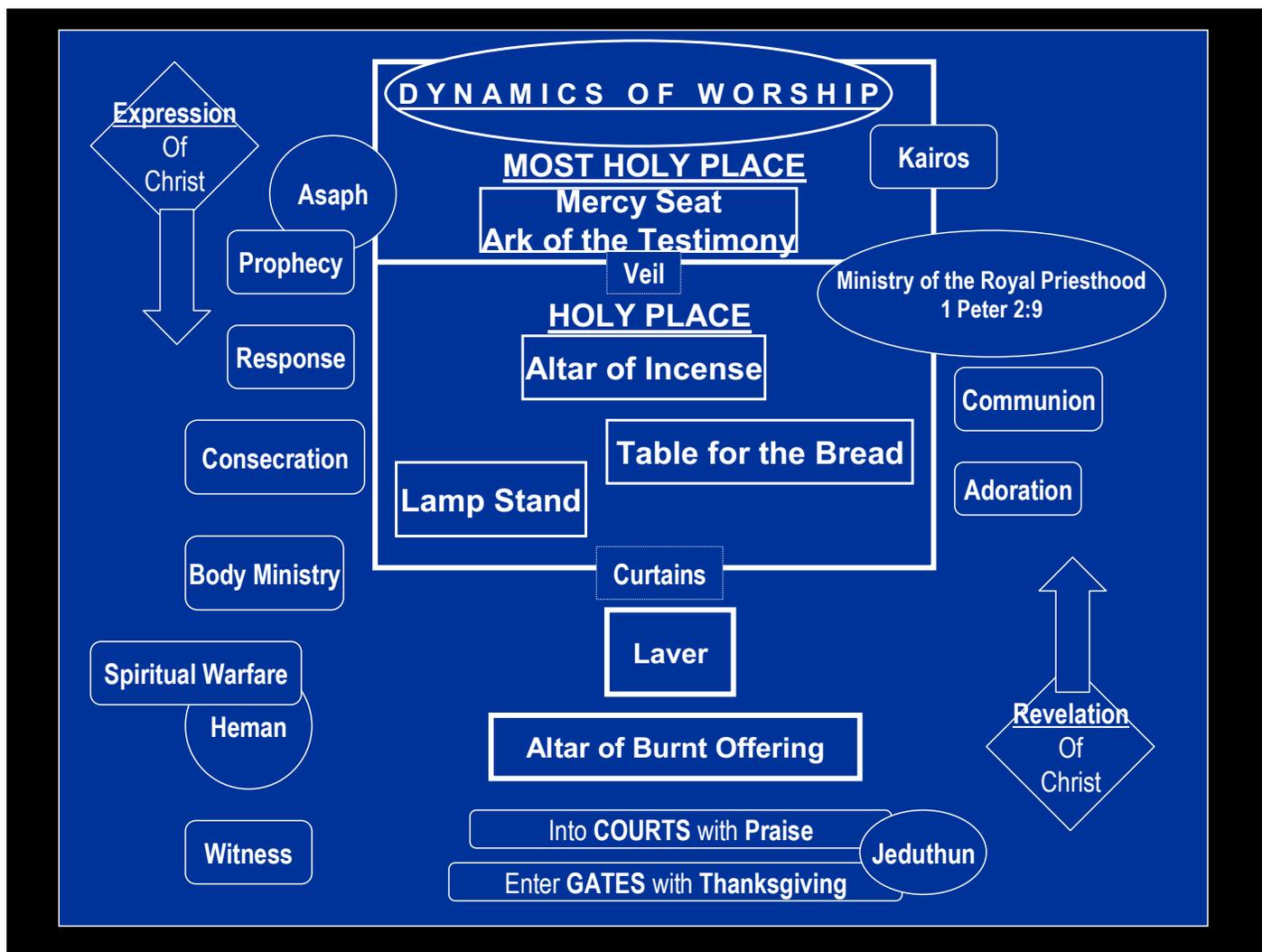
<sup>14</sup> Exodus 25:19

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 25:20

We will see that it is only at the Mercy Seat where God chose to meet with, speak to, direct and guide His people. In order to truly meet with God, to truly hear God's word and be truly led by God, one must understand the Mercy of God. Namely: As a Holy Judge, God is right and righteous in His judgments. Because of the Fall, all human beings are all pitiable sinners. As the Father of Mercies, God always shows Mercy to those who acknowledge their sin. By definition, Mercy is the forgiveness of sin.<sup>16</sup> Mercy is only available to those who acknowledge their sin. Unless we acknowledge our sinfulness and our utter dependence upon His Mercy, we cannot receive God's Mercy, nor can we have a personal relationship with Him, nor can we hear His word, nor can we receive His guidance.

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<sup>16</sup> Exodus 34:7



## A PATTERN FOR WORSHIP & PRAYER THE SHEKINAH GLORY

### EXODUS 25:22

<sup>22</sup> **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.”

As we look into the Mercy Seat, which was on top of the Ark, we see a Pattern for Worship & Prayer: It is a

place where God meets with His people; and from that place directs and guides His people.

When we look at the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, we are reminded that these things “are a mere shadow of what (was) to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”<sup>17</sup> The Ark represents the Person of Christ.

We meet with God in, by and through<sup>18</sup> the Person of Christ.

So, again in verse 22 we read: “There I will **meet with you** ... and I will **speak to you** about all that I will **give you in commandment** for the sons of Israel.” Three things took place at the Mercy Seat:

- 1) God meeting with His people
- 2) God speaking to His people
- 3) God leading and guiding His people

“There I will **meet with you...**”: This indicates **Communion**. The Hebrew word *yaad*<sup>19</sup> means to meet at a designated, appointed place and time. Gesenius says it is most often used in designating or appointing a wife.<sup>20</sup> The apostle Paul said: “The mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the Church.”<sup>21</sup> God had designated and appointed a place to meet with the Israel. And that place was the Mercy Seat. Today, the Lord wants to meet with His Bride, the Church, on that same basis.

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<sup>17</sup> Colossians 2:17

<sup>18</sup> Greek: *dia*; Strong's # 1223

<sup>19</sup> Strong's # 3259

<sup>20</sup> Gesenius' *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*

<sup>21</sup> Ephesians 5:32

“There I will **speak to you....**”: This indicates **Communication**. The Old Testament tells us: “The Lord used to speak to Moses **face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.**”<sup>22</sup> Now, we need to try to explain what we mean by the Lord “speaking face to face”. I believe the understanding is contained in the phrase “in the Spirit”, which we will discuss shortly as we look into the concept of the Shekinah Glory. But, the Old Testament does tell us that “The Lord used to speak to Moses **face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.**” And the New Testament tells us: “God has **spoken to us in His Son.**”<sup>23</sup> (Hebrews 1:2) The dispensational / cessationist perspective<sup>24</sup> would like us to believe that the second has “done away” with the first – that because God has now spoken to us through Jesus Christ, He no longer speaks to people “face to face”. This is both an assumption and an illogical conclusion drawn from faulty reasoning.<sup>25</sup> Neither God nor His Scriptures employ faulty reasoning. What has been “done away with” is the shadow, not the reality.<sup>26</sup> Jesus Himself said, he did not come to “do away with” anything, but to

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<sup>22</sup> Exodus 33:11

<sup>23</sup> Hebrews 1:2

<sup>24</sup> This view is most often based on a poor exegesis of one verse of scripture, 1 Corinthians 13:10, which states: “But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.” The “perfect” is arbitrarily interpreted as the Canon of Scripture. At the time of the writing of this epistle, the Church had no concept of a “canon” or that the establishing of a Canon would become necessary 1500-1600 years into the future. It seems to me a much more rational interpretation of “the perfect” would be what Paul refers to a few chapters later in 1 Corinthians – the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the Church – “Then **comes the end**, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father.” 1 Corinthians 15:24 (Context: vv.20-28).

<sup>25</sup> It is utterly astounding how much Christian, and non-Christian, teachings are based upon faulty premises, with half-truths being presented as the whole truth.

<sup>26</sup> Colossians 2:17

fulfill and provide the reality of everything God had initiated in the Old Testament.<sup>27</sup>

While the New Covenant has made the First Covenant “old”,<sup>28</sup> that in no way indicates that God no longer speaks “face to face” with His people. The speaking “face to face” was never the basis of the Old Covenant for it to be “done away with”. But it is significant to note that the personal aspect of speaking “face to face” IS very much the essence of the New Covenant: “FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL<sup>29</sup> AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. “AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW THE LORD,’ FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.”<sup>30</sup> Contrary to the dispensational / cessationist perspective, the New Covenant is not lacking any blessings God had given in the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is a “Better Covenant”<sup>31</sup>, which I believe includes the blessing of God speaking “face to face” with His people. Having said that, I realize that we will need to

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<sup>27</sup> Matthew 5:17

<sup>28</sup> Hebrews 8:13. “To make old” is the literal translation the Greek: *palaioo*, Strong’s # 3822.

<sup>29</sup> “Israel” is defined in Romans 9:6-8.

<sup>30</sup> Jeremiah 31:33-34; Hebrews 8:10-11.

<sup>31</sup> Hebrews 7:19, 22; 8:6; 11:40; 12:24.

discuss relating to God “in the Spirit”, which we will do as we look further into the concept of the Shekinah Glory.

Like **Communion, Communication** is always two-way. Exodus 33:9 says “Whenever Moses entered the tent (of meeting)... the Lord would speak with Moses.” And Numbers 7:89 says “... Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him....”

What was the nature of their dialogue? In 1 Chronicles 13:3 David said: “Let us bring back the ark of our God, for we did not **seek it** in the days of Saul.”<sup>32</sup> The Hebrew word translated “seek” is *darash*, and can also be translated as “inquire”, “ask”, “question” or “consult”. Examples of Moses inquiring or consulting the Lord at the Ark are in Exodus 23 and 33, where he is questions, reasons with, and requests of the Lord.

In the New Testament, the writer to the Hebrews encourages us to “draw near with **confidence** before the throne of grace....”<sup>33</sup> The Greek word translated “confidence” is *parresia*. It is a compound word: *par*, meaning “all”, and *resia*, meaning “speech” – therefore actually meaning feeling free to inquire of the Lord about anything.

God said that there, at the Mercy Seat, would be “all that I will **give you in commandment**”. The Hebrew word, *tsavah*, does not mean commandment in the sense of “Thou do this, and thou shall not do that”. The word

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<sup>32</sup> When Saul became king, he never bothered to bring up the ark from the house of Abinidab in Kiriath-Jearim. (1 Samuel 7:1-2; 2 Samuel 6:1-4)

<sup>33</sup> Hebrews 4:16

phrase means “all that I will give you **to constitute or set in order**”. God was building a people – a kingdom of priests.<sup>34</sup> In Egypt, Israel’s identity was slavery - the only thing they knew was how to make bricks. They needed to learn their identity in God, His plans and purposes, His culture, the ways of His kingdom.<sup>35</sup> “All that I will give you to instruct you and direct you”. Namely, God would be leading His people through a wilderness land into a promised land for their inheritance. By extension, God is leading His Church through “this present darkness”<sup>36</sup> into His kingdom and eternal purposes.

### **Exodus 33:7-11**

<sup>7</sup>Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. <sup>8</sup>And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. <sup>9</sup>Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. <sup>10</sup>When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and

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<sup>34</sup> Exodus 19:5-6

<sup>35</sup> Exodus 19:5-6

<sup>36</sup> Ephesians 6:12

worship, each at the entrance of his tent. <sup>11</sup> Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.”

The Tent of Meeting with the Ark of the Testimony and the Mercy Seat were the very first items to be constructed in the Tabernacle. Moses recognized the preciousness and the importance of this gift – being able to meet with God, hear His word, and be led by His Spirit - so, he immediately began meeting with God at the Mercy Seat, even before the rest of the Tabernacle had been constructed.

The Scripture says that the Tent of Meeting was placed “outside the camp”: Consciously or unconsciously, Moses seemed to understand that there must be a separation between a holy God and sinful people. But this was only a temporary arrangement, until the whole of the Tabernacle was constructed, signifying the completed work of redemption by Christ. Then the Tabernacle could be placed in the center of the camp, in the midst of His people.

The Scripture says that “everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting”. They would go out to the Ark of the Testimony and the Mercy Seat, because there God would meet with His people to speak to them and guide them.

The Scripture says that when the Shekinah glory of the Lord appeared, “the people would arise and worship”. Worship is a response to God’s initiation of meeting with

us and speaking to us. And when we meet with God at the Ark and Mercy Seat for Worship and Prayer, we receive His direction and guidance.

### **Exodus 40:34-38**

“<sup>34</sup> Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. <sup>35</sup> Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. <sup>36</sup> Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; <sup>37</sup> but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. <sup>38</sup> For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.”

God’s glory came down upon the Mercy Seat. God’s meeting and speaking with His people is the method by which God leads His people. God led His people by revealing His glory. This is Moses’ testimony, not only in the Book of Exodus<sup>37</sup> but also in the Books of Numbers<sup>38</sup> and Deuteronomy.<sup>39</sup> In other words, Moses testifies that God led His people in this way the whole forty years, in and out of the wilderness. But Scripture shows the same testimony was given in subsequent generations:

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<sup>37</sup> Also see Exodus 13:21-22

<sup>38</sup> Numbers 7:89, 10:11-13

<sup>39</sup> Deuteronomy 1:33

throughout the time of David's Tabernacle,<sup>40</sup> and into the time of Solomon's Temple.<sup>41</sup> This is the way God has chosen to shepherd His people – by revealing His Shekinah Glory.

David saw the Lord as his Shepherd<sup>42</sup>. Peter refers to Christ as the “Chief Shepherd”,<sup>43</sup> “the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls”.<sup>44</sup> The psalmist, Asaph, tells us clearly how the Lord directs and guides His flock; and Asaph's description matches exactly what the Lord had given to Moses in the Tabernacle at the Mercy Seat. In Psalm 80, Asaph sings: “Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who are enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth!”<sup>45</sup> The Lord's Shekinah glory dwells upon the Mercy Seat, and shines forth direction for His people.

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<sup>40</sup> Asaph in Psalm 80:1 and David in Psalm 99:7.

<sup>41</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:1-3. God also revealed His glory through fire in the days of Elijah (1 Kings 18).

<sup>42</sup> Psalm 23

<sup>43</sup> 1 Peter 5:4

<sup>44</sup> 1 Peter 2:25

<sup>45</sup> Psalm 80:1

## The Shekinah Glory

So, we must now discuss this “Shekinah Glory”, and explain what is meant by worship “in Spirit”, being “in the Spirit”, and experiencing the “Manifest Presence of God”.

The word “Shekinah” comes from the Hebrew root word, *shachan*, meaning “to dwell”.<sup>46</sup> “Shekinah” refers to the special dwelling of God’s Presence; and this special dwelling of God’s Presence came to be known as the “Shekinah Glory”.

In John 4:23-24, Jesus introduced the idea that “worship in spirit and truth” when He said to the Samaritan woman: <sup>23</sup>“But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.<sup>24</sup>“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The apostle Paul also referred to worship “in *the* spirit” in Philippians 3:3, using the article “the”, referring to the Spirit of God. A.T. Robertson said this could be understood to be in the “Instrumental Case”: “by the Spirit of God”, or in the “Locative Case”: “in the Spirit of God”.<sup>47</sup>

Paul used the phrase without the article four times in his epistles to the Romans<sup>48</sup> and Ephesians<sup>49</sup>. John used the

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<sup>46</sup> This is the same root word for the word, *mishkan*, meaning “tabernacle” (Psalm 132:5; Numbers 24:5)

<sup>47</sup> *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

<sup>48</sup> Romans 8:9

<sup>49</sup> Ephesians 2:22; 3:5; 6:18.

phrase without the article four times in the Book of Revelation.<sup>50</sup> A literal rendition of John's phrase is: "I came to be in spirit".

I don't think there is an essential difference between Paul's phrase "praying in spirit"<sup>51</sup> and Jude's phrase "praying in Holy Spirit" (no article used)<sup>52</sup>. Considering the Divine Attribute of omnipresence, I'm not sure there is an essential difference between being "in spirit" and being "in *the* Spirit". God doesn't dwell in things which are created or "made with hands"; but the Spirit is certainly present everywhere everything is. So, wherever "spirit" is located, "*the* Spirit" is there. And I found that to be the essential question: Where is spirit located? The answer to that question will help explain in Scriptural terms what it means to be "in the Spirit". This will also help to explain how the Shekinah Glory, the Manifest Presence of God, is experienced in New Covenant worship of "spirit and truth".

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<sup>50</sup> Revelation 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10.

<sup>51</sup> Ephesians 6:18

<sup>52</sup> Jude 21

## Worship in the Old & New Covenants

I believe the key to understanding lies in the Book of Hebrews, which is a letter of instruction comparing and distinguishing worship in the Old and New Covenants. And once again we will see God's principle in operation – **first the natural, then the spiritual.**<sup>53</sup>

Hebrews 8:5 tells us that the things of the Law of Moses “serve (as) a copy and shadow of the **heavenly things**, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, “SEE,” He says, “**THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.**” This means that Moses' Tabernacle, including the Ark and the Shekinah Glory that came down upon the Mercy Seat were all “a copy and a shadow” of “**heavenly things**” which exist “**in the spirit**” realm. Not only what Moses built, but also **the Shekinah Glory which God sent down was a physical form of a spiritual reality.** The Shekinah Glory, the Manifest Presence of God, in New Covenant worship does not take on physical form, but is a spiritual experience. Although it is spiritual and not physical, the Manifest Presence of God today is every bit as real and available as it was in Moses' Tabernacle. Today we enter into a spiritual, heavenly tabernacle, “not made with hands”.

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<sup>53</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:46

## Hebrews 9:11, 24; 6:20; 10:20

<sup>11</sup> “When Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation....” “<sup>24</sup> For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”<sup>54</sup> “Jesus has entered as a Forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever...”<sup>55</sup> making “... a **new and living way** which He inaugurated for us through the veil.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, we can now enter into “the spirit” and the Manifest Presence of God.

The difference between Old Covenant and New Covenant worship is pictured in the writer’s comparison between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion:

“<sup>18</sup> For you have not come to *a mountain* that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, <sup>19</sup> and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words ....”<sup>57</sup> **IN OLD COVENANT WORSHIP, THE MANIFEST PRESENCE OF GOD AND HIS AND SHEKINAH GLORY CAME DOWN INTO THE PHYSICAL REALM.**<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Hebrews 9:11, 24

<sup>55</sup> Hebrews 6:20

<sup>56</sup> Hebrews 10:20

<sup>57</sup> Hebrews 12:18-19

<sup>58</sup> The New Covenant not having been inaugurated yet, the nature of the gospel accounts and the experience of the disciples act as a “bridge” between the Old and the New Covenants, whereas the norm for the Church is found in the Book of Acts and the Epistles. When Jesus walked the earth, he walked under the Old Covenant but also revealed the New Covenant that

“<sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, **the heavenly** Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, <sup>23</sup> to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect.”<sup>59</sup> **IN NEW COVENANT WORSHIP, WE ARE RAISED UP (in Christ) INTO THE SPIRITUAL REALM** - “The Heavenly Places” – “In the Spirit” – in order to experience the Manifest Presence of God and the Shekinah Glory. Again, because this is spiritual and not physical, does not mean it is not real. The challenge is to try to describe these spiritual realities. Actually, except in the case of heavenly visions like those given to Paul and John, our descriptions have more to do with the effect the heavenly spiritual realities are having on our on our souls.

## **Experiencing the Manifest Presence of God**

Jesus said that Eternal Life is “know the one true God and Him Whom He has sent”; and I believe God desires that “knowing”<sup>60</sup> is intended to be both doctrinal and experiential. God intends for us to experience the doctrine which says He “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the **heavenly places** in Christ Jesus”.<sup>61</sup> “Places” is

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was about to come. Glory came down to earth physically in John of Nazareth. (John 1:14) But Peter, James and John “beheld His glory” in the heavenlies at the “Transfiguration”. (Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:2; 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:1)

<sup>59</sup> Hebrews 12:22-23

<sup>60</sup> Greek: *epignosis*, Strong’s # 1922

<sup>61</sup> Ephesians 2:6

not in the Greek text, so a literal rendering would be raised up and seated with Him in the “**heavenlies**”. The Greek word means literally “above the sky”<sup>62</sup>. I believe this is what the apostle Paul was referring to when he said he didn’t know if he was in or out of his body, but he was lifted up to the “third heaven”, that is above the clouds and sky.<sup>63</sup> Whether we describe it as Paul did, or as “a parallel universe at the center of a black hole”, this “heavenly place” he experienced was “in the spirit”. Of course, we see throughout the Book of Revelation that the apostle John experienced the same phenomenon which he described as being “in the spirit”<sup>64</sup>.

This is not to say that this phenomenon of the Manifest Presence of God always results in “visions” of heaven. I believe the experience of being “in the spirit” can more often be explained as being “under the influence of the Spirit”. I think that is Biblical language and a Biblical experience: On the Day of Pentecost, when the disciples were gathered in the upper room, the Book of Acts tells us that “a noise like a violent, rushing wind **filled** the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues (flames) **as of fire.**”<sup>65</sup> The Greek word, *pleroo*<sup>66</sup>, means to fill up a physical space. And the Manifest Presence of God – the Shekinah Glory – which **CAME DOWN UPON THEM** was in the form of fire,

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<sup>62</sup> Greek: *epouranios*, epi = above, ouranos = sky

<sup>63</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:2

<sup>64</sup> Revelation 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10.

<sup>65</sup> Acts 2:2

<sup>66</sup> Strong’s # 4137

reminiscent of the pillar of fire in the wilderness tabernacle. The disciples were experiencing the ending of the Old Covenant, where the Shekinah Glory **CAME DOWN IN A PHYSICAL FORM**; and they were about to experience the beginning of the New Covenant.

Next<sup>67</sup>, it says that the disciples were “**filled**” with the Holy Spirit. This different Greek word, *pletho*<sup>68</sup>, means “filled” in a different sense, that is, “filled” as in “**under the influence of.**” I offer this as a prototype experience in New Covenant “worship in spirit and truth”, where they experienced Manifest Presence of God and Shekinah Glory as being **RAISED UP AND SEATED WITH THE RISEN CHRIST IN THE HEAVENLIES**, and the effect upon their souls was ecstatic and bold uttering of “the mighty deeds of God”.<sup>69</sup> Make no mistake; this was not a one-time experience for the disciples. They would experience this Manifest Presence of God and Shekinah Glory many times again. The same language for the same experience is used in the Book of Acts on six occasions.<sup>70</sup> Since “tasting” is experiential, I believe it is this experience which is referred to when the writer to the Hebrews speaks of “tasting the powers of the age to come”, and when Peter refers to “tasting that the Lord is good”<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Having just been baptized in the Holy Spirit ....

<sup>68</sup> Strong's # 4130

<sup>69</sup> Acts 2:4, 11

<sup>70</sup> Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, 52.

<sup>71</sup> 1 Peter 2:3

When Paul, who experienced being filled with the Holy Spirit<sup>72</sup>, writes of the doctrine of “the sealing of the Holy Spirit” being “given as a down payment”<sup>73</sup>, I believe this is a doctrine that is to be experienced. A financial down payment is not the full amount; but neither is it a mere pledge in words. While it is not the full amount, it is real funds. Likewise, this experience is not imaginary – it is a real taste of heaven. And, during times of Worship and Prayer, God would have His people experience His Manifest Presence and Shekinah Glory by being raised up, as it were, into the realm of the spirit to receive advanced tastes of heaven.

In another sense, it is more than “a tasting” which is going on. When we Worship and Pray “in the spirit”, the Scripture tells us that we are “coming to the heavenly Jerusalem” and joining in adoration with “myriads of angels, the general assembly, the church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven”<sup>74</sup>, as well as coming to the Father Who is seeking such worshipers<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> Acts 9:17. “Filled”, *pletho*, Strong’s # 4130

<sup>73</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:14

<sup>74</sup> Hebrews 12:22-23

<sup>75</sup> John 4:23

## ADDENDUM

### THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY/COVENANT: **BLESSING & CURSING**

- A. Regarding God's enemies: Cursing and death
- B. Regarding God's people: Blessing and life
  - **1 Peter 2:4-8**
  - **2 Corinthians 2:14-16**
  - Death for God's enemies and life for God's people.
    - 1 Samuel 4:21-22 "Ichabod ... the glory has departed ... because the ark of God was removed...."
      - Hebrew "Ichabod": *no glory*
      - Hebrew "kabod": *glory, abundant blessing*
      - 1 Samuel 5 – 8 The ark brought the curse of tumors upon the Philistines and the destruction of their god, Dagon
        - As did Christ on the cross "when He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through it."  
(Colossians 2:15).
        - **1 Samuel 7:1-2** The ark remained at the house of Abinadab in Kiriath-Jearim, and his son Eleazar kept the ark.
          - Hebrew "Kiriath-Jearim": place of wood i.e. the ark
          - Hebrew Eleazar: "the Lord helps"
          - Hebrew "Abinadab": "generous father"
          - 2 Samuel 6:11 When "the ark of the Lord remained at the house of Obed-Edom, ... the Lord (abundantly) blessed Obed-Edom and his household."
            - The ark represents Christ, in Whom "we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places".  
(Ephesians 1:3)