

The Veil (Exodus 26:31-33)

The veil covered the entrance to the Tabernacle's innermost room, called the Holy of Holies. Behind the veil was only one piece of furniture – *The Ark of the Covenant!* This veil separated the two rooms in the Tabernacle proper. The first room, the Holy Place – 30 feet long and 15 feet wide – while the innermost room, the Holy of Holies, was cube shaped, with each of its dimensions being 15 feet.

The veil that divided the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was upheld by four pillars of acacia wood, overlaid with gold (Exodus 26:32). The veil was much like the gate and the door, with one major difference – embroidered on the veil were cherubims (Exodus 26:31). Cherubims are angels that protect the holiness of God. On the veil they represented protection of the inner room where God was, and the penalty for anyone other than Moses or the high priest entering the Holy of Holies was death. The veil, therefore, kept everyone from God's presence.

After the wanderings and the establishment of the nation of Israel, Solomon built the first *permanent* building – the Temple – to house the furniture of the Tabernacle. The Temple also had a Holy Place and a Holy of Holies that were separated by the veil.

Matthew 27:50-51 tells us, when Jesus died on the cross, “*Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, He gave up His spirit. At that moment the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*”

Interestingly, Christ died precisely at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and, at that very moment the sacrifice would have been offered at the Brazen Altar. It was the week of Passover and multitudes of people would have been gathered around the Temple. The outer court would have been full of people crowding around the door and the gates that led into the Sanctuary.

Can you picture the scene? The priest, in his colorful vestments, takes the sacrificial knife, the lamb that is to be sacrificed is before the Brazen Altar – its blood is about to be shed at the hour of three. Multitudes were looking on! Behind the priest hangs the veil, hiding the Inner Sanctuary. There, cherubims spread their wings over the Mercy Seat. God, Himself, evidenced by His Shekinah glory, was there. People are bending to get a glimpse of the beautiful veil, with its colors of pure white, scarlet, and purple, embroidered with golden Cherubims. No one can enter behind that veil except the high priest, and even he could enter only once a year, and that only with blood.

The eye of every one there was directed toward that veil. The hour of 3 arrives, the priest takes the sacrificial knife and is about to slay the lamb, but behold, an unseen hand tears the veil apart from top to bottom! The Mercy Seat, unseen by ordinary man before, is open to view. The Cherubims are there; the Ark of the Covenant, sprinkled with blood, is there. *It is the Holy of Holies!*

Does the priest drop the sacrificial knife; does the lamb go free, as the Lamb, “*slain from the foundation of the world,*” dies for mankind?

The way into the Holy of Holies is now opened, as a new, and living, day is here. Man can never put up a veil to the way to God again. Never again can only a priest enter into God's presence. A way, whereby, humanity - oppressed and downtrodden - from all over the world, can find the way to the Mercy Seat - into the very presence of God.

Hebrews 4:14-16, *"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* And, Hebrews 10:19-22 states, *"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."*

Hebrews 9:8 tells us that during the Old Testament time, before Jesus came to die as man's sacrifice, *"the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest..."* The veil was only meant to be temporary until, the way to God was made clear by Christ and His ultimate sacrifice at Calvary.

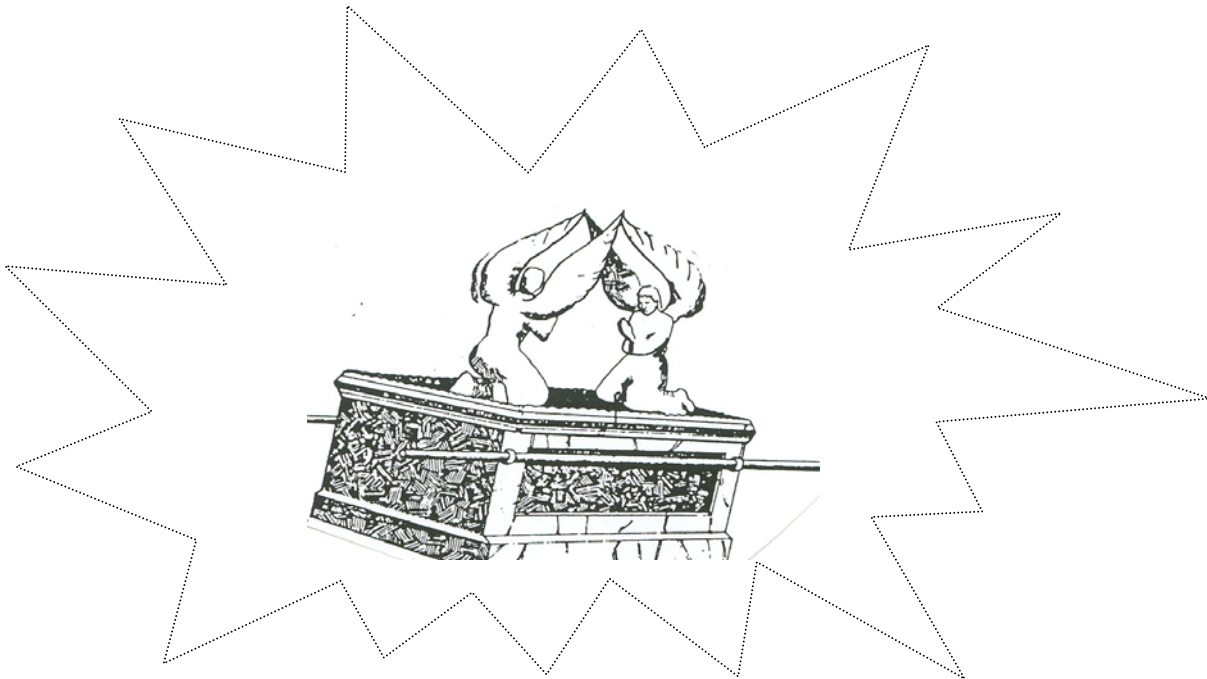
In Exodus 26:33, God said that they were to *"hang up the veil, that thou may bring thither within the veil the Ark of the Covenant."* (See Exodus 25:10-22)

The Ark of the Covenant was God's dwelling place in the Tabernacle!

The Holy of Holies was behind the veil and was the place of God. Two Cherubims, with outspread wings, gazing down at God's Mercy Seat, covered the Ark of the Covenant, becoming its lid, or cover.

Here was the purpose of the Tabernacle - it was that God might dwell in the midst of His people. God's Shekinah glory remained in the Holy of Holies, the rear one-third of the Tabernacle proper, where it was guarded with golden walls on there sides and a heavy veil on the inside.

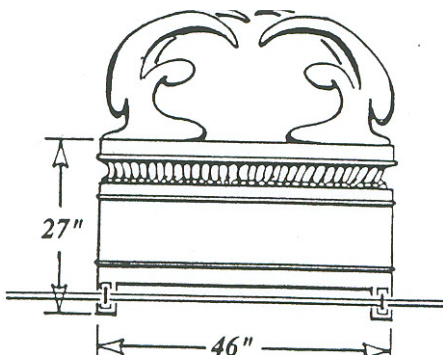
In this hidden, windowless room the presence of God dwelt with the children of Israel. Everything else about the Tabernacle was intended only to point men to this Holy room. Many people came through the gate with their sacrifices however they could go only so far. Many could not go past the Brazen Altar, or even to the Laver, much less into the Holy Place. They had to be represented by the priests, who could go into the Holy Place. However, only the high priest could go past the inner veil, entering into this most holy and sacred place - the Holy of holies - and even he could only enter once a year, on the Day of Atonement.



There, in the actual presence of Almighty God, over the Mercy Seat, was such an intense and celestial experience that even the high priest could only enter once a year, and then, only with the "*blood of atonement.*" The slightest mistake on his part could bring immediate death! The high priest wore bells on the bottom of his robe, so that those outside could hear him moving about and would know that he was still alive.

The Most Sacred Place

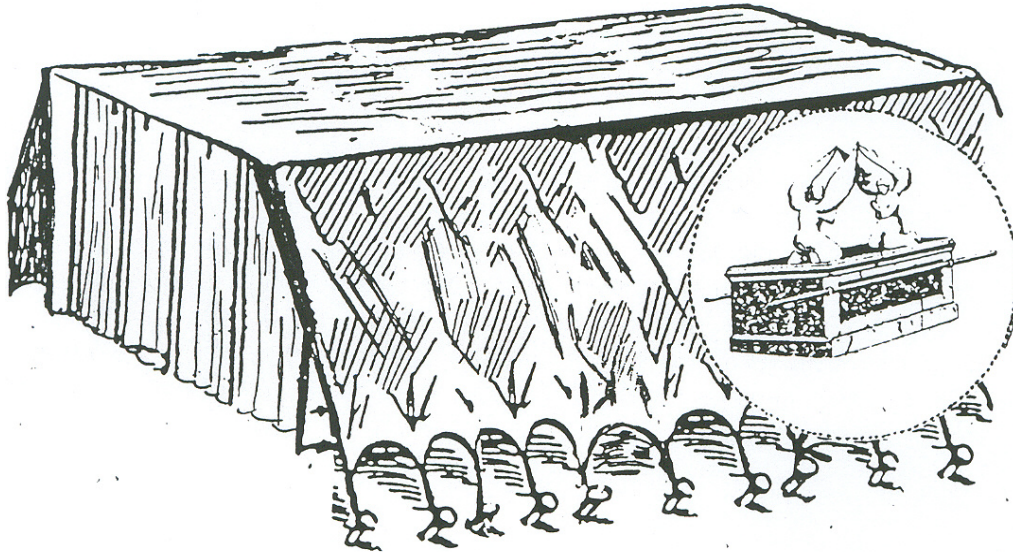
The Ark of the covenant and the Mercy Seat were actually two separate articles, very closely related, therefore often referred to as one. The importance of the Ark of the Covenant can hardly be overemphasized. The Bible makes reference to it more than 170 times, with such names as "*the Ark of the Covenant,*" "*the Ark of the Testimony,*" and "*the Holy Ark.*" It was a chest made of acacia wood and covered inside and out with pure gold. The top of the ark was a lid or covering made of pure gold - called "*the Mercy Seat.*" The ark, itself, was approximately 46 inches long, 27 inches wide and 27 inches high (Exodus 25:10-11).



There were four rings of gold through which the gold-covered acacia staves were placed for carrying the Ark while traveling (Exodus 25:12-14). The staves, or poles, were *never* to be removed from the rings, but rather were always to "*remain in the rings of the Ark*" (Exodus 25:15). The reason the staves were never to be removed was so that no one would ever touch the Ark of

the Covenant because the penalty for touching the Ark of the Covenant was immediate death.

Resting on top of the Ark of the Covenant was a lid of pure gold, the same length and width as the Ark. On the lid were solid gold figures of Cherubims (Exodus 25:18-19). God said in Exodus 25:20, *“And the Cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the Mercy Seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another, toward the Mercy Seat shall the faces of the Cherubims be.”*



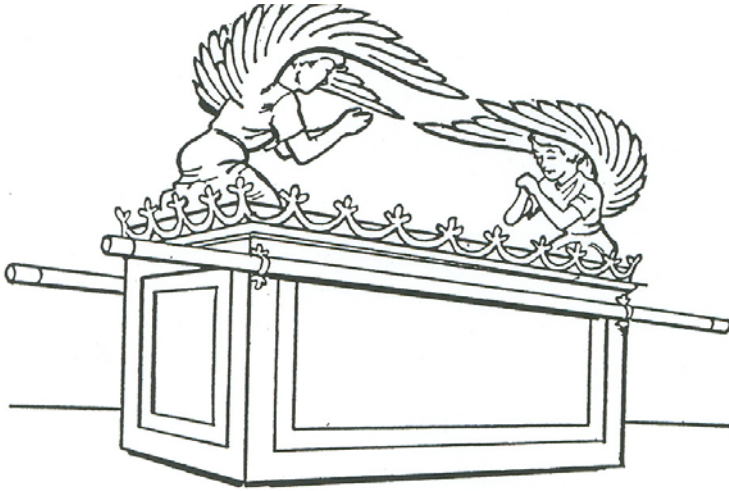
God said to Moses, in Exodus, *“There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the Ark of the Testimony (that is, the Ark of the Covenant) I will meet with you and give you all My commands for the Israelites.”* Numbers 7:89 states, *“When Moses entered the Tent of the Meeting (the Tabernacle) to speak with the Lord, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubims above the atonement cover on the Ark of the Testimony. And He spoke to him”* – (that is, *“ God spoke to Moses.”*)

The word *“Mercy Seat”* is translated from the Hebrew word, *“kapporeth,”* that, interestingly means *“a place of covering for sin.”* The English word *“propitiatory”* best conveys the idea intended by this word – meaning, *“making a propitiation for sin”* – or – *“appease or make provision the payment for sin.”*

On the Day of Atonement the high priest, Aaron, would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood of the sacrificed lamb on the Mercy Seat, thereby making atonement for the sins of the nations of Israel.

God is a holy God, and sin is a heinous offense to His holiness. Therefore, God’s holiness and justice demands that sin be fully punished, but because of His fathomless love – God has provided a way to justify the sinner and has made provision to forgive sin. This took place at the Mercy Seat, where propitiation was made for sin. However, the Mercy Seat was only a picture of Christ’s ultimate fulfillment.

John states in 1 John 2:1-2, *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense. Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”*



Exodus 25:20 states, “*toward the Mercy Seat shall the faces of the Cherubims be.*” These Cherubims were to look at the Mercy Seat where blood would be sprinkled to obtain forgiveness for sin. 1 Peter 1:12 says that Christ’s sufferings were things “*the angels desire to look into,*” – indicating that the angels of heaven yearn for the salvation of sinful humanity. Thus, we might better understand why, “*there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that*

repents (Luke 15:10). Angels are thrilled, overjoyed, and anxious over our salvation and we should be too!

There were three articles in the Ark of the Covenant (2 Kings 11:12; Exodus 16:33; Numbers 17:10 and Hebrews 9:4) These three articles were:

1. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ON TWO TABLETS OF STONE

The tables of the law in the Ark of the Covenant were reminders that Israel had sinners and needed the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat, or else they would be condemned. They were a continual reminder of God’s righteousness and man’s sinfulness. These tablets of the laws of God were a constant reminder that mankind could never keep God’s commandments, and that there must be a sacrifice for sin – (We, today, can only keep God’s law’s through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

2. A GOLDEN POT OF MANNA

This “*manna*” was the food that God had miraculously supplied to the Israelites during their wilderness journey. The word “*manna*” in Hebrew means, “*what is it?*” None of the natural substances can be identified as that which was provided to Israel by God. In Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses said that God, “*fed you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.*”

This manna, that God fed His people in the wilderness, usually spoiled if kept for more than one day, however this portion within the Ark of the Covenant was miraculously preserved for many years because it was a picture of something better than bread, that was to come down from heaven. Jesus said in John 6:49-51. “*I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manner in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If a man eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bred is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*”

Revelation 2:17 states, that his manna, "*hidden in the Ark,*" refers to the spiritual food that feeds our souls, that is the life of Christ Jesus.

3. AARON'S ROD THAT BUDDERD

Aaron's dead rod was nothing but an old dead stick to begin with, however, God miraculously gave it life (Numbers 17:1-11). It is an undeniable picture of resurrection -- *coming from death to life!* Like Christ, Aaron's rod rose to life and produced fruit. The resurrection life of Christ is ever present - producing God's glorious life within the believer.

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The Ark of the Covenant with its contents was the focal pint of the entire Tabernacle. In Leviticus 16 a detailed set of instructions is given concerning the preparations and ceremonies to be followed on the Day of Atonement. This was the most important day of the year for the Israelites because the high priest would atone for the sins of the nation Israel with the blood of animals. However, this had to be done once each year and was only a picture of Christ Who was to come and, by His blood, pay the price for the sins of the world.

Hebrews 9:11-12 states, "*But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*"

The Living Bible states it, perhaps, clearer to our understanding when it states, "*He [Christ] came as High Priest of this better system that we now have. He went into that greater, perfect tabernacle in heaven, not made by men nor part of this world, and once for all took blood into that inner room, the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled it on the mercy seat; but it was not the blood of goats and calves. No, He took His own blood, and with it he, by Himself, made sure of our eternal salvation*" (Hebrews 9:11-12, Living Bible).



# THE TABERNACLE IN THE WILDERNESS

Psalm  
105:39

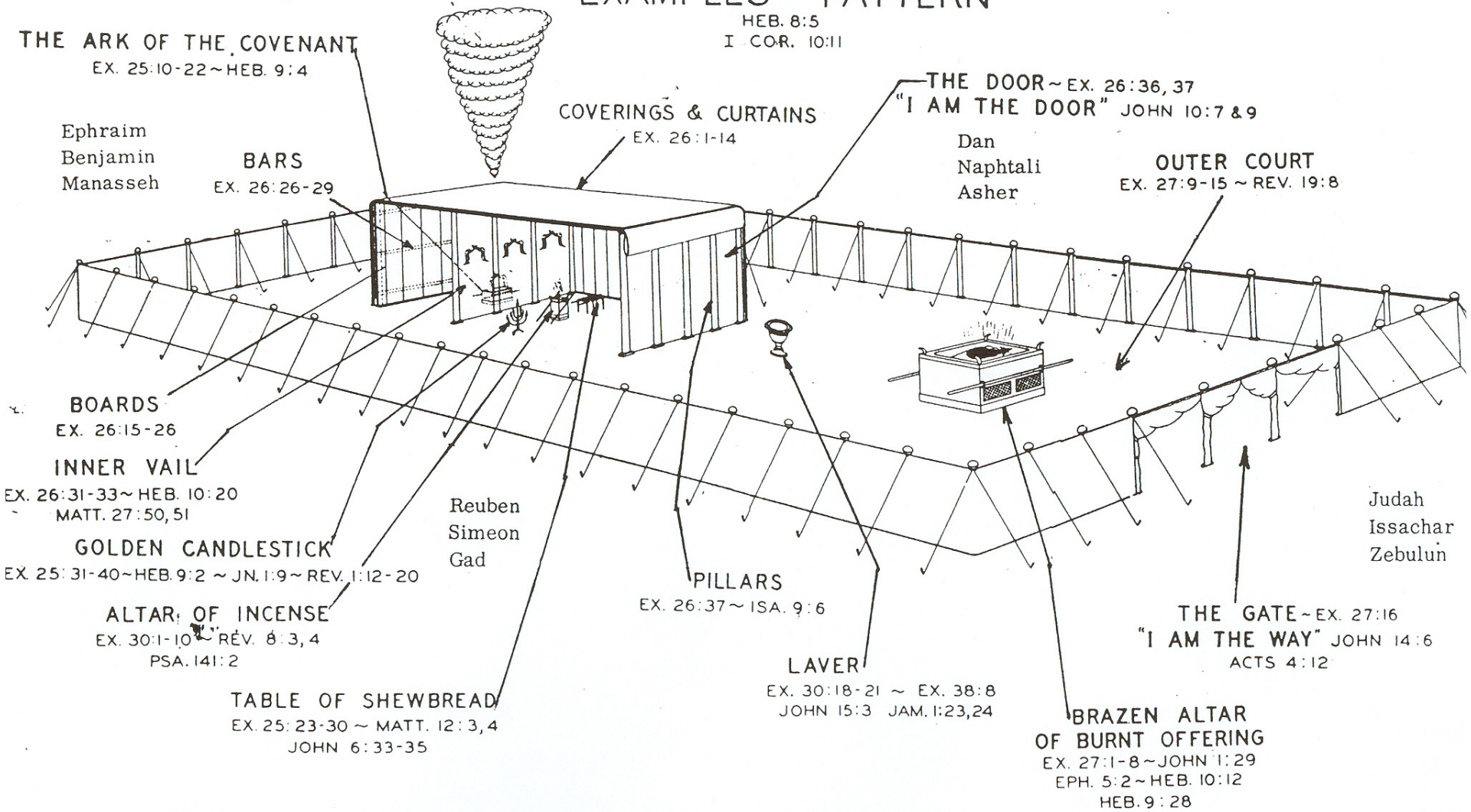
## A FIGURE A SHADOW

HEB. 9:8,9 & 24

HEB. 10:1

## EXAMPLES & PATTERN

HEB. 8:5  
I COR. 10:11



"FOR IT IS THE BLOOD THAT MAKETH AN ATONEMENT FOR THE SOUL" LEV. 17:11 ~ HEB. 9:22 ~ I JOHN 1:7