

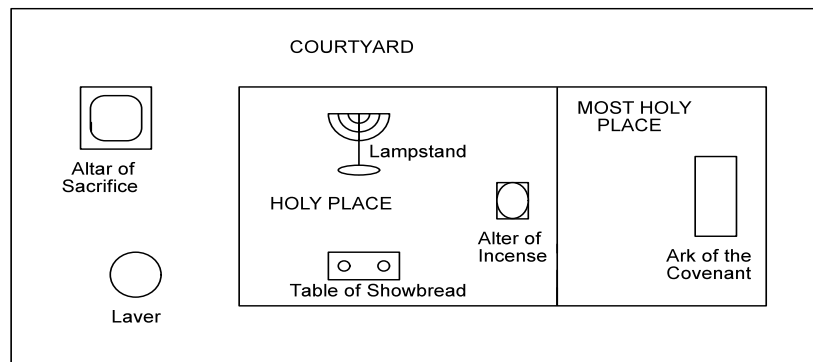
The Sure Word Bible Studies *Lesson 4*

God Wants To Be Our Friend

In a previous lesson we learned that when Adam and Eve believed the lies of Satan and rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden, in mercy God withdrew His glorious presence from the earth. Later God was recorded in Exodus 33:20 as saying “*No man can see my face and live,*” meaning that man in his fallen condition could not live in the literal presence of God. (We will study in more detail this in a later lesson.) But even though God could no longer walk in the garden with Adam and Eve as He had in the beginning, He still longed to be with the man He had made and the time came when the Lord said to Moses:

Exodus 25:8,9 “*And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.*”

The word “*sanctuary*” is from the Hebrew word “*miqdash*” which means “*sacred place.*” God gave Moses detailed instructions for building the sanctuary which are recorded in the book of Exodus. As seen in the diagram below, the sanctuary had three basic apartments. The Courtyard – The Holy Place – The Most Holy Place.



1. The Courtyard was surrounded by a curtain / fence and contained the altar of sacrifice and the laver (a basin used for ceremonial washings) and the tabernacle or tent which housed the Holy and Most Holy place.

2. The Holy place was the first compartment of the tabernacle that contained the table of showbread, a seven-branch lamp stand, and the golden altar of incense.

3. The Most Holy place was the second compartment of the tabernacle that was separated from the Holy place by a veil. It contained the Ark of the Covenant and the tables of stone upon which were written the Ten Commandments.

The Most Holy Place represented the throne of God on earth and no one could go into this compartment except the High Priest and then only on one special day of the year.

The first sanctuary was portable and moved from place to place as the Israelites traveled through the wilderness on their journey to the promised land. After they had settled in Jerusalem years later, King David's son, Solomon, built a permanent sanctuary known as "Solomon's Temple" which became the pride of the Israelite nation.

Everything about the sanctuary was a "visual aid" or a symbolic representation to help the Israelite people to come to know about the living God in heaven and His plan to save man. A number of the furnishings in the sanctuary were symbols pointing to this. Some examples are:

John 6:35 *"And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life: he who comes to me shall never hunger."*

This was symbolized by the table of showbread in the Holy Place.

John 8:12 *"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, I am the light of the world."*

This was symbolized by the lamp stand in the Holy Place.

Hebrews 10:19, 20 *"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,"*

The veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was a symbol of Christ who was God "veiled" in the flesh so that He could live among men on earth.

In the book of Leviticus are recorded the detailed instructions of how all the rituals and sacrifices were to take place at the sanctuary. There were certain things that were to be performed day by day continually by the priests on behalf of the people. These particular rituals were known to the Israelites as "The Daily" and were a representation of God's continual work on behalf of mankind.

The most common of the sacrifices was called the "Burnt Offering." This offering clearly symbolized Christ's sacrifice as the "*Lamb of God.*"

Leviticus 1:3,4 *"If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him."*

The Apostle Peter connected this sacrifice with Christ when he wrote, *“But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Peter 1:19). Note that this offering was not commanded, but was to be made of one's own free will just as Christ offered all of Himself of His own free will for us.

Leviticus 1:9 continues: *“but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.”*

The Apostle Paul makes the connection in the New Testament:

Ephesians 5:2 *“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma.”*

Other ritual sacrifices listed in Leviticus included:

“Meal Offering.” This offering signified thanks giving to God for all His provisions.

“Peace Offering.” This offering signified thanksgiving for peace, either with God or with another person with whom there was once disagreement or conflict.

“Sin Offering.” This offering was made for atonement of sins of ignorance.

“Trespass Offering.” This offering was made for atonement of willful sin.

New Testament texts like the following help us understand that the sacrifices were intended to remind the people that sin leads to death and then to point them to God, the only Savior.

Hebrews 10:3 - *“But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.”*

Romans 6:23 - *“For the wages of sin is death.”*

John 1:29 - Jesus is *“the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

In addition to the daily rituals, chapter twenty three in the book of Leviticus lists seven annual ceremonies that were called "feasts." The Hebrew word is "mowed" and it means "appointed time." These ceremonies were to take place in the order and at the specific time given. Each one pointed to a specific event in God's plan of salvation.

- 1) The Feast of Passover pointed to Christ's death.
- 2) The Feast of Unleavened Bread the next day pointed to Christ's burial.

- 3) The Feast of Firstfruits the third day pointed to Christ's resurrection.
- 4) The Feast of Weeks pointed to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost fifty days later.
- 5) The Feast of Trumpets pointed to the warning of a time judgment soon to come.
- 6) The Day of Atonement pointed to the time of judgment.
- 7) The Feast of Tabernacles pointed to the time when judgment was over and all God's people are gathered in their heavenly home.

All of the annual ceremonies and daily rituals whether in the tabernacle in the wilderness or in Solomon's Temple were only *"the shadow of good things to come"* or a symbolic representation of the real thing.

Hebrews 10:1 says *"For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect."*

The *"good things to come"* was the knowledge of the heavenly sanctuary of which the earthly sanctuary was only a type or model, and a righteous, divine High Priest (Christ) that would take the place of the fallible human priest as we see in the following texts:

Hebrews 4:14 - 15 *"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."*

Because Jesus has lived in this world as a human being Himself, we are assured that He knows what it's like to be hungry, tired, to feel pain and grief, He knows what it's like to be tempted, and tried. He's "been here and done that!"

Hebrews 8:1,2 *"Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man."*

The earthly sanctuary and its services served as a visual aid until *"the time of reformation."* It was the "old covenant," or a better way to state it would be that it was the "old arrangement" which is true to the Greek word used in Hebrews.

Hebrews 9:1 *"Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and the earthly sanctuary."*

This first covenant or first arrangement with all its visual aids and symbols would be replaced with a new covenant or a new arrangement which was much better because, instead of symbols and visual aids, God himself in the person of Jesus Christ came to show mankind the Way of Salvation.

Hebrews 9:8 - 12 *"The Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience-concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."*

The earthly temple was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans and was never rebuilt. According to scripture, Christ did not enter into the earthly sanctuary as High Priest, but into the heavenly sanctuary. And now that we know that Christ is our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary - we need to know what He is doing there. To answer that question we begin with the book of Romans.

Romans 5:10 *"For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."*

Two points to be made here. 1) We are reconciled to God by the death of Jesus. This means that we were once separated from God, but learning of the love of God through the death of Christ we have been won back into a relationship with Him.

2) But after being reconciled or won back to God, we have the tendency to stray away again and need God's continual help to keep us close to Him. This is where Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary comes in. The next verse helps us to understand what it means to be *"saved by his life."*

Hebrews 7:25 *"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."*

Just as the *"Daily"* ministry of the priests in the earthly sanctuary, as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary Christ *"always lives,"* that is, He continually ministers or makes *"intercession"* for us. Intercession is from a Greek word which means to communicate or to stay in touch with another. Christ through the Holy Spirit is continually pleading for us to come to Him and stay with Him, reminding us of His sacrifice that won our hearts to Him and that *"without Him we can do nothing."* Our resulting salvation from the work Christ *"ever lives"* to do in our hearts is what it means *"to be saved by His life."*

Understanding this, we now know that whenever we may need help it is not necessary for us to go to a rabbi, or a priest, or a preacher for intercession with God but that we can go "*boldly*" to the throne of God for ourselves.

Hebrews 4:16 *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

Though we can't stand in the literal presence of God, we can always talk directly to Him about anything, knowing He is always anxious to hear from us. This is what prayer is all about, it is talking to God as to a friend! Which is exactly the kind of relationship God wants with us:

John 15:14,15 *"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you."*

It is wonderful to be God's servant – we all want to hear Christ say to us, "*well done thou good and faithful servant.*" And we rejoice that we are considered the children of God – "*What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*" (1 John 3:2) But our Heavenly Father wants us to come even higher and closer still. He wants us to be His faithful, loyal friends! The Bible says "*there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother*" (Proverbs 18:24) and that friend is God in Christ.

Through Christ, God is extending His hand in friendship to you! Will you accept His gracious offer? Will you continue to study to learn more about the God who loves you and wants to be your friend? In our next lesson, we will study about sin, the enemy of good.

Response Questions:

1. Is it clear to you that God loves us and wants to be with us? Yes ___ No ___
2. Is it clear to you that sin separates us from God? Yes ___ No ___
3. Is it clear to you that Jesus is God and He came to this world to show us what God is really like? Yes ___ No ___
4. Do you want to be God's friend? Yes ___ No ___

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