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The furniture - different aspects of entering into fellowship with God

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• *The lampstand*

• *The altar of incense*

• *The oil and the incense*

Once the basic building is put in position, next the ark, the table, the lampstand and the altar of incense were placed in position.

The Ark in the holy of holies was the special location of the presence of God^{□1} (see 25:10–22). Where the ark was, God was present. It speaks of His kingship and power. It tells of His holiness and inaccessibility, His royal decrees, His mercy because He may be approached through the blood of sacrifice. It all spoke of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross opens up a way for us to find mercy at His throne.

We remember that inside the tabernacle there were two rooms, and there was a place in the holy of holies where the ark was situated. There God was specially and visibly present in Israel. It was the earthly dwelling-place of God, an earthly copy of God's heavenly throne-room, an extension of heaven here on earth. We remember too that the tabernacle is a symbol of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, and that the holy of holies (where the ark was to be found) represented the highest blessing of the new covenant. When Jesus died the way into the holiest place was made open and the way into the 'new epoch' of the gospel was wide open. There is available a level of fellowship with God which is greater than what was known under the Old Covenant. The holy of holies stood for the highest level of fellowship of all.

So the ark stands for the experienced presence of God. The greatest blessing that God offers us in this world is what Hebrews calls 'entering into rest'. It is the highest form of fellowship with God. It is hearing God's oath concerning one's life's work. Hearing God's oath in one's own heart involves and includes a high level of fellowship with God. The ark and the holy of holies are a representation of it. It is when we are in the presence of God in the richest possible manner. Like the cherubim in the holy of holies we are worshipping God. We are finding the greatest conceivable mercy because we are present at the mercy-seat. The law is out of sight and we are not intimidated by it, although we know about it.

The furniture in the holy place represented different aspects of entering into fellowship with God. The first compartment has to be entered before you get to the inner compartment. There has to be fellowship with God before you can 'enter into rest'. **The table**^{□1} (see 25:23–30) represented table-fellowship with Yahweh. If the tabernacle was His house, the table was the place where symbolically He provided food for His people. The 'bread of the presence' represents the sustaining strength that God gives us as we have fellowship with Him. **The lampstand**^{□2} (see 25:31–40) spoke of wakefulness, life, fruitfulness, illumination. It represented the light of God which comes as the result of fellowship with God. The light burns continuously; since fellowship with God gives steady light. **The altar of incense**^{□3} (see also 30:1–10) represents someone else praying for us. It represents the intercessions of the whole sacrificial system.

Then there is mention again of the **holy anointing oil and the pure fragrant incense**^{□1}. The oil mentioned in 27:20, 21 was used to keep the seven-branched lampstand perpetually burning. The oil had to be the brightest and best that was available. The burning lampstand was placed in the holy place in front of the veil^{□2}.

□1 37:1-9

□1 37:10-16

□2 37:17-24

□3 37:25-28

□1 37:29

□2 see
Leviticus 24:1-3

• *Jesus – the light of the world*

• *Jesus – our ever-continuing intercessor*

• *The Spirit – our strength*

The blessings of close fellowship with God

• *Following a route that Jesus has already followed*

• *Fully experienced if we give God time*

• *New understanding*

• *Confidence*



• *Joy*

We remember that the altar of incense was used for offering incense every morning and every evening¹. In its fulfilment the altar of incense represents the praying of Jesus. The incense was offered to God daily, morning and evening.

The Christian lives upon the oil and the incense! For the modern Christian the oil and the incense represent (i) the Holy Spirit who enables Jesus to be the light of the world, and (ii) the ever-continuing intercession of Jesus whose presence with God involves His requests to the Father concerning His people.

The Spirit who fills Jesus and the sweet fragrance of His intercession are the greatest possible sources of strength for our lives. And His oil and incense then becomes our oil and incense. The anointing that was upon Him, He gives to us. The life of intercession that was (and is) His life becomes the greatest characteristic of our lives also.

All of these items of furniture (table representing table- fellowship with Yahweh; lampstand representing the light of God; incense representing someone else praying for us; oil representing that which enables us to burn brightly) speak of the blessings of living in close fellowship with God. This is the secret of ‘entering into rest’ or of ‘entering the holy of holies’. In the tabernacle one compartment had to be entered before you could get to the next compartment. There was no way of entering the holy of holies except via the holy place. Of course, only the high- priest could go there. For the Christian this means that entering the highest blessings of God (the holy of holies) involves following along a route that Jesus has already followed. He went into the holy of holies **first**. He has opened up the way for us to follow in after Him, into the highest blessings of fellowship with God. One has to travel along the route that God has ordained. He demands first that we spend time in the holy place. We shall never enter into the ‘holy of holies’ unless we do so via the holy place. Interpreted, this means, we shall never reap the full rewards of God’s oath unless we spend time in fellowship with Him in His fellowship-room. The table speaks of **time** with God. Spiritual meals are eaten leisurely in the dwelling-place of God. The lampstand represents God’s giving us **revelations**. He shows us things that we did not know. He is the light of the world, for us. He illuminates things that we had not seen. The altar of incense represents our **confidence** in praying through Jesus’ praying. We mix our prays with His prayers. His intercession makes our intercession acceptable to God. The brightly burning light and the sweet-smelling fragrance talk to us of the joy we find in God’s presence and the joy that God finds in our seeking Him.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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