

Symbols of Christ in the Tabernacle of Moses

Various components of the tabernacle foreshadow aspects of Jesus Christ’s divine ministry and atoning sacrifice. These components include the tabernacle furniture (laver of brass, altars, lampstand, ark of the covenant), sacrifices (burnt, peace, sin, trespass offerings), foods (portions of sacrificial offerings, shewbread), sacred objects (jar of manna, tablets of the law, rod of Aaron), and diverse parts of the tabernacle (veil, horns of the altar). The rituals and performances (i.e., anointings, washings, sprinkling of blood, laying on of hands), too, typified Jesus Christ and His mission.

The tabernacle building itself, and later the temple of Jerusalem, served as types of Jesus

Christ. Many scriptures so testify. The Lord told the Jews, who were scattered among the nations, that He would be “as a little sanctuary” to them (Ezek. 11:16). Moses prayed, “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations” (Ps. 90:1). In his epistle to the Hebrews, Paul called Jesus “a greater and more perfect tabernacle” (Heb. 9:11). And the Lord Himself compared Himself to the temple when He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews, who thought that He referred to the temple of Herod, responded, “Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body” (John 2:19–21).

Tabernacle	Jesus Christ
Altar of Incense	Incense signified the prayers of the righteous. The altar of incense, located directly in front of the temple’s veil, specified that prayer (incense) and Christ (the veil) are the mediators by which one can approach God in the Holy of Holies (Ex. 30:1–10).
Altar, Sacrificial	The sacrificial altar is associated with blood sacrifices of various kinds, which pointed forward to Jesus Christ, the ultimate and infinite sacrifice.
Anointing with Oil	Anointings were performed in the tabernacle (Ex. 30:26–27; 40:9) and on its altar (Ex. 29:36; 40:10). Prophets (1 Kgs. 19:16; D&C 124:56–57), priests (Ex. 28:41; D&C 68:20), and kings (Jacob 1:9; Ether 6:22) were anointed in similitude of the Anointed One, who is Christ and the Messiah.
Ark of the Covenant	The ark, associated with Deity, brought blessings to believers of the Israelite faith (Josh. 3–4; 1 Sam. 7:1; 2 Sam. 6:2–17) and cursings to the unbelievers (Josh. 6; 1 Sam. 5:1–7; 6:19–20).

Tabernacle	Jesus Christ
Blood, Sprinkling of	The blood of sacrificial victims that was sprinkled on the temple altar, on Aaron and his sons, on the cleansed leper, and on the mercy seat (Ex. 29:16, 20–21; Lev. 14:7; 16:14) pointed to Christ’s blood (Heb. 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:2).
Horns of Altar	The lord is “the horn of . . . salvation” (2 Sam. 22:3), a possible reference to the horns of the altar, whereon was placed the blood of the sin offering (Ex. 29:12). Horns are representative of power and strength (1 Sam. 2:10; Ps. 75:10; Jer. 48:25).
Jar of Manna	The jar of manna was kept in the ark. Manna, which saved the children of Israel temporarily, represented Jesus Christ, the “living bread,” who saves His people everlastingly (John 6:48–51).
Lampstand	Various parts of the lamp related to Jesus: olive oil pointed to Christ, who is the One Anointed; light symbolized Jesus, who is the light of the world (John 1:9; 8:12); the seven branches formed a tree, representing Jesus as the tree of life; and the number of branches—seven—signified perfection, pointing to Jesus’s perfection.
Laver of Brass	Ablutions, or ritual washings (Heb. 9:10; D&C 124:37), symbolized the cleansing of the soul from sin; it was one method the lord employed to symbolize the washing away of the filth of His people (Isa. 4:4).
Mercy Seat	The mercy seat, or lord’s throne of atonement (Hebrew <i>kapporet</i>), was a focal point of atonement and kingship.
Rod of Aaron	The rod of Aaron was kept in the ark. The rod was a symbol of Jesus—His chosenness, His regal power, His priesthood authority, and His ability to give life (Ex. 4:2–4; 7:9–20; Num. 17:2–10; Ps. 23:4).
Sacrifices	Sacrifices were direct similitudes of Christ’s atoning sacrifice.
Shewbread	The bread, eaten by the priests, anticipated the emblems of the lord’s sacrament. Some scholars maintain that wine was placed alongside the bread. <i>Shewbread</i> literally means “bread of presence,” referring to God’s presence.
Tabernacle	The tabernacle anticipated Christ’s body, the perfect tabernacle or temple (Ps. 90:1; Ezek. 11:16; Heb. 8:2).
Two Tablets of Stone	The stone tablets, which were kept in the ark, represented Christ, who is the Lawgiver (Isa. 33:22) and the Word of God (Rev. 19:13).
Veil	The veil was representative of the flesh of the Savior (Heb. 10:20), showing that the crucified lord (the veil) stands between individuals and the presence of God.