

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 7)

Summary: Christ Is The Way

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In one part of the world, there was a very tall rugged mountain. At the top of this majestic mountain is said to be a treasure beyond what anyone could imagine. Wealth, unlike any other on earth and rumor had it that not only was there wealth at the top of this mountain, but the fountain of youth was there as well.

The problem was that this mountain was so steep and jagged and beset by inclement weather, that it was virtually impossible to climb. There was a road—a path, really, a trail—made in ages past that led all the way to the summit; but it was a narrow trail, full of obstacles, and often covered with snow and ice. It was so treacherous that only the bravest of souls would attempt it. Legends alleged that only one man had ever made it to the top, and returned to tell the tale.

Now, there were a handful of young men who lived in a town not far from the base of this mountain, and they were full of adventure and not a little greedy. These men decided that they would pledge their lives to ascending to the top of that mountain, claiming the treasure, and drinking from the fountain.

A couple of them argued that they should work together, but disagreeing on how to do that, in the end they all decided to make the attempt alone.

The first of them decided to defeat the mountain by use of a hot air balloon. So, he spent the next several weeks putting his balloon together, getting his supplies and gear packed. Then he jumped into the basket of the balloon, and floated away. At first it looked like he was going straight for the mountain, bearing a straight course right to the top. But the higher he climbed, the colder it got, and the winds tugged his balloon here and there. And then on top of it all, the storm became violent and blew him away. He was never heard from again.

The second man, hearing of the first's misfortune, decided to take a different tack—he decided he would use a sled with dogs. He searched for the best and the strongest and the healthiest sled dogs he could find. He constructed a very sturdy but lightweight sled and packed lightly, knowing that he could then just make it right up there because these dogs were strong; and they would pull him right to the top.

Off he mushed, making good progress for a while. But as the mountain grew steeper,

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the path grew narrower, and the winds fiercer blowing snow into a great blizzard blinding him, he lost his way. Everyone assumed that he, his sled, and all his dogs had plunged over a cliff and perished. And so they had.

The third man, shaking his head over his friend's deaths concluded that they had been too undisciplined—too "flying by the seat of their pants" in their approach to this great challenge. He, though, would approach the mountain rationally, orderly, strategically, and cautiously. He spent several years doing his due diligence on the mountain, learning all that he could about the montane geography and weather conditions, the obstacles, the animal life, and anything else he could find out about it.

He reasoned out how he could overcome all of these things. He worked very hard to get everything just right. He made several attempts, actually, not just one, to climb the mountain. But he never got very far.

You see, at the first difficulty that he had not expected, he gave up saying that he needed to study it further. And down the mountain he would go.

Finally, the fourth man remembered what the other three had either forgotten or dismissed—the legend—the legend that it had been done before. He began to seek information about that original climber. He picked up tidbits here and there until he finally found an old book that told the tale.

Further research convinced him that not only had the original climber actually succeeded, but that he was still alive, and that he was still living at the top of the mountain. So, he packed up a few provisions, picked up his hiking stick, and began to walk up the trail. But he stopped after just a few feet and shouted the man's name, saying, "I need you to lead me to the summit!" And immediately, the ancient climber appeared ahead of him on the trail and told him to, "follow me, and I will take you there."

So they lived happily ever after.

Now obviously, this is a fictional tale, a kind of a parable. A parable is nothing more than a fictional story taken from quasi-real life that is designed to impart a spiritual truth. The truth of this story that I have given you is the same principle that my sermon series on "Approaching God Through Christ" has been all about.

Our Savior Jesus Christ is the way and the means to our relationship with God the Father. If you wish to reach the treasure at the top of the mountain, the only way to get there is to follow the Trailblazer Himself.

If you will, please turn to John 14:6. Early in Christ's sermon to His disciples there on that last fateful Passover evening, He makes a very astounding statement. He says to him, here, after Thomas had asked Him a question about knowing the way, how can we know the way? Jesus said to him,

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

I find this to be extremely intriguing.

It is astounding to think about just the simple truth that is in here. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

To the proud human mind (which we all possess, wanting to do everything our way, achieving what we want) this statement is beyond reason. It is really beyond comprehension. Really, to a human being without the Spirit of God, it is impossible to think that one could approach God only one way, through one other Person. It does not make much sense to the human mind. But it is nonetheless true. This is the way that God and His Son have set things up. This is the method and the means—this is how it is supposed to be done.

The human nature—that heart that is within us that is both deceitful and incurably wicked—believes that it can do anything it wants, and so sets its mind and will to do it. That is all it takes—even to find the secret to immortality! As a matter of fact, trying to find the secret to immortality is the center of man's religious quest. Men really do not care about having their sins forgiven. All they care about is living forever.

But God says, "No!" Your sins must be forgiven first, and then you can live forever.

But like I said, trying to find the secret to immortality, trying to find a way to eternal life is what man is seeking to do in all of its religions. I should also say that he has tried every conceivable way to do it, too. I mean, just look at all the different kinds of religions that there are! It is not just false Christianity, not just Judaism, not just Islam, not just Hinduism, not just the various philosophies or quasi-religions that pass as philosophies, but there is also animism, demonism, and all kinds of other "isms" that people have come up with over the course of time in order to try to find a way to live beyond the grave. Some of them are really weird and strange, too. They are grasping for immortality.

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But oh so few have been led to the right path. And I must emphasize that one is *led* to the right path. One does not just find it. We heard Ryan already today talk about John 6:44. The Father draws a person to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ puts them on the right path. And that is the only way that it can be done. So, it is beyond human nature to find the right way.

Jesus' words here, then, in John 14:6 strike at the very heart of man's stubborn independent nature—a nature that believes it has the right to accomplish whatever it desires and in its own way to boot.

But Jesus Christ says, "No." There is only one way to have fellowship with the Father, and that is His way. This drives people crazy.

It used to be in America, that almost every Christian knew that there was only one way "to heaven" (as they would put it), and that is through Christ. We could look at the Scriptures, and it says that there is only one name by which we may be saved. But as things have liberalized over the last 100 years or so, this idea that there is only one way has come under severe criticism, even among the churches.

So now you have mainline Protestant churches who hardly blink an eyelash at the fact that their ministers proclaim that there is more than one way to get to heaven, that you do not have to be a member of their church; you could be a Jew, or a Hindu, or a Muslim blowing up innocents. But there is always a way through that other religion to get to heaven.

But there is not.

The Bible says that there is only one way to approach God, and have eternal life; to be saved. This is the way that God has opened up through Jesus Christ.

Looking at this verse—John 14:6—commentators provide several interpretations of the phrase, "the way, the truth, and the life," as well as the individual elements within them. However, whatever we decide their meanings to be, together—the way, the truth, the life—cover the entirety of the means to a lasting successful relationship with God. And of course, they all center on Jesus Christ.

So, let us take a moment to look at these terms—the way, the truth, and the life.

THE WAY

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Overall, *the way* describes the fact that Jesus is the sole—only—and complete means of approach to God. And that has been essentially the theme of these sermons in this series. However, the way specifically points to a manner, or a method of doing things. There is a way to build a house. There is a way to get to San Jose. Do you know the way? It is a manner or a method of doing things—living life. It is a path to walk.

He is our chief example of how to live. That is the way that we are to live. His way is the way of life. If we follow what He did, if we take the path that He took and opened up for us, we will arrive at the same destination that He reached—the Kingdom of God. He had by a resurrection eternal life. And, if we follow the way that He forged—the manner of living—then, we will reach that same destination.

So the way emphasizes behavior in many respects. Behavior, not just in individual acts, like opening the door for an elderly lady, or any other act of doing the right thing, but also the direction of one's life. It must be behavior and direction of life at the same time.

When you walk down a path, you are doing something—walking—but you are also going in a direction. So, it is not just the individual acts of behavior, but also the direction that you are going. And He is the perfect example of both things.

The way, then, emphasizes behavior.

THE TRUTH

This covers everything He did, because everything He did reflected the truth. He embodied God's truth. He was the Word. He was the Spokesman who came with the revelation of God. He is the One who has revealed everything in the Bible—Old Testament and New Testament—He is the Revelator of the truth.

So, every word He spoke was true, and all of His teachings, then, are not only factual, but are necessary and helpful. (We must live by every word, do we not?) Therefore, they are necessary and helpful in the growing into the character image of God and entering the Kingdom of God.

Years ago, I gave a sermon on truth, and I came to the conclusion in that sermon that it is really talking about what is real and reality. We think that we can touch ourselves, we can touch the things around us, and we think that they are real. But when it comes down to it, what is real is what is eternal—what is real is what will last forever, what is real is what God is, does, and thinks. And so, Jesus Christ is the embodiment of that reality. He lives forever. His truths are timeless and eternal. His truths are what is going to take

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us into the Kingdom of God—that is what is real. He is the only reality that is worthwhile.

His Word and example, then, according to Scripture are perfectly accurate representations of God, what God knows, and what God wants us to know. All these things have been revealed in the person, life, work, and words of Jesus Christ. That is the truth of the matter.

So, when it all comes down to it, this point, *the truth*, emphasizes spiritual knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Perhaps, the one word that could encapsulate them all is revelation. All that God has revealed is the truth.

So now, we have behavior as the way. And now we have knowledge (and all that it implies) as the truth.

THE LIFE

What is *the life*? Some feel that this may be the broadest, and the most ambiguous of these three elements—the way, the truth, and the life. Some think of it as, "His was the perfect life to lead." This is true.

Some others say that He is the embodiment of the abundant life. This is true also.

However, these ideas are basically covered in the way accounted above. So, there must be a difference here, or Jesus would not have used life as well. Those ideas that His was the perfect life to lead, and that He is the embodiment of the abundant life are the things we would consider to be under the rubric of the way.

Now, it seems more plausible that Jesus means that He is the Life-giver. Remember, one of the first things that was written in the book of John, "In Him was life," meaning life inherent. And not only life inherent, but He was given the power to impart life not only in the physical creation; but once He went through and became our High Priest, and ascended to God's right hand, He had the ability then to impart spiritual life to all the rest of us. So, in Him was life.

He is the only one who has gained immortality through the resurrection from the dead. And it is through Him that we are able, through the resurrection from the dead, to also, someday, have immortality. Notice in John 14,

John 14:19 Because I live, you will live also.

He had just told them that they would not see Him in a little while, and they did not quite understand what He meant. They should have, but they did not. He was going to die. But, He also knew that that death was only temporary; He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Then He would live again. And because He would live again, they would live also. He had forged the way for eternal life. And that is what this means. He is the One who gives eternal life. He is the way to eternal life. As a matter of fact, to us He is the eternal life.

We come to know Him—and what is coming to know Him and His Father mean? Eternal life with them (John 17:3).

What we have here are three elements that are necessary in order to approach God. So then, we have behavior, we have knowledge, and we have eternal life. We have that link to eternal life, which God gives to us through His Spirit. It is that spiritual life that we need—that other spirit that is given to us that allows us to communicate with God and Jesus Christ.

We can be good people can we not? We can know a lot by study. But without that final element—the life—it is all worthless, because that gives us the connection with the Father. And all three of these things are supplied by Jesus Christ. He is the key to all of them.

So back in verse 6 where He said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me," He is giving us a summary statement of these three elements of behavior, knowledge, and godly life through the spirit. All three are necessary ingredients for entering the Kingdom of God. You must have right knowledge, right behavior, and eternal life given to us through Christ.

Notice a few pages back, in John 5,

John 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

Re-read that and think of the three elements—the way, the truth, and the life—and see if you can find them in this passage.

John 5:24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into

judgment, but has passed from death into life.

Now, they are not said in the same fashion, but they are there. First He says, "He who hears my words." That is how we get knowledge is it not? Then He says, "And believes in Him who sent Me." Most people think of belief in terms of mere consent. But the Bible does not teach that belief is merely consenting to something. The Bible teaches that belief must be accompanied and followed by obedience, because if you do not do what you believe, then you do not really believe it. And so, this is the way and behavior—the way of life and direction of life that we saw there in the way.

Already now, we have the truth and the way. Then Christ mentions the word life twice toward the end of this verse. We have indeed passed from death to life when we were given the Spirit of God. We were given that little bit of earnest of eternal life—the promise of eternal life—if we continue in the way.

Jesus Christ, as the Mediator of the New Covenant, which we saw in one of those sermons regarding Hebrews 8:6 and Hebrews 9:15, is the central focus of all three elements—the way, the truth, and the life. As the Mediator you would call it then the overall term. He is the One who is in the midst of—He is the Mediator—He is in the middle of everything that is involved in approaching the Father.

Now what we saw in the previous six sermons on the furnishing of the tabernacle is in reality a further expansion on these three elements—the way, the truth, and the life. As we saw, a walk past each of these pieces describes the path to draw near to God on His throne. That is how it is set up. God is there in the Holy of Holies, on the mercy seat, which represents His throne. We have to walk from outside the camp all the way to the veil. So each item we walk past as we take this little journey expresses in a different way part of the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. So what we have in the tabernacle and the courtyard of the tabernacle is a full scale picture or portrayal of Jesus Christ as the way (specifically) to approach and come into fellowship with the Father. It was all laid out there 1400 or so years before Jesus Christ walked on this earth as a man.

But the symbolism was already all there for them to see, and for us to go back and look at and take lessons from.

Now, what we are going to do for the rest of this sermon is to summarize each one of the pieces, again, just to show you by walking the path again how it all works. Most of it is a reiteration of what we have heard in the past six sermons. But maybe putting it all in one package will make it easier to see.

THE BRAZEN ALTAR

We walk in from outside the camp of Israel. We begin walking toward the center, and we finally make it to the tabernacle. And once we pass through the gate, there, we come into the courtyard. Immediately we are confronted with the huge brazen altar of sacrifice. It would seem very large, because it fills up a great part of this courtyard. It dominates it. It is 8 feet square and fairly substantial, especially when you add the 5 feet height, with a ramp leading up to a ledge that encircled it. Besides this, you cannot miss the roaring fire in the midst of it. And, you would also notice the smell of the animal carcasses being consumed upon the altar.

It would assault many or most of your senses, except your sense of taste. You would not be allowed eat the sacrifice if you are not a priest. (But we will be priests, so maybe we could partake of this table, according to Paul in Hebrews 13.)

We would be assaulted in our eyes, according to the huge size of it, and its color; as well as the activity going on around it.

We would smell something very pleasant and savory in the cooking of the meats.

We would most likely feel the heat from the fire.

We would most likely hear the priests in the work, the crackling fire, and the prayers made involving the sacrifice.

Turn to Mark 10 for a summary statement regarding the altar of sacrifice:

Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus Christ died for us, for our sins, as Hebrews and I Peter tells us. And He did this so that we could be ransomed and redeemed from the penalty of sin. So He became the sacrifice for sin, which is seen here in the brazen altar. Without this first crucial step, everything else—the whole path beyond—would be meaningless. We must first be forgiven of our sins. There would be no approach to God, no relationship with God, and not even the slightest chance for eternal life. And so, this huge altar was placed first on this pathway so that we can understand how big and huge this sacrifice of Christ was and is for us and our eternal life. It starts everything going. Without it, our lives are meaningless, because we would sin; we would live out our lives, and we would die in

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our sins. The penalty would have been paid, but we would have paid it ourselves with our own body. So then, there would be no chance for an afterlife because it had not been redeemed. No one else had paid it. We paid it. We are dead. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. We are lost—without a hope.

But He, our Creator Jesus Christ, became our Savior by paying the ultimate price to provide pardon to us. And that gives us hope. That allows us the chance for eternal life. It opens the way to God's presence behind the veil, because Jesus Christ (when He went to the stake) was righteous and sinless. His righteousness, then, not only paid for our sins, but His righteousness covers us before God. And so, we can then come before God's presence as if we were Him—totally holy and righteous—covered by His blood.

So, not only was the bigness of the altar, and all of that, representative of the fact that they were going to have to put animals up there for burnt sacrifices, but it was also the symbolism of just how big this step is in our eternal lives.

I Corinthians 5:7 For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

THE BRONZE LAVER

Just a few steps beyond the altar is the bronze laver. It is a caldron shaped vessel, probably highly polished, because the ladies had donated their "mirrors" for this. Mirrors at this time were highly polished bronze or brass plates. This was bronze and most likely shiny. It had a large bowl filled with fresh water. I surmised that there were spigots underneath for the priests to draw water from this bowl to wash their hands and feet, and this they had to do before engaging in any of their duties. They had to be clean.

The laver was strategically placed between the brazen altar and the door of the tabernacle because whichever place a priest had duties, he had to first go to the laver and clean up before going to do his assignment. If his job was to do the morning sacrifice, first he went to the laver and then started the duties. Then, if he needed to go inside the tabernacle, he would wash again and then go do whatever it was. It was very conveniently placed.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it.

This is obviously the brazen altar, right? He gave Himself for it.

Ephesians 5:26-27 That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

So now we see what the laver represents—Jesus Christ as the One cleaning us up through the instructions given in His Word. And, as we respond to the washing that He gives, we are purged of any remaining sin. We are set apart as pure and undefiled, as His Bride—a glorious bride—not having spot or wrinkle.

You see, the main cleansing was done on the brazen altar. That is where our past sins were forgiven, and we come before Him spotless covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.

But we still must live after that point. We live human lives. And, for most of us we have many years of life after this point. There is absolutely no way that any of us, as polluted as we are by this world, by the ways that we have been brought up, by the influences that we have had, that we are going to stay clean and pure after we have been cleaned up by Christ's sacrifice.

So, there must be a means that we can be continuously cleaned up, and made more pure, more righteous, and more holy as time goes on. That is the responsibility of the laver. You see, even though he had already gotten his bath that morning, every time a priest started a new responsibility, he had to go and wash again. Certainly he had walked from where he had been to the tabernacle and the laver. And in just walking, as we see in the footwashing ceremony, even though we shower or bathe before coming to the ceremony, we still wash our feet. It is the same way with what happened there in the tabernacle. The priest had to be clean every time he performed a duty.

This happens with us. We have to be constantly re-washed, re-cleaned—cleaned up more, and more, and more, and more, as we go on in our Christian lives. So, what the laver represents is not the cleansing of justification—that was found in the brazen altar. No, this is the continual cleansing of the sanctification process during our life of conversion.

So, Jesus not only cleans us up at the beginning with the sacrifice that covers us with His blood, He continues to clean us up with the washing of water by the word—His instructions and examples, by us continually coming to Him, the Father, for forgiveness, coming to Him for instruction and correction, constantly being purified and made more

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righteous.

He is doing this for two primary reasons. The first is to present us holy before God, and the second is to prepare us to assist Him in His great work in the Kingdom of God. So, the cleansing not only works to make us holy before God so we can be accepted, but also we have a job to do in the future, and He wants us to be ready for it. And to do that job, we have to be pure as He is pure as it says there in I John 3:3.

THE DOOR

There is one piece of furniture that we did not talk about very much. We did talk about it some in the sermon regarding the table of showbread; and that is the door. Remember, you have to get through the door to get into the tabernacle.

So, as we walk from the laver toward the tabernacle, we would find a fabric screen, door, or veil before us. We would have to go through this door in order to get inside the tabernacle. The door was a woven curtain. It was fifteen feet square, a rather large curtain. It was primarily blue with threads of purple, scarlet, and linen that was likely white in color. So, it had flecks of these colors in the majority blue.

Anyone desiring access to God must pass the door.

John 10:9-10 "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

We are all familiar with doors are we not? We probably used a half dozen or more of them already today just walking through your home or coming into this building. So we all know doors. We use them without thinking. Dozens of times every day. And not just doors in buildings, but there are doors on cars, cabinets, and many other things—any place where there is a space that needs to be accessed, there is a door to it.

Jesus says that He is a type of door. Every time you look at a door, if you think about it, you can think about Jesus Christ, because He is the door.

Doors provide access to some space. They also provide protection.

Many of you have dead-bolts on your front door, because that door is protection against

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those who are outside. If you do not want them to get in, then you lock your dead-bolt, and then the door protects you.

But doors also are separators.

Say the children are loud, and you do not want to hear them. What do you do? You go to a place with a door, enter in, and shut the door behind you. (Or, you make them shut their door.) So the door separates one place from another.

Doors not only let people in, but they can let people out to let them do what they need to do, because life is not lived inside all the time. You have to go outside to do a lot of things. And so, a door oftentimes needs to swing both ways, letting people in or out—giving that freedom.

So, our Savior does all these things. He provides access to the Father and access to a lot of other things too—all the other things that come with our relationship with them, including eternal life. Certainly, He provides protection. He is there to be our defense against Satan and his world. He is the One who separates us from this world. He is that boundary, you might say. We can be safe behind Him because we are separated from the world. And if we are a true Christian, then we are different and separate. That is because of Christ—we are like Him. He said that if they hated Him, they will hate us, too. That separates us from the world.

And so as the door, He separates us from all others who are not Christian.

Of course, He also provides us freedom—freedom to go in and out. This does not mean in and out of the church, or in and out of a right relationship with God, but it means that He gives us the freedom within His law and structures He has given us to live life in an abundant fashion. So, we can go in when we need to and also out when we need to. We have this freedom of access at all times, and we can then live our lives within the boundaries that He has set.

The door represents Jesus Christ in all these areas.

THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD

Going inside past the door, safely inside the tabernacle, immediately to our right as we enter the holy place we recognize the table of showbread. It is made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Everything inside the holy place is made from or overlaid with gold. Immediately, this tells us that we are in the home a very wealthy, powerful, dignified

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individual.

This table is not very large, maybe the size of an end-table. On this table is stacked twelve loaves of unleavened bread. On top of these are small golden cups filled with incense that has been burned on them. Also upon this table are a pitcher and a couple of cups of wine.

Actually, when you stand back and look at it, it looks like a very small dinner service that God has put out—a meal or snack to refresh ourselves.

John 6:32-35 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

So Jesus is the true bread of life. The table of showbread focuses on the bread, even though the wine is there. The bread is the focus of this table.

Christ later says in this same chapter that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood. Notice that in this case, He calls Himself the bread of life, but He does bring in the wine as well. Eat the bread, drink the wine. That is what was on the table of showbread.

Obviously the Jews were just horrified that He said this, because they thought He was talking about Himself and cannibalism of some sort. Of course, they always took things physically when He meant them spiritually, so they misunderstood a lot things. He was talking in a spiritual sense about eating His flesh and drinking His blood as we do in the Passover service. We eat a piece of unleavened bread, and we drink a little bit of wine, which we are told is the New Covenant. So the bread and the wine—His body and blood—when we partake of it, represents our acceptance of the New Covenant with Him. It represents our acceptance of His sacrifice for us.

So eating and drinking of Christ is a symbolic act which shows that we agree to the terms of the covenant, and we accept the work of atonement that He has done which are necessary for us to attain unto eternal life.

So, we eat His flesh, we drink His blood, and we have now signed on with Him

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according to the agreement between Him and us to be His people in the family of God.

In other words, if we want to be in God's presence for ever, we must ingest and accept what Christ provides for spiritual life.

Now, I have always associated the bread with ingesting God's Word. But that is not found here. That is found in the next one. The bread and the wine represent the covenant, and our acceptance of His sacrifice.

THE MENORAH

Now, as we look left on the south side of the room, we see the seven branched menorah—candelabra, candlestick. Like the other pieces, it is made from pure gold, and stands about 42 inches tall and perhaps 30 inches wide.

If you remember, I spent some time explaining all the cups, knobs, and such. But essentially it had a central stem with three branches on each side that resembles a tree, that I said may represent an almond tree.

At the end of each branch was a golden lamp. This lamp was filled with pure olive oil with a wick, and it was the only means of light in the entire tabernacle's holy place. It was to be kept burning all the time.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

II Corinthians 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

These two verses together pretty much says it all.

The same God who commanded, "Let there be light," as the re-creation began also commanded light to shine upon us in the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came, then, not only to do all those other things that He did in terms of His sacrifice, but He also came to give us His instruction, and also to leave us an example of how to live—both of which we need to become children of God.

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 7) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

And because Jesus is the true light of the world, we do not have to worry about those scary things of darkness. We can have our path lit as we approach the Father. It is always good when walking along a path, and you do not know what might be there, to have some light with you.

It says back there in Psalm 119, "Your word is a lamp unto my feet." And that is truly what He is for us. He is the Word, and He is the Lamp who lights the way for so that we can see things—what is coming, or obstacles—to see the truth of the matter.

Thereby, our approach to the Father can be smooth if we follow Him, and then we can lay hold of the promise of eternal life.

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

Now, directly in front of us centered in front of another blue veil embroidered with cherubim, the veil of the Holy of Holies, is the altar of incense.

This piece of furniture was also made of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold. It was 18 inches square and 36 inches tall.

Everything seemed to be about 36 inches tall. It is not quite what most people expect. You would think that you would find huge things, but what they had in the tabernacle was quite small, especially to the things outside, like the brazen altar which was quite large.

Like the brazen altar it had four horns, one at each corner. And we saw that the officiating priest would burn five pounds of incense on this altar every day—half after the morning sacrifice and half after the evening sacrifice. The smoke and aroma would waft over and up toward the mercy seat, representing our prayers before God.

Romans 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

The Spirit being talked about in verses 26-27 is actually Christ Himself, as Paul also says in II Corinthians 3, that the Lord is the Spirit. That is who we are talking about. He is the One, as our Mediator, Advocate with the Father, sitting there at His right hand, mediating for us; letting God know what we are really asking for, giving us what we need.

So when we do not have the words to express what we require, or if we have no idea what we need, He does. He has lived this life. We could go to the book of Hebrews and find that He has been through what we are going through. He has had the temptations that we are going through. And so, He is a compassionate High Priest. He has lived this life. He has died the death. He knows the pains, the struggles. And so, He can tell the Father, who has not had this experience, what we need. He is there. He has been in the trenches.

And I am sure that the Father, being who He is, understands what we go through better than we think. But, Jesus Christ is there just in case to say like in one of the parables, "Let us fertilize this one for a while, and prune him, and give me some more time with him," as it says. And the Father is ready to accede to the wishes of His Son. He is there as our merciful High Priest and Advocate before the Father—our lawyer as it were—making the case for us, getting us the help that we need.

So, we can see that Jesus Christ is with us all the way, even before we ever were. We were all born within this last century. But, He was with us from the very beginning. He was certainly with us when He gave Himself for our sins. He gave Himself for the sins of all mankind for all time.

And so, He shows the way in His sacrifice. Then, when we are finally called, He shows us the way and cleans us up. He provides the covenant. We make the covenant with Him. And we accept those terms. He provides the light that we need to see all along the way. He is there when we pray, so that we can help in our time of need.

Turn to I Timothy 2 where Paul mentions that Timothy should pray for all men, that we might lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and reverence.

I Timothy 2:3-6 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, and sacrificed Himself so that He could become our Savior, High Priest, and King. He now sits at God's right hand as our Advocate, performing all of these services that we have seen throughout the tabernacle furniture for us so that we could have a relationship with the Father. Without Him we would have nothing, could do nothing, and would be nothing.

John 12:26 "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also.