

“Yet I hold this against you:
You have forsaken the love you had at first.”

Revelation 2:4

HIDDEN MANNA

As we get started with chapter three, it is important to understand that “the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched” is in Heaven (Hebrews 8:2, KJV). In the Book of Revelation, the beloved disciple tells us that he “did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Revelation 21:22). When we look at the illustration of the heavenly throne room, please keep in mind that it is likely symbolic. All the parts of the temple have been fulfilled through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is what we see in the picture below.



When we actually arrive in the New Jerusalem, however, I believe we will see the Lord sitting on His throne (4:2). The ark of the covenant from Heaven will likely be His throne (11:19). It may also extend to either side where we may find the two altars. The altar of sacrifice is pictured on our right, while the altar of incense is on our left.



I am not completely sure whether we will see both altars in the city, but the Lord has included them in the illustration to show us how He fulfills them. The beloved disciple, however, mentions Heaven's golden altar, which is the altar of incense (Revelation 8:3). Therefore, I think it's more than likely that the altar of incense will be in the New Jerusalem.



Verse 3 tells us that
“another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God's people, on the golden altar in front of the throne.”

And, come to think of it, the beloved disciple also hints of the altar of sacrifice. He says, “Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne...” (Revelation 5:6).

*Please note that
the lamb is lying
down on the altar.*



The heavenly temple will not have a separate room for the holy place or the most holy place, for Heaven itself *is* the most holy place. Jesus will be accessible to all. His throne will be in the center, so that all people, angels, and living creatures may worship Him from all around (Genesis 2:9; Revelation 4:2-6).

In the last chapter, we learned about the white stone. I believe this stone may get placed before His throne in the New Jerusalem. If the altar of incense is visible, then it is possible that the stones may find a permanent place there. The point is that we will understand the depths of heavenly worship at that time. Our service to the Lord in the Holy City will be perfect and have purpose. Everything we do will have significance.

Garden of Eden

Whenever I start a new chapter, I always gather all my

notes for that particular subject. Late last night, I began to jot down topics of interest in a new notebook. Since I'm kind of old-school, I still write many things by hand. My final thoughts, however, usually come together on the computer. So, while I was upstairs getting ready for bed, I prayed the following. I said, "Lord, what exactly *is* the hidden manna?" I know it represents Jesus, as well as the manna from Heaven, but how does all of it tie together? Suddenly, it was as if a lightbulb appeared above my head like in an old-fashioned cartoon. I will do my best to explain.

The Lord brought me to Genesis 3, which tells the story of the fall of man. In verse 21, "the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them." An animal sacrifice was necessary to clothe Adam and Eve, to cover their nakedness because of their sin. Let's read the next verse. It says that "he must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever" (v. 22). If Adam and Eve happened to eat from the tree of life, they would live in that fallen state forever. Therefore, they had to leave the garden. Verse 24 says that "after he [the Lord God] drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life."

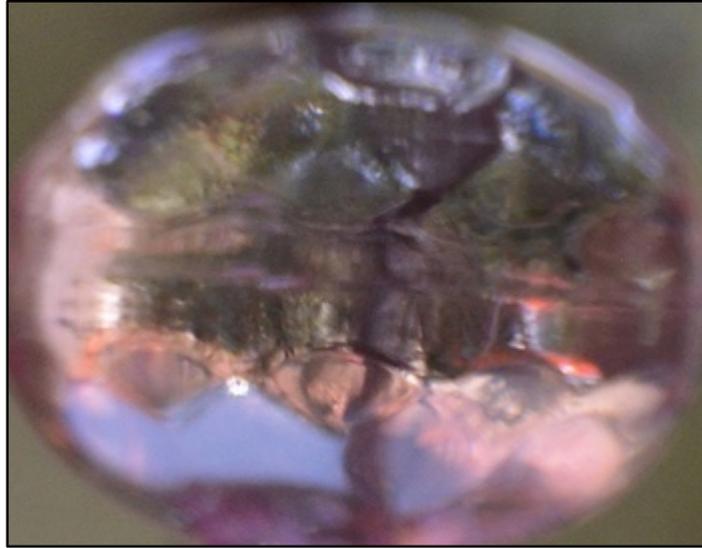
First, I would like to point out that Adam and Eve, before the fall, had everything they could ever want or need. They had perfect fellowship with the Lord. They had one

another. They ruled over amazing animals. There was an abundance of nutritious food. Plus, it was a beautiful place to live. Within this perfection, however, they still felt that something was lacking. Adam and Eve felt like they were missing out on something. I believe this is the root of the problem. This is the reason why they left their first love.

Modern-day Christians sometimes feel like they are missing out as well. Some may feel like they are missing out on the latest phone, the latest music, or perhaps the latest kind of church. Like King Solomon said, “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). We all have a tendency to want a little more. It just happens to get packaged a little differently from generation to generation.

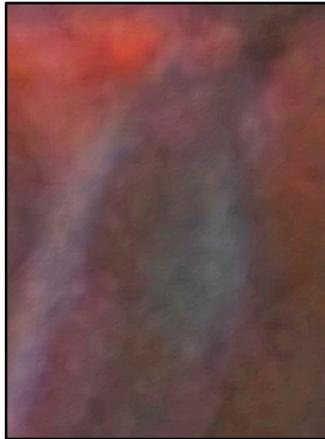
When the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, they grumbled about God’s provision. They said, “If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!” (Numbers 11:4-6). This story certainly hits close to home. If we had been in their shoes, I’m sure we would have complained too. Here they had perfect food from Heaven. God rained down heavenly bread for them to eat. It was free, easy to collect, and relatively easy to prepare. And yet it wasn’t enough. They felt like they were missing out on fish, cucumbers, and other tasty things. Even though the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, for a moment they wished they were back in

bondage just so they could satisfy their flesh. How often do we give up God's best just for a moment of carnal indulgence? Is it really worth it? Of course, it isn't. The flesh is flesh. It goes after what it wants when it wants it, even if it is through the imagination or through words.

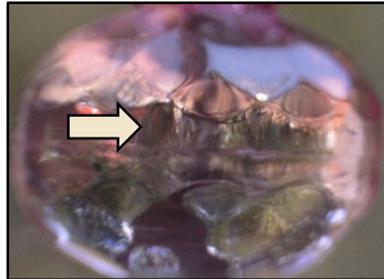


As we have already learned, the church in Ephesus had lost their first love. Their hearts had likely been drawn to other things. So, Jesus tells the church to do the following: (1) Consider how far you have fallen, (2) repent, and then (3) do the things you did at first (Revelation 2:5). Even today, if the church does as the Lord instructs, He will reward those who diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus says, “To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7). Humans have not seen the tree of life since Adam and Eve had to leave the garden. Therefore, to see the tree of life, not to mention eat from it, is a big deal.

In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."



I like the picture above since it represents the Lord as our Shepherd-King. The arrow points to Him in the main picture.



Please note that Jesus is wearing a purple robe. Also, if you look carefully, you will see another face within the bluish color. I believe this represents the Father.

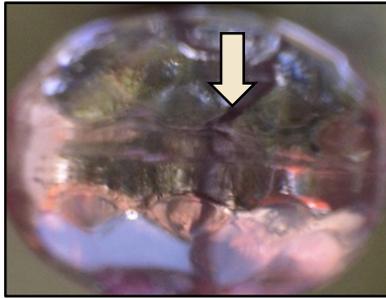


When Adam and Eve left the garden, the Lord placed cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). The King James Version says, “to keep the way of the tree of life.” I cannot help but think of Jesus, who is “the way and the truth and the life.” By protecting the tree of life, the plan of salvation was guarded and kept safe.

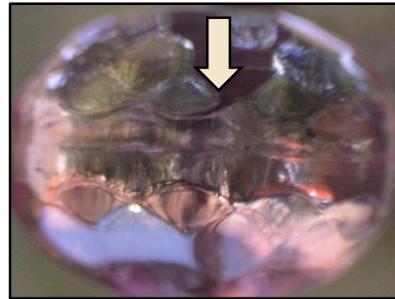
The first time we see the cherubim in Scripture is right after the fall. Then, we see them in the tabernacle and temple. Their image was woven into curtains made from finely twisted linen as well as blue, purple, and scarlet yarn (Exodus 26:1; 2 Chronicles 3:14). When Solomon built the temple, craftsmen carved cherubim on the walls (2 Chronicles 3:7). Two olive-wood doors leading to the inner sanctuary also had cherubim, palm trees, and flowers (1 Kings 6:31-32). It is interesting to note that the millennial temple will have intricate carvings of cherubim and palm trees as well (Ezekiel 41:25).

The ark of the covenant is perhaps the most well-known article from the tabernacle and temple. The atonement cover had a gold cherub on each end (Exodus 25:19). Their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover (v. 20). This is symbolic of the cherubim in Heaven. In verse 22, the Lord says to Moses, “There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.” The ark of the covenant was a model of God’s throne (Hebrews 8:5). In Heaven, He sits enthroned

between the cherubim (Psalm 80:1; 99:1; Isaiah 37:16). It is there that He gives commands, judges the nations, and, of course, shows mercy.



West Side



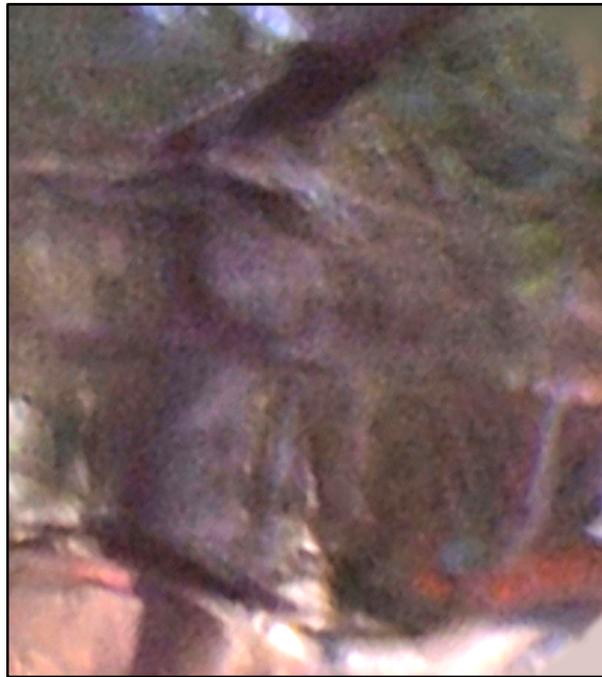
When we rotate the two main pictures to the west side, we see a very large angel with a sword in its sheath. The angel is near the center of both pictures. He is in front of the tree of life.

*The angel's wings
look like a plane
or a bird.*

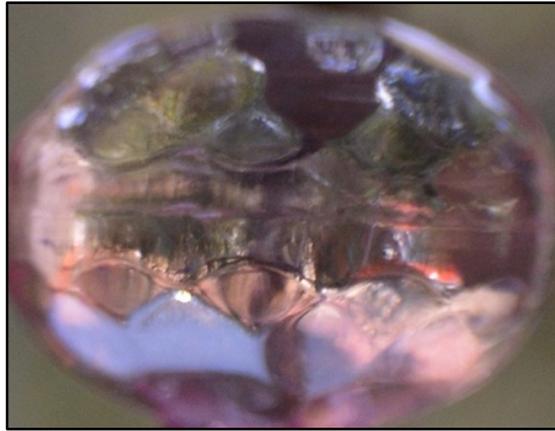
*He is also very
tall in comparison
to the people on
the right.*



As we already know, when Adam and Eve sinned, they had to leave the garden (Genesis 3:24). God placed cherubim and a flaming sword on the east side to guard the way to the tree of life. I find the picture of the angel with the sword interesting since it is similar to the Garden of Eden. The angel is standing at a place where east meets west. The floodgate, in a sense, has been opened and living water is flowing to the earth (Zechariah 14:8).



The beloved disciple describes the river of the water of life. He says that it is as clear as crystal and flowing from the throne of God (Revelation 22:1). On each side of the river stands the tree of life (v. 2). As already noted, it could be one enormous tree or, perhaps, several smaller trees being fed by the tree of life. I tend to think that it is one enormous tree. Please see the picture on the next page.



Notice how the river (at the top of the picture) is in between the leaves of the tree of life.

It is as if the tree is a large umbrella that reaches across to cover the land on either side. Please keep in mind that the picture is impressionistic. The greenery represents the treetop on the west side, and it represents the land on the east side.

With Adam and Eve, the curse came when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. With Jesus, however, we find blessings as we partake of the tree of life.

One of the most important images in the miracle pictures is of a cross. The angel's sword looks like a cross.



It also looks like a cross when turned right-side up.



The King James Version tells us that “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Galatians 3:13). The tree in this verse is the cross of Christ. This is where Jesus died for our sins. He is the only one who kept the Law perfectly. He never sinned in thought, word, or deed. Since God has designed the Ten Commandments to go inside of the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:16; Hebrews 8:5; Revelation 11:19; 15:5), it makes sense that He will judge from this place. Only Jesus kept the commandments perfectly, so it is only through His death—the sacrifice of the Perfect Lamb—that we find forgiveness. Therefore, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we have access to the tree of life.

I must take a moment to mention that if you have yet to accept the gift of salvation, and you would like to, the following verse is very helpful. It says, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). I believe the best prayer is the one from your heart, so please take a few minutes to talk with the Lord.

Isn't it interesting how cherubim and a flaming sword were placed on the east side of the garden to keep the way of the tree of life? According to the Strong's Concordance, the Hebrew word for "keep" is *shamar*. It means "to hedge about as with thorns." The curse, of course, brought forth thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:18). And, as we already know, the cherubim and flaming sword protected the tree of life. In a sense, the tree in the Garden of Eden was hidden from human sight much like the most holy place was hidden by a veil.

The ark of the covenant was placed within the holy of holies, also known as the most holy place. And above the mercy seat, between the two cherubim, is where God chose to meet and commune with man (Exodus 25:22, KJV). Verse 20 says that they "shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat...." The Hebrew word for "covering" is *akak*, which means to "entwine." It also means "to hedge in." Therefore, the ark of the covenant was "hedged in," while the way of the tree of life was "hedged about."

Last night I decided to do a word study on the flaming sword. Please hang in there with me as we look at both words. I guarantee it will be worth our time. First of all, according to the Strong's Concordance, the Hebrew word for "sword" in Genesis 3:24 is *chereb*. It is "a cutting instrument (from its destructive effect), as a knife, sword, or other sharp implement."

The Hebrew word for "flaming," however, took me by

surprise. It is *paradechomai*, which means “to accept near,” “admit” or “delight in,” and “to receive.” If you remember back to the last chapter, the word “admit” was also used to describe the white stone. Apparently, it was used as a ticket of admission during Bible times. So, as I thought about the meaning of the flaming sword, it suddenly occurred to me that it could represent an “acceptable sacrifice” or a “pleasing sacrifice.” Swords or knives, of course, were used to cut into a sacrifice. For example, when the Lord made a covenant with Abram, He told him to take a heifer, a she goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon (Genesis 15:9, KJV). He cut the animals in two, although he did not cut the birds, and he laid the pieces against one another (v. 10).

There are several other things in the Bible that were “divided.” For example, in the beginning “God divided the light from the darkness” (Genesis 1:4, KJV). Then, when Jesus died, the veil of the temple tore in two (Matthew 27:51). When Jesus returns one day, He will stand on the Mount of Olives, and it will be such a powerful moment that the mountain will split in two from east to west. Half of the mountain will move to the north, while the other half will move to the south (Zechariah 14:4).



In the two main miracle pictures, you can see the crack in the foundation. It runs from east to west.

I find it very interesting how the last verse of chapter three describes the cherubim and flaming sword. Then, in chapter four, we immediately learn about Cain and Abel. Genesis 4:2 says that “Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.” In time, they brought their offerings to the Lord. Cain brought some fruit of the ground (v. 3), while Abel brought “some of the firstborn of his flock” (v. 4). The Lord respected Abel’s offering (KJV). We could say that it was an acceptable sacrifice. It was pleasing to the Lord.

Also, fire was present in some of the Israelites’ offerings. Of course, we have already learned about the altar of sacrifice and the altar of incense.

I would also like to briefly comment on the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel. He was trying to tell the people that they were worshiping false gods. Two altars were presented in this story, one for Baal and one for the True God of Israel. The people sacrificed a bull, shouted to Baal from morning till noon, and danced around the altar, but nothing happened (1 Kings 18:26).

When Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord, there was a definite order to how things were done. He took twelve stones, one for each tribe, and built an altar in the name of the Lord (vv. 31-32). Then, he dug a trench around it and arranged the wood (v. 33). Elijah cut the bull into pieces and placed them on the wood. He had the people pour four large jars of water on the bull and the wood. Since they did this three times, there was a grand total of twelve large jars of water (v. 34). Verse 35 says that “the water ran

down around the altar and even filled the trench.” Come to think of it, this reminds me of the river of the water of life, flowing from the throne of God (Revelation 22:1).

At the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah prayed, “Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again” (vv. 36-37). Verse 38 tells us that “the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.” God was pleased. He received everything Elijah had done in His name. It was an acceptable sacrifice.

Yesterday the Holy Spirit placed Isaiah 53:10 on my heart. Let’s take a moment to read it in the King James Version. It says, “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him.” Since I’ve often wondered about this verse, I decided it was time to do a word study. And I’m certainly glad I did, since I discovered something truly amazing. I have to say that this is my favorite thing that I have learned so far in this study. I learned that the Hebrew word for “pleased” is *chaphets*, which means “to be pleased with,” “desire,” “(have, take) delight,” “favour,” and “have pleasure.” You may see the similarity to “flaming,” which means “to delight in” or “receive.”

The next word has a serious meaning. It is the word “bruised,” which is *daka* in Hebrew. It means “to crumble,”

“bruise,” “(literally or figuratively) beat to pieces,” “break (in pieces),” “contrite,” “crush,” “destroy,” “humble,” “oppress,” and “smite.” How do we even begin to process all that the Lord Jesus endured for us?

As we have already learned in this chapter, the cherubim and flaming sword kept the way of the tree of life. Simply put, they protected the way of salvation, which was fulfilled in Jesus. He died on the cross, a tree, so that we may have access to eternal life, which is represented by the tree of life in paradise. Jesus was not just *an* acceptable sacrifice on our behalf. He was *the* acceptable sacrifice. This is what pleased God. Jesus died once for all (Hebrews 7:27).

As previously noted, the white stone is similar to the flaming sword. A sword pierces and cuts, while a stone beats and crushes. Jesus was “wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5, KJV).

Interestingly enough, the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2). I couldn't help but think of Adam and Eve in the garden. When they sinned, they sewed fig leaves together for clothing (Genesis 3:7). I don't know exactly what kind of tree the tree of life happens to be, but I am beginning to think that it may have characteristics of several different trees. The point, however, is that Adam and Eve covered themselves, perhaps in search of a cure or, perhaps, relief from sin. They likely knew that healing was in the leaves.

I am the Vine

Since my mom used to have a vine theme in her home, this particular section reminds me of her. I certainly wish she could have seen the miracle pictures, but I know Heaven is even more beautiful.

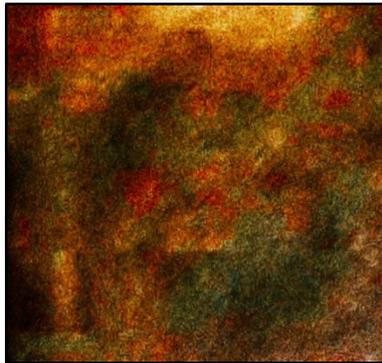


In John 15:1-2, Jesus says, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.” The fruit, of course, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

The man in the picture above is taking care of the bright red flowers, which could be the *anemone coronaria*, also known as the Jerusalem Red. People are blossoming all around him.

According to the Strong's Concordance, the Greek word for "vine" is *ampelos*, which is "a vine (as coiling about a support)."

The Greek word for "fruit" in this passage is *karpos*. It is fruit that is plucked. The root word, interestingly enough, is *harpazo*, which means "to seize," "catch (away, up)," "pluck," "pull," and "take (by force)." This word is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. The King James Version says, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (vv. 16-17). The word "caught" is similar to the word "fruit." It is as if the Lord will pluck His people off of this earth like pieces of fruit.



In John 15:4-11, the word "remain" means "to continue to abide." In 1 Thessalonians 4:17, those who "remain" are those who have survived. They are not lifeless branches that have been cut from the vine. Rather, they remain attached to Jesus, even when pruned.

In chapter one, we took a look at a few things that twist, wind, or whirl. I would like to add “coil” to our growing list of words. This particular word describes the heavenly vine, and, consequently, the tree of life. Please take note of the curves in the trunk of the tree.



What is It?

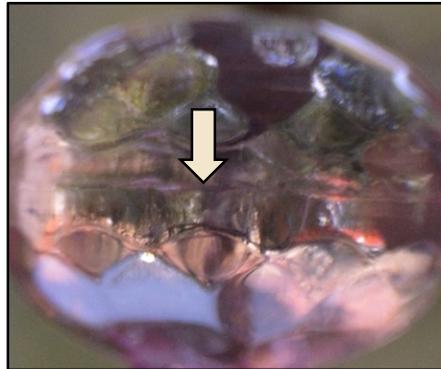
I know this chapter is a little longer than the other ones, but we are finally getting closer to an explanation of the hidden manna. I have often wondered, just as the Israelites wondered, what *is* this mysterious bread from Heaven?

All life, of course, flows from Jesus. The tree of life exists because God gives it life. When the Israelites received the bread of angels, I believe the heavenly grain fell directly from the tree of life in Heaven.

While I was writing *Looking Glass, The City God Loves*, I often wondered about the pearl gate. It looks like a pearl

on the east side. When we turn the picture upside down, however, it looks like a white substance is hanging on the side of the tree. I believe this substance *is* the hidden manna that we will receive one day (Revelation 2:17). It is an edible gum that comes from the tree's trunk.

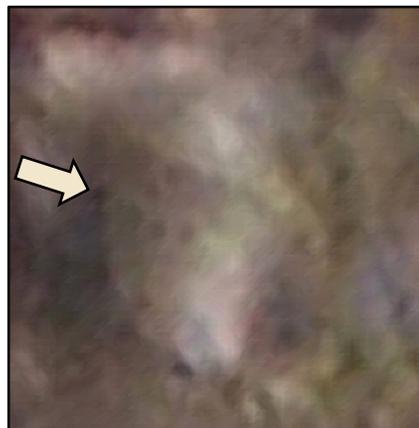
Remember, Jesus hung on a tree (Acts 5:30, KJV). He is the true bread from Heaven (John 6:32-33). The hidden manna, therefore, represents the Lord's body.



The arrow points to the hidden manna.

It is likely that the manna in Heaven grows on greenery, perhaps an extension of the Lord's vine. Since manna is like coriander seed, it may look something like the little beads on the pearl gate.

Here is the pearl gate on the east side.



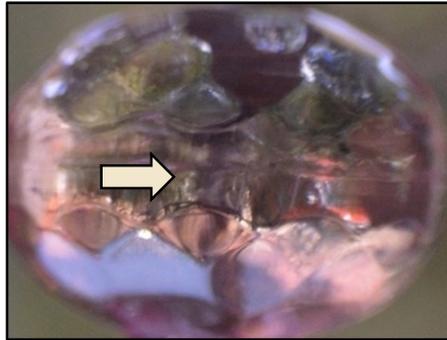
Incense & Prayer

I don't know about you, but I find this journey fascinating. As we learn more about the incense, my hope is that we will better understand prayer in God's temple.

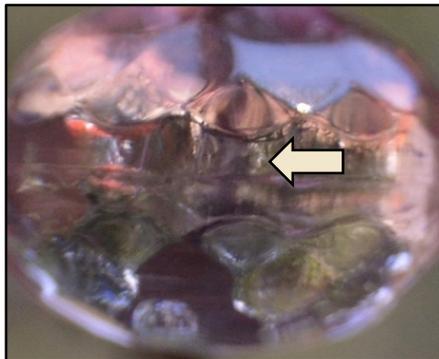
Since I am sensitive to fragrances, I do not know a lot about incense. However, I find the instructions for the spices extremely interesting. King David says, "May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice" (Psalm 141:2). As we have already learned, there has to be a sacrifice before one can enter the holy place in worship. Someday when we receive a white stone, my guess is that we will use it to grind the hidden manna. This process will represent the great sacrifice that the Lord Jesus made on our behalf. Then, I think we will place the white stone underneath the altar of incense. Since the hidden manna will have been finely ground, a part of it may be used as incense either at the altar of incense or, perhaps, within a censer before the throne of God.

Let's take a moment to look at the four ingredients within the holy incense. According to the King James Version, the first spice is "stac'-te." It is "an aromatic gum, specifically a drop." It comes from the Hebrew word *nataph*, which means "to ooze," "distil gradually," or "fall in drops." This reminds me of sap from a tree. It also reminds me of the manna from Heaven. Remember, God rained down the heavenly grain (Exodus 16:4; Psalm 78:24). The stacte spice, I believe, connects to land since it falls in drops to

the earth. Trees, of course, grow on land. When God created the heavens and the earth, the land and the trees were made on the third day, on the same day (Genesis 1:10-13).



The second spice is “onycha.” Some people believe bdellium is the ancient onycha. According to the Strong’s Concordance, the Hebrew word is *shecheleth*, which means the “peeling off by concussion of sound,” “a scale or shell,” and “the aromatic mussel.” Now that’s a strange definition, isn’t it? The root word is even more baffling. It is the Hebrew word *shachal*, which means “to roar.” It is like a fierce lion with its deep roar. How about that? You may wonder how on earth I could tie all of this together. I admit that I would have trouble if it weren’t for the Holy Spirit.



Let’s begin with a shell. As we know, the pearl gate is on the east side of the picture. Pearls, of course, come from a variety of shells, including the oyster and mussel.

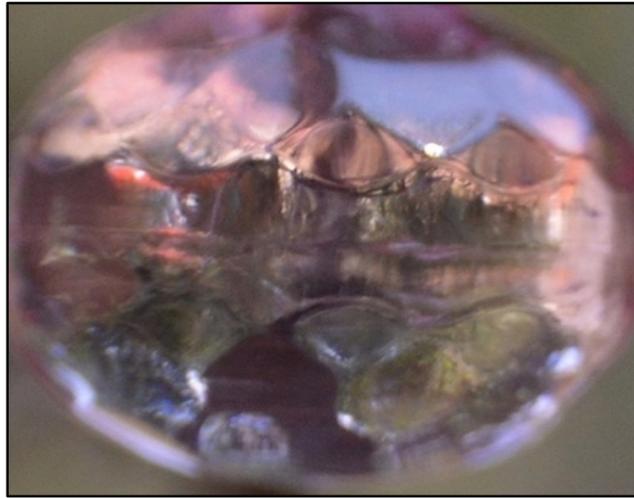
It is interesting to note that there weren't any pearls within the design of the earthly tabernacle or temple. My guess is that they weren't considered kosher since they come from a shell. In the New Jerusalem, however, all things will be pure and holy. The Lord says, "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5, KJV). I'd also like to mention that the pearl gate could represent how the curse has been lifted. We won't have to worry about whether something is kosher or nonkosher since all things will be holy and new.

The pearl gate, of course, represents the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-46). Jesus is the door. He is the gate to the kingdom of heaven (John 10:9). One day, when we pass through a pearl gate, may we remember the great price that Jesus paid for salvation.

The other night, I was wondering if I could find a verse that speaks of a gate and bread. Sure enough, Ezekiel 44:3 describes the Messiah and the millennial temple. The prophet says, "Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it was shut. Then said the Lord unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Is'-ra-el, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same" (Ezekiel 44:1-3, KJV).

The East Gate is special since the glory of God departed from the east (10:18). Ezekiel also sees the glory returning

from the east. The prophet says, “Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory” (43:1-2). I believe the photo below represents the return of God’s glory. The land is certainly radiant. I have never seen a *painting* quite like it.



When Jesus entered Jerusalem, some people believe He did so through the East Gate. Zechariah 9:9 says, “Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in all four gospels. It is my favorite Bible story!

It is also important to note that Jesus ascended to Heaven from the Mount of Olives, which is east of Jerusalem. And one day He will return from the east to this place (Luke 24:50-52; Acts 1:11-12).

The “prince” in Ezekiel 44:3 is Jesus. He is the One who will enter through the East Gate. Today this gate happens to be shut, which fulfills the prophecy. There is nothing, however, that can keep the power and glory of the God of Israel from entering through it. People can seal it. They can bury their dead in front of it. Nothing, however, can nor will stop the Lord!



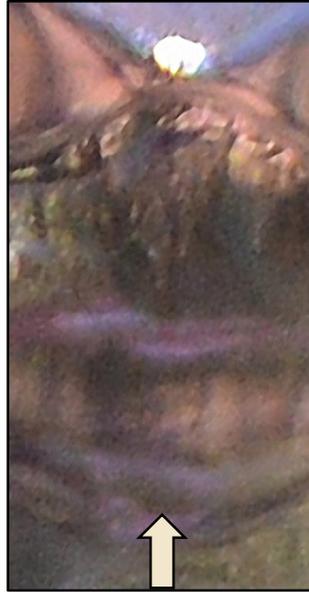
In Revelation 10:1, the beloved disciple sees a mighty angel coming down from Heaven. A little scroll was in his hand (v. 2). In the picture, it looks like he is reading it. Please note the position of his head, particularly his face. (The arrow points to the little scroll.)

Some people believe the mighty angel is Jesus, while others think it is the heavenly messenger, Michael.

This is where things get interesting. The mighty angel “planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke” (vv. 2-3).

The “land” reminds me of the manna that the Israelites gathered. In the King James Version, we read that “upon

the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground” (Exodus 16:14). And the “sea” reminds me of the pearl gate. Here we find a possible connection between land and sea, between manna and pearl. If we look at the beginning of creation, we also read how “the Spir’-it of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2, KJV). Here we find the word “face” once again. And the mighty angel is standing above the Lord’s face in the picture.



Mighty Angel

As already noted, the root word for “onycha” is *shachal*, which means “to roar.” The King James Version tells us that the mighty angel “cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth” (Revelation 10:3). We also read about the seven thunders that utter their voices, which points to the “peeling off by concussion of sound.”

If we jump back to the stacte spice for a moment, we learn that the root word also means “to speak by inspiration.” It

is possible, therefore, that the incense points to that which was, and is, and is to come. And since incense is often tied to prayer, the ingredients could represent how we approach the Lord when we speak to Him. For example, if we pray for His return, we can align our words with Scripture. A great example is a part of the Lord's model prayer. He says, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10, KJV).



The beloved disciple tells us that the mighty angel lifted his right hand to Heaven (Revelation 10:5). In verse 6, the angel says, "There will be no more delay!" This is in reference to the suffering and glory of the tribulation. The verse also mentions God, who created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that lives within each one.

Only God has the right to judge all that He has made. The "galbanum" spice will hopefully help us understand His judgment and mercy.

The Hebrew word for "galbanum" is *chelbenah*, which is "an odorous gum (as if fatty)." And the root word is *cheleb*, which means "to be fat," "the richest or choicest part,"

“best,” “fatness,” “finest,” “grease,” and “marrow.”

One important thing to remember is that the altar of sacrifice had three separate fires. Interestingly enough, the choicest branches of a fig tree were used for the second fire. This pile of wood provided the coals that were used for the altar of incense.

When Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, put unauthorized fire underneath the altar of incense, they actually died for their mistake (Leviticus 10:1-3). The fire was unholy and strange. It was from an inappropriate source, somewhere other than the second fire.

The reason God gave Aaron specific instructions for the tabernacle was significant. He wanted Aaron and his sons, as well as all the Israelites, to distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean (vv. 8-11).

God wants us to worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23). All intercession, whether prayer or worship, exists through Christ. Hebrews 7:25 says that He lives to make intercession for us. Jesus is our High Priest who truly meets our needs. He is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, and exalted above the heavens (v. 26). Only Jesus has the right to go before the throne of grace. Once we have met Him at the altar of sacrifice, then, and only then, is it possible for us to worship at the altar of incense.

As you may have already noticed, there are some controversial worship practices in the church today. For

example, people may want to experience God for personal pleasure or edification. The incense in the tabernacle and temple, however, was not for personal use. It was for the Lord. The Lord said to Moses, “Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the Lord. Whoever makes incense like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from their people” (Exodus 30:37-38). That’s not to say that we won’t ever enjoy prayer and worship. Of course, we will. We just need to keep in mind that it is about the Lord. We come to Him for His purposes alone.

It is important to note that the “marrow” is the fatty part within a bone. The King James Version says that “the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

There is nothing that we can keep hidden from God. He knows the deepest parts of our being. Spiritually speaking, He can cut through to the marrow, to the choice parts of who He made us to be. He knows us better than we could ever know ourselves. Every thought and intention is understood by our Creator. He knows what is good and what is bad. In and of ourselves, we are destined for sin and failure. In Christ Jesus, however, we receive the forgiveness we so desperately need. When we come to the Lord in prayer, we are given an opportunity to see things

for what they are. God allows us to embrace Him and His plan as we acknowledge our innermost parts. This is the choice part of prayer. It is where we get to the heart of the matter. There's no other place that we can go outside the throne of God. In verse 16, it says, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Let's take a moment to return to the mighty angel. In Revelation 10:8, John hears the voice from Heaven once again. The voice says, "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land" (Revelation 10:8).



John goes to the angel and asks him for the little scroll. The angel says, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but 'in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey'" (v. 9). I love the verse that says, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103). The Word of God is sweet to those who humbly receive it. The prophets, however, had a difficult calling since they had to deliver a bitter message to a fallen world.

You may have already noticed that the Lord told Moses to take *sweet* spices (Exodus 30:34, KJV). This was in reference to the spices' fragrance. Interestingly enough, the manna from Heaven tasted like wafers made with honey (16:31, KJV). The manna was obviously sweet. Then, in Revelation 10:9, the little scroll is described as being as sweet as honey. The common thread between the three—the spices, the manna, and the scroll—could be the tree of life. Some honey bees have their hives in trees. Therefore, it is possible that heavenly honey bees may make their home in this amazing tree.

Ancient books and scrolls were made from linen, cotton cloth, animal skins, papyrus leaves, and sometimes even the inner bark of trees. Therefore, the little scroll in Revelation 10:2-11 may have been made from the tree of life's bark. The arrow points to a scroll in the third picture.



I believe the Israelite's manna came from this glorious tree, and the hidden manna that we will receive one day will probably come from it as well. It will likely be an edible gum or resin. Once we grind it with the white stone, it may be used as incense, similar to the incense in the tabernacle and temple. The earthly ingredients, of course, represent

those that are in Heaven (Hebrews 8:5).

The promised land is often described as “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8; Numbers 14:8). The milk refers to the livestock and pasture, while the honey points to all the flowers and plants for the bees. Ultimately, a land with honey means there will be plenty of food for everyone because of the bees’ pollination. The fruitfulness of God’s kingdom, of course, will be presented both naturally and spiritually. Psalm 1:3 suddenly comes to mind. It says, “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (KJV).

Our last ingredient in the incense is probably the most well-known. It is “frankincense.” The Hebrew word is *bonnah*, which means “frankincense (from its whiteness or perhaps that of its smoke).”

On the Day of Atonement, Aaron would take a censer full of burning coals along with two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small (Leviticus 16:12). He would place the incense on the fire before the Lord, so the cloud of incense would cover the mercy seat (v. 13). The cloud, as we know, represents the Lord’s presence. Remember how He went before the Israelites in a pillar of cloud by day and by a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21)? And as the high priest entered the most holy place, he found protection in the cloud.