

The Sanctity of the Tabernacle

Leviticus 24:1-9

I. Introduction

- A. The tabernacle was established as the place where Yahweh could dwell among his people. It reminded them that God dwelt in their midst and was with them.
- B. Its careful arrangement ensured that God could have fellowship with his people while protecting and exalting his holiness. It symbolized the divinely prescribed means of access to his presence.
- C. The tabernacle was the location of all the various offerings, and its central location among the people visualized its centrality in their life and worship.
- D. Israel's sacred calendar—outlined in ch. 23—set the yearly rhythm for corporate spiritual worship and solidarity.
- E. But lest they gain the impression that these seven festivals were the sum total of their spiritual obligations, 24:1-9 reminds them that their fellowship with God and the offerings outlined in chs. 1-7 were to be a regular part of spiritual life in Israel.
- F. In other words, worship could not and should not be limited to the annual feasts.

II. Exposition

A. Oil for Illuminating the Tabernacle (24:1-4)

- 1. A lampstand stood in the tabernacle. It was made of gold and stood on the south side of the holy place, just outside the veil to the most holy place where the ark of the covenant was located (cf. Exod 25:31-35; 26:35; 40:24).
- 2. The lampstand served several purposes:
 - a) It provided illumination for the holy place so that the priests could continually carry out their intercessory work. The lampstand was the only source of light in the holy place.
 - b) It reminded the people of Yahweh's continual presence among them (light being closely associated with the manifest presence of God). As it shined its light, particularly on the show bread, it was a constant reminder that God was with his people.
- 3. The high priest was responsible for maintaining the flames on the lampstand so that it burned continually. Both morning and evening, he trimmed the lamps so that the flame remained burning.
- 4. The people were responsible for providing the olive oil necessary to fuel the flame. In this way, the people took an active part in the tabernacle ministry. Although they could not enter the tabernacle themselves, they could ensure through their giving that its ministry continued and that the lampstand served its purpose.

5. In this way, the people were reminded that their active participation in tabernacle ministry (through giving oil) ensured that priestly mediation continued and God's presence remained with them.

B. Bread for the Tabernacle (24:5-9)

1. On the north side of the holy place, opposite the lampstand, was a table on which fresh loaves of bread were placed in two piles, with six loaves in each pile, for a total of twelve loaves.
2. Based on the amount of flour used for each loaf (two tenths of an ephah), these loaves were quite large and would be piled high on the table.
3. Frankincense was placed on (or perhaps alongside) each row and was burned as incense, serving as a God's memorial portion in place of a normal grain offering.
4. The high priest was responsible to replenish these loaves weekly on the Sabbath.
5. The bread served several purposes:
 - a) It reminded Israel of God's sustaining provision for them.
 - b) It reminded them of his continual presence, and so was known as "the bread of the presence" (Exod 25:30).
 - c) It belonged to the priests and was their portion from which they ate.
 - d) It represented the fellowship that God had with his people.

III. Leviticus 24:1-9 and the Christian

- A. At a basic level, this section reminds us that worship is a continual event and not something that we can relegate to a weekly worship service (cf. Rom 12:1-2).
- B. Theologically, the lampstand and bread take on important typological significance in the NT.
- C. The NT identifies Jesus Christ as our light. Jesus came and "tabernacled" with us (John 1:14), and he is "the light of men" which "shines in the darkness" (John 1:4-5). Just as God established his servant as a "light to the nations" (Isa 49:6), so Jesus identified himself as "the light of the world" (John 8:12).
- D. Jesus is the incarnate Word of God (John 1:1, 14). God's word, according to Ps 119:105, serves as a "lamp" and "light" for us as we aim as Christians to "walk as children of light" (Eph 5:8).
- E. The NT also identifies Jesus as our "bread" (John 6:35). As we eat of him, we take part in the life that God has provided through the heavenly bread. In the OT, the bread pictured Israel sustained through God's gracious provision of sustenance. In the NT, the bread becomes a picture of God's gracious provision of eternal life through Jesus Christ.