

OLD TESTAMENT TEMPLE ELEMENTS IN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

COLUMNS

Christian churches sometimes have columns by the door. Often they are simply architectural choices based on the style of the building, but they do remind us of the massive Temple columns named Jakin and Boaz that were made of solid bronze.

COMPASS ORIENTATION

The Old Testament temple was aligned east-west. The entry was to the east, and the Holy of Holies to the west. The Bible says the Garden of Eden was in the East, so the symbolism was that God came from the east, so the Temple doors opened to face that direction.

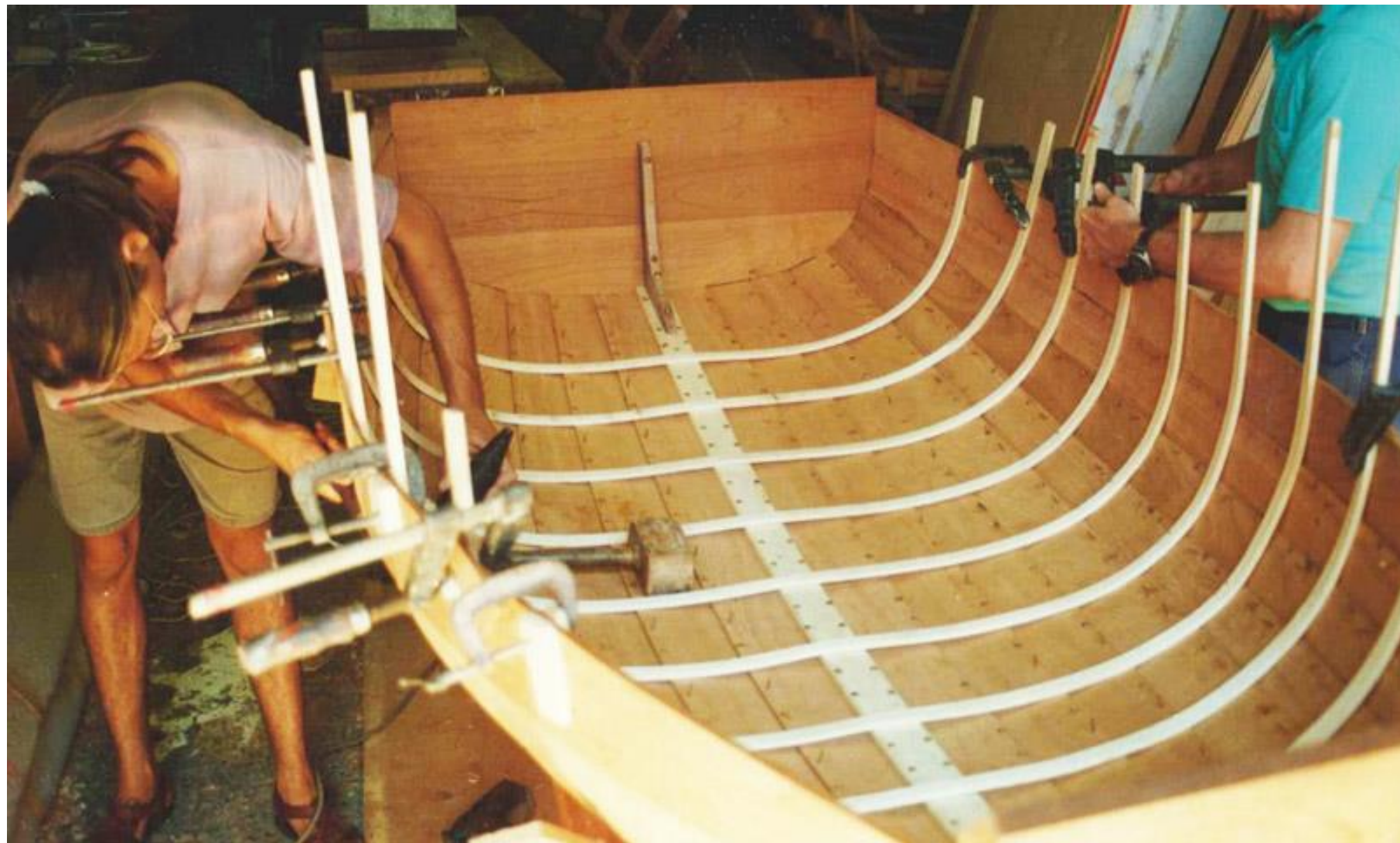
COMPASS ORIENTATION

In many Christian churches, the entrance faces west, and the altar faces east. The eastern orientation often leads to sunrise coming through a large window behind the altar. The light reminds Christians of the rising of the sun on the first Easter morning, and the rising of Christ, the light of the world.

THE NAVE

In Christian churches, the area that the congregation sits in is called the nave. This area is often rectangular, which echoes the shape of the temple. Nave comes from the Latin word *navis*, which means “ship”. Naves often have beams across the ceiling and/or wooden planks. This design resembles the hull of ship, and reminds Christians of God saving Noah and his family during the Flood.

THE NAVE



THE BAPTISMAL FONT

In the Old Testament Temple, the Sea was an enormous container of water. The Moveable Bronze Basins were filled with water from the Sea. This water was used for the ritual washing of the priests and the actual washing of the sacrifices.

THE BAPTISMAL FONT

In Christian churches, the Baptismal Font holds water to be used in baptisms, the washing away of sin.

Baptismal fonts often have eight sides, symbolizing the number of people who survived the Flood, as God washed sin from the world in Genesis 6-9.

THE CHANCEL

In the Temple, the Holy of Holies was a separate room that held the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was the visual representation of the presence of God. No one went into the Holy of Holies, except for once a year on the Day of Atonement.

THE CHANCEL

In Christian churches, the front area surrounding the altar is called the chancel. Unlike the Holy of Holies, people enter the chancel any day of the year. When Jesus died, the curtain to the Holy of Holies was torn open, showing us that because of Jesus, we can now approach God at any time and without hesitation.

Even so, during worship times, Christians often bow before entering the chancel, acknowledging the presence of God in his place of worship.

FLAMES

The Temple had golden lampstands that gave light to the building, but also reminded the people of God's light in the world.

FLAMES

Christian churches often have candles that are lit during worship to remind us of The Light of the World – Jesus. They also remind us of the Holy Spirit and the tongues of flame that rested on the heads of the disciples on Pentecost.

FLAMES

Christian churches also often have an “Eternal Lamp” or “Eternal Flame”, is burning at all times, symbolizing the constant presence and work of Jesus in the world.

THE ALTAR

The Temple had an Altar of Burnt Offering outside in the courtyard, and an Altar of Incense on the inside of the building. Both were used daily. The burnt offerings were used to pay for sin. The incense was used as a sacrifice and to pray to God.

THE ALTAR

Christian churches have altars that are never used for sacrifice, because Jesus has sacrificed Himself once and for all. For Christians, the altar is a reminder of Jesus' saving act.

Communion, where we receive forgiveness and strength from the body and blood of Christ, is served from the altar.

PRECIOUS MATERIALS AND ARTWORK

The walls of the sanctuary were lined with cedar, on which were carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers that were overlaid with gold -1 Kings 6:29–30

The temple was richly decorated with precious building materials and with the work of skilled artists. The symbols reminded the people of God's goodness and of his majesty. The magnificence of the temple would help people remember that God is the Almighty Creator and Ruler of the universe.

MATERIALS AND ARTWORK

Many Christian churches are built with precious materials that are worked into beautiful shapes and symbols. Some of the more common decorative elements of Christian churches include:

- ❖ Stained glass windows
- ❖ Carved wood and stone
- ❖ Tile work
- ❖ Paintings and icons
- ❖ Statuary

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

During and after our tours of the churches, you will have a checklist of the items we've discussed. You will mark off the things you see, and make some notes about them.

Remember to have a pen or pencil with you.