

Introduction

This series of lessons is intended to be a follow-up (either as individual studies or in a group setting) for people who have gone through the Messiah's Mansion sanctuary exhibit. It can certainly be used in other circumstances, but it does assume a certain amount of familiarity with the sanctuary that may not be present without the previous tour of the exhibit.

Since the series is targeting those whose initial point of contact and interest is the sanctuary, you will find that it takes a more direct approach to introducing some distinctively Adventist truths. But this is not a general or complete evangelistic presentation. There are many important topics that are not covered in any detail.

At the same time, the series seeks to lay the groundwork for the presentation of other truths in the future. A series of meetings focused on prophecy would be a good next step, as there are several "teasers" on the subject throughout this series.

The printed lessons come in two forms, one for the presenter and one for the attendees. The presenter's copy is essentially a "teacher's version" with some additional material. Those materials are indicated by the border around them, as on this paragraph.

Please note that this design, intended to enhance a live presentation, makes these lessons poorly suited for "unguided" use. In other words, they are not intended to be passed out as a self-study program. Should that be the only possible approach with a particular individual, some special explanation of the presenter's materials might be the best option.

The extra material for the presenter is written with some specific purposes in mind. The most basic purpose is to provide structure for a group meeting setting. These lessons do not use the "Q&A/Fill-in-the-blank" format. This has pros and cons, one of the latter being the loss of a "control" to keep people working together, rather than just reading through the material as fast as each individual can.

To keep the group together, this series uses frequent "ad-lib" material from the presenter. By

and large, that's what is in the boxed paragraphs. Most any of these items *could be skipped*, if necessary, but almost all of them have a purpose beyond "crowd control," so *skipping probably isn't a good idea*.

This material is for an ad-lib style of presentation, so personal *adaptation and modification probably is a good idea*. It was demonstrated a long time ago that fighting in someone else's armor is a bad idea, so feel free to adapt. Any presenter who has looked through the whole series and has a basic understanding of Adventist doctrine should be able to more or less figure out the goal of each little "presenter blurb." Retain the goal and modify the presentation as you like.

You will notice that—compared to the main body of the lessons—the presenter's material is more informal, and conversational in style, with even a touch of mild humor a times. This is an intentional effort to provide contrast between the two parts of the meeting. That will only work, however, if the presenter is familiar enough with the material to *deliver* it in a conversational style. Somehow the "informality and friendliness" evaporates when it is read straight off the page.

Another purpose of this extra material is to enhance the credibility of the presenter. These should be delivered as *your* comments, *your* insights—not something you got off the notes that came in the box with the studies (even if you *did* get them off the notes that came in the box).

We want the attendees to respect *your* knowledge of the subject, so we provide some extra information to help you look smart. That's the whole idea behind a "Teachers Edition" of anything. If people respect you, they will listen to you, and you will gain influence to be used for the Lord. Please take the time to prepare to make the most of this opportunity.

The Scriptures quoted in this series are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible. All emphasis in Scripture verses has been added.

Lesson One—

The Purpose of the Sanctuary

WELCOME to the fascinating study of God's sanctuary. In just a few lessons, we'll cover thousands of years of history, examine some of the most faith-building passages of Bible teaching and prophecy, and find an often-overlooked revelation of God's wisdom and love.

But before jumping into all the details, we want to get one major idea in place—God's purpose for the sanctuary. True enough, we could probably find many different things that God accomplished through the sanctuary, but there is one major, underlying intention that runs consistently through the entire Scripture record. That's where we want to start.

The sanctuary is introduced to us in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. This first mention is only a passing poetic reference (though we will eventually find that even this is significant). Ten chapters later, God gives the definitive command that provides the starting point of our study.

This first mention of the sanctuary is in the "Song of Moses" just after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. In Revelation, this thought is picked up in the reference to the "Song of Moses and the Lamb."

1. What did God tell the Israelites to do?

Let them make Me a *sanctuary*, that I may *dwell among them*.—Exodus 25:8

Here we see the sanctuary's purpose. At first it looks like a simple matter. After all, God can do anything, so if He wants to live with us, what is there to stop Him?

Already we can see that there's something special going on here. One of the attributes of God is "omnipresence," the ability to be everywhere at once. So, if God is everywhere, isn't He already "among them"?

The question of God's "dwelling among" the Israelites had to do with something more than geographical location.

2. How important is this matter of "togetherness" in God's mind?

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "*Where are you?*"—Genesis 3:8–9

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the *tabernacle of God is with men*, and He will *dwell with them*, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be *with them* and be their God."—Revelation 21:3

Adam's sense of guilt made it natural for him to hide from God, just as our guilt does to us. But that's not what Jesus wants, and it only leads us to sorrow and death. So as soon as sin entered this world, God began seeking sinners. All through the Bible we see Him seeking to win our trust and love. This was Jesus' most common theme—just think of the parables of the lost sheep and the prodigal son.

Another example would be the parable of the wedding garments in Matthew 22, where the king gave out beautiful clothes to anyone who would come to his feast. Jesus also wanted to make sure the disciples knew that God the Father loved them, so in John 16 He tells them that "the Father Himself loves you."

The good news is that, way down at the other end of the Bible, we are told that He *will* win back the total love and trust of His people. When sin and Satan and death itself have been destroyed, He will finally be able to dwell in peace *with* His people.

3. What keeps God from dwelling with us now?

But your *iniquities* have *separated* you from your God; and your *sins* have *hidden* His face from you.—Isaiah 59:2

Some people look at this verse and see the whole thing as *God's problem*. "He's the one that's all upset. He needs to just lighten up a bit and accept people as they are instead of making such a big thing out of a few mistakes here and there."

This is actually one of Satan's favorite deceptions. He wants us to doubt God's love, because it's not likely we will throw ourselves on the mercy of someone who pretty much hates us.

4. Does God have an attitude problem? Or is there some other point of concern?

The *sinners* in Zion are *afraid*; *fearfulness* has seized the *hypocrites*: "Who among us shall dwell with the *devouring fire*? Who among us shall dwell with *everlasting burnings*?" He who walks *righteously* and speaks uprightly.—Isaiah 33:14–15

When God comes to visit His people, not everyone has the same reaction. The "sinners in Zion" see only "devouring fire" and "everlasting burnings," and can't imagine who could possibly live with that! But it's not that way with those who "walk righteously and speak uprightly."

5. What do the righteous see when God comes to them?

Your eyes will see the *King* in His *beauty*.—Isaiah 33:17

What a contrast! Somehow there is a huge difference in the perspective of these two groups. Maybe it's not God's problem, after all. Isaiah 33 goes on to describe what God's plan was for the nation of Israel in Old Testament times. The scene is one of eternal peace, happiness, and health.

Though literal Israel made it impossible for God to carry out His plan for them, we can easily recognize the fulfilling of this prophecy in heaven. In one of our future lessons we'll see how this transition came about. It's actually based on the sanctuary, and the role of the priests. I just love the way all this stuff ties together.

6. What is the one common characteristic of all those who have a place in God's plan for eternity?

The people who dwell in it will be *forgiven* their *iniquity*.—Isaiah 33:24

Notice this point! It is our iniquities that separate us from God. Not because God has an attitude problem but because our guilt makes it impossible for us to

meet Him in peace. He *wants* to live with us. He *wants* to forgive us. But far too many of those He loves would see His presence only as "devouring fire" and "everlasting burnings." By refusing to accept God's forgiveness and clinging to their iniquities, the wicked have made it impossible for Him to approach them. But those who are willing to accept God's gift of forgiveness have their iniquities removed.

This is the purpose of the sanctuary—to allow God to come close to His people while they are yet sinful.

7. What part of the earthly sanctuary especially symbolized this point?

The LORD said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the *veil*, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he *die*; for I will *appear* in the cloud above the mercy seat."—Leviticus 16:2

The veil was hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place to shield the priests and even the individual worshipers in the courtyard from the "Shekinah," the visible glory of God's presence. Notice the word "shield." The veil was *not* to cut them off from His presence entirely, for then they would be left in spiritual darkness. The veil was constructed so that it did not extend all the way to the ceiling of the sanctuary, thus the glory of the Lord could still be seen indirectly, and could still draw the hearts of all who would respond to God's entreaties.

This is fascinating! Look at the imagery of the veil.

The veil was necessary, so God made it a part of the sanctuary. But it was something of a "necessary evil," because while it protected the people, it also made it impossible for them to clearly see God. He was largely hidden from them.

8. What was this veil like?

"You shall make a veil woven of *blue*, *purple*, and *scarlet* thread, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an *artistic* design of cherubim."—Exodus 26:31

Even in the dazzling setting of the sanctuary, with gold and silver all around, the veil was considered one of the most beautiful parts of

God's design. It was supposed to be, for God wanted His service to be attractive. Just as in the New Testament Jesus said He would "draw all peoples to Myself," so in the Old Testament He was seeking to draw His people with "gentle cords" and with "bands of love." (John 12:32, Hosea 11:4)

9. Did God *like* the veil?

Then the veil of the temple was *torn in two from top to bottom*.—Mark 15:38

The veil was miraculously torn in two at the time of Jesus' death. This was no small matter. Jewish historians tell us that the veil in Herod's temple was massive, some accounts saying it was as much as nine inches thick. That's a lot harder than tearing up a phone book!

But wasn't that disrespectful? After all, the veil was an important part of God's plan, and it was made just as He had directed. Why did God treat it with such violence?

God was making a point. With the death of Christ, the plan for our salvation had taken a giant step forward. As the final act of the Old Testament system of symbolic sacrifices and ceremonies, God showed His eagerness to remove all barriers between Himself and His people. Instead of reverently drawing the curtain aside, He ripped it in two. Though it was necessary that we be shielded from the fullness of His glory, He made clear that the ultimate goal is complete openness and fellowship. This is the purpose of the sanctuary.

Paul picks up on this idea in 2 Corinthians chapter 3. He says "For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." (verses 14–16)

You see, we have two choices when it comes to relating to the veil. We can look at the glory of God coming over the top, and pray like Moses, "Show me your glory." (Exodus 33:18) That's what we pray when we want to become like God ourselves.

Of course, the other option is to step back and say "Praise the Lord for the veil! Sure glad I don't have to see Him face-to-face!" See the difference?

10. What did the veil represent?

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*.—Hebrews 10:19

Just as the veil shielded men from the glory of God while still allowing them access, so Christ came in human flesh to show what God is like without overwhelming us with His glory.

11. What was Jesus' work? And how was it to be accomplished?

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will *save* His people *from* their *sins*." So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name *Immanuel*," which is translated, "*God with us*."—Matthew 1:21–23

As through all of the Old Testament, now as the New Testament era began, God's desire and Jesus' lifework was to "save His people from their sins." But only as we come to know God for what He really is will we trust Him to save us *from* our sins. We "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) Indeed, none on earth have known anything but a sinful world, and though we aren't entirely comfortable with our sinful surroundings, it takes a great act of faith to let go of all we have ever known, and accept this forgiveness of God which saves us *from* our sins.

And so from the very beginning of His life on earth, Jesus was "God with us." Near the close of His life He would say, "he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me," and "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." (John 12:45, 14:9) Paul says "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." (2 Corinthians 5:19) All this was to win our love, to invite our trust, to increase our faith, so that we might accept the salvation from sin that Jesus

offered. This is the purpose of the sanctuary, carried out in the life of Christ.

Notice that verse in 2 Corinthians 5—it was the “world”—that’s you and me—that needed reconciling. Many people think that Jesus came and died to convince the Father that He really ought to love us sinners. That’s wrong. He already loved us. The bigger problem was getting that idea across to us.

12. Is there really any more importance to the sanctuary after Jesus’ death? Or was it strictly an Old Testament thing?

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.—Hebrews 8:1–2

Good news! The sanctuary is still in business! But the action has moved from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly sanctuary.

13. “Heavenly sanctuary”? Is there really such a thing?

Sure there is. Look at those last two verses from Hebrews 8. The “heavenly sanctuary” is the “sanctuary and... the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.” The sanctuary that man erected would be the portable sanctuary built just after the exodus, or Solomon’s temple, or Zerubbabel’s temple, or maybe Herod’s temple (we’ll look at all of these in our next lesson). But the heavenly sanctuary is... in heaven. Notice these verses:

There are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the *copy* and *shadow* of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See that you make all things according to the *pattern* shown you on the mountain.”—Hebrews 8:4–5

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the *greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands*.—Hebrews 9:11

For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are *copies* of the *true*, but into

heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.—Hebrews 9:24

You can probably think of dozens of intriguing questions about this heavenly sanctuary. God hasn’t told us everything about it, by any means, but perhaps the most useful piece of information is that the earthly sanctuary was a “copy” of the heavenly. God showed Moses the pattern, and told him to make one like it. In fact, God was very specific on that point. Four times in Numbers 25–27 God tells Moses to “see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.” When it was all done, Moses—the Quality Control Officer for the project—“looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the LORD had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them.” (Exodus 39:43)

So even though there is much we can’t say for sure about the heavenly sanctuary, God has told us a great deal about the copy. Apparently He thinks that’s enough for our needs.

The book of Hebrews has the most to say about the heavenly sanctuary. But notice what Stephen, the first Christian martyr, said in Acts 7:44—“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen.” This is interesting, because it shows that Christians knew about the heavenly sanctuary even before the book of Hebrews was written.

14. So there’s a sanctuary in heaven... but is anything important going on there?

Well, yes, there is. But that’s a topic for another lesson. We should cover several other issues before getting into that.

15. If Moses actually saw the heavenly sanctuary way back at the time of the Exodus, how old is it?

You were the anointed cherub who *covers*; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found

in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O *covering cherub*, from the midst of the fiery stones.—Ezekiel 28:14–16

These verses come from a description of the angel Lucifer, the covering cherub, who became Satan, the adversary, the originator of sin. The only place covering cherubs appear in the Bible is in the throne room of God—in the sanctuary. Which means that long before there was sin, God had the sanctuary in place, ready to deal with the problem.

Ever notice that it's really, really hard to surprise God? Imagine the irony—Lucifer worked in the very place that was all set up and ready to solve the problem that he himself would cause. That must have been a very unpleasant realization, when it finally dawned on him.

16. So is the heavenly sanctuary going to last forever?

[An angel] carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.—Revelation 21:10

But I saw no *temple* in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its *temple*.—Revelation 21: 22

In the next-to-last chapter of the Bible, the apostle John describes the New Jerusalem, the city of God, as it descends to the earth. The description is quite extensive. He tells about the city's gates, walls, foundations, streets, and dimensions." But," he says, "I saw no temple in it."

17. Why get rid of the sanctuary?

Apparently the sanctuary (or temple) is no longer needed. Why? What made the difference?

Earlier in the same chapter, John "heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.'" The purpose of the sanctuary has finally been fulfilled.

There's an interesting thing about John's de-

scription of the New Jerusalem. Revelation 21:16 says "The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal."

This has created a lot of discussion about the dimensions of the city. Twelve thousand furlongs is about 1,300 miles (some say more, some less). Thirteen hundred miles is a long ways, and a city that size would be huge—but still more or less imaginable. But a city that is that big on the sides, *and that tall*, starts to seem a little, well, strange.

But the verse said "Its length, breadth, and height are equal."

Now that may be literally true, I don't know. But here's an interesting thought. If the city's length, breadth, and height are equal, that means it's a cube. Which is not the shape we're used to as far as cities go. But in the Bible, there is one other thing besides the New Jerusalem that's described as a cube—the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary, the dwelling place of God.

18. But what if God needs the sanctuary again?

What do you conspire against the LORD? He will make an utter end of it. *Affliction* will not rise up a *second time*.—Nahum 1:9

Revelation describes the time when God has saved His people from their sins, and is free to dwell directly with them, with no need for anything to interfere. And Nahum tells us that this victory is complete. Sin, the great affliction of this world, will not rise up again. The sanctuary has been so effective that it has put itself out of business, for all eternity.

But that's OK, because that was its purpose from the very beginning.

Lesson Two— The Sanctuary Through History

Review:

Lesson One—The purpose of the sanctuary is to remove the barriers of sin and guilt that keep us from face-to-face communion with God.

IN this lesson we will be tracing the history of the sanctuary over the years, and looking at the work of God that was going forward through all the changes and developments. This study provides an impressive example of a Biblical principle known as “progressive revelation.”

1. Which part of the sanctuary came first?

And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an *offering* of the *fruit of the ground* to the LORD. Abel also brought of the *firstborn of his flock* and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering.—Genesis 4:3–5

This is the first specific mention of sacrifices to the Lord, which means that some elements at least of the ceremonial ritual came long before the physical structure of the sanctuary.

Actually, in Genesis 3:21 it mentions that “for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.” While the Bible doesn’t say for sure, it’s not hard to imagine that those “tunics of skin” came from the first sacrifices, as God Himself explained the cost of sin.

Notice that the first story of sacrifice to the Lord also includes a false sacrifice. Cain’s fruit was probably very nice produce, but it wasn’t a lamb, and couldn’t represent faith in the coming Messiah. Instead, it represented what Cain could do by himself.

As the prophet Samuel would ask centuries later, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15:22)

In Genesis chapter 8, Noah built an altar and offered sacrifice to God after the flood, and in chapter 12 we read of Abram doing the same.

There’s no mention of the religious practices of the nine generations between these two, but it seems reasonable to assume that altars and sacrifices were a part of their worship of the true God.

2. What was the point of these sacrifices? Were they some sort of bribe, or payment of a debt?

And as for Me, behold, *I establish My covenant with you* and with your descendants after you.—Genesis 9:9

And *I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you* in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.—Genesis 17:7

In the stories of Noah and Abram, God introduces the new idea of a covenant. Though never mentioned before, the covenant is confirmed to Noah eight times. A long silence on the subject takes us to Abram, to whom the covenant is confirmed in no less than eleven different verses. More important than the number of references, though, is the greatly expanded idea of the covenant as compared to what was said to Noah. But these are not two different covenants; this is just the normal path of progressive revelation.

3. OK, what came next?

And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the *LORD’s Passover*.—Exodus 12:11

The next element of the sanctuary to be introduced was the ceremonial system, or at least the first of those ceremonies, the Passover.

You probably already know that the Passover, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, and the other ceremonies—just like the various offerings—all had symbolic importance. Most of them pointed forward to the work of Christ during His life here on earth, but some point even further to His work in heaven after His ascension, and some further yet to His work at the end of time. This is incredibly interesting stuff—which we’ll talk about in a later lesson.

4. So far we've got sacrifices and ceremonies; what next?

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a *kingdom of priests* and a holy nation.—Exodus 19:5–6

The sanctuary services are only for those who have entered into God's covenant, and central to the whole process is the work of a priest. Symbolic of Christ, of course, the priest we normally think of was the mediator between God and Israel. But here we have the whole nation of Israel acting as the mediator between God and the rest of the nations. Sadly, this is a role the Jewish people largely neglected. In a later lesson we will see that this idea is picked up and expanded in the New Testament.

Well, it's not as though this was the absolute first time there had been any mention of a priest in God's service. As far back as Abram's time we find reference to Melchizedek, the "priest of God Most High." (Genesis 14:8) But here in Exodus 19, when the Israelites were encamped around Mt. Sinai, God re-established the priesthood in the context of the sanctuary.

5. What about the *building*? When do we get to the building?

And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.—Exodus 25:8

Finally! God commissioned the Mosaic sanctuary about three months after the Exodus, approximately 1445 B.C. This is when all the details were laid out for Moses, when the heavenly sanctuary was shown to him, and God commanded "you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern." (Exodus 26:30)

This was no small task. Almost all of Exodus chapters 25–31 is taken up with directions and specifications for constructing the various elements of the sanctuary. There was the tent itself, the curtains of the courtyard, and the veil to be made of cloth and skins. There were the wallboards of the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, made of wood and covered with gold. There

were the altar of burnt offering and the brass laver which held the water for the various washings. There were the smaller but more intricate pieces of furniture which went inside the holy places—the seven-branched candlestick, the altar of incense, the table for the showbread, and ark of the covenant, covered over with the solid gold mercy seat topped by the two golden cherubim covering the dwelling place of the Shekinah glory. And finally there were the pontifical robes of the priests, and especially the high priest.

This was no small task. Still, just twenty-one months later, "in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month," the tabernacle was set up for the first time. (Exodus 40:17)

That's a lot of details there, isn't it? Well, we'll be looking at all those pieces of furniture and robes and curtains—but not in this lesson.

6. What happened to the sanctuary after the children of Israel entered Canaan?

When the Israelites crossed the Jordan, they set up camp about three miles to the west, in Gilgal. (Joshua 4:19) This was the time when the land of Canaan was being divided among the tribes of Israel, and the initial battles of conquest were being fought. The ark is mentioned separately in Joshua 6, in the story of Jericho (about four miles northwest of Gilgal), and evidently the sanctuary was erected there, for it is recorded shortly after that "the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover." (Joshua 5:10)

When the most threatening of the Canaanites were defeated, Shiloh (eighteen miles northwest of Gilgal) was designated as "the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place." (Deuteronomy 12:5)

Now the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of meeting there.—Joshua 18:1

This was approximately 1400 B.C. The sanctuary would remain intact in this location for about 300 years.

Actually, there was one time that the sanctuary was moved temporarily from Shiloh. Do

you remember the famous quote from Joshua, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”? (Joshua 24:15) That was just a short while before he died, sort of his formal “last words” to the nation. For that occasion, Joshua “gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem” (about twelve miles north of Shiloh) to renew their covenant with God. (Joshua 24:1) The Bible says Joshua “wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God,” and then set up a stone monument to the event “under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.” (Joshua 24:26) Since the Book of the law was kept in the side of the ark, it makes sense that the sanctuary mentioned here is the one from Shiloh—on temporary assignment in Shechem.

7. “Intact”? How could it *not* be intact?

Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines.... and when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field. And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the *ark of the covenant* of the LORD from *Shiloh* to us, that when it comes among us *it may save us from the hand of our enemies.*”—1 Samuel 4:1–3

This was during the disastrous high priesthood of Eli, and after God’s judgment on his household had been announced by the child-prophet, Samuel. The blindness of disobedience led many even of the “elders of Israel” to regard the sacred ark as some kind of magical charm that would ensure victory in battle. They were wrong.

The *ark of God* was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.—1 Samuel 4:11

It would be seven months before the ark came back to Israel, and many years before it was restored to a sanctuary setting.

This was the time the Philistines put the ark in the temple of Dagon. The idol fell down and broke, then all the people got sick, and they finally sent it back to Israel on the cart with the cows who walked away from their calves. I hope you know that story, because we don’t

have time to go over it now.

The ark did not go back to Shiloh. It’s possible that Shiloh had been overrun by the attacking Philistines (there’s apparently some archaeological evidence for that), but “the tabernacle of the LORD and the altar of the burnt offering” are next mentioned located in the priestly town of Nob, just two miles northeast of Jerusalem. (1 Samuel 21:1) What became of the laver, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense is not clear.

After a brief period at Beth Shemesh, the ark was taken to Kirjath Jearim where it remained for the next twenty years. Then David decided to take it to Jerusalem. Careless as to the specific directions given to Moses in regard to the proper means for moving the ark, they began the journey using a “new cart” as had the Philistines. (2 Samuel 6:3; 1 Chronicles 13:7)

Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God.—2 Samuel 6:6–7

Notice that the Israelites were held to a higher standard than were the Philistines, because they had been told what to do, whereas the Philistines were operating in ignorance. It’s a good illustration of James 4:17: “To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

Following Uzzah’s death, David’s plan was tabled, and the ark was taken to the home of Obed-edom. His household was so abundantly blessed in the next three months that David decided to try again—this time following the proper procedures.

There were no further mishaps, and the ark was placed in a tent prepared for it in Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 1:4) But this was only a tent, not the sanctuary, which by this time (approximately 1000 B.C.) had been re-located once again to the town of Gibeon, six miles northwest of Jerusalem. (1 Chronicles 16:39)

All this, the result of treating the ark like a rabbit’s foot!

8. What did the Jews do without the sanctuary? Did it ever get back together again?

Meanwhile the people *sacrificed at the high places*, because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days.—1 Kings 3:2

This is not what God had planned. Perhaps the most that can be said for it is that it was the best they could do under the circumstances.

Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around, that the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains.”—2 Samuel 7:1

David’s idea was to build a temple for the Lord. God, however, had slightly different plans. Apparently He had seen enough of warfare and bloodshed, and didn’t want to be associated with that. He sent His prophet to tell David

You shall not build a house for My name, because *you have shed much blood* on the earth in My sight. Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest.... He shall build a house for My name.—1 Chronicles 22:8

But David didn’t just drop out of the picture entirely. As God directed Moses at the construction of the original sanctuary, so He worked with David now.

Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat; and the plans for all that he had *by the Spirit*, of the courts of the house of the LORD, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things.... “All this,” said David, “*the LORD made me understand* in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans.”—1 Chronicles 28:11–12, 19

It is interesting to note that even though the Mosaic sanctuary and Solomon’s temple were both designed by God, still there were differences. The most obvious of these were the size and permanence of the temple as compared to the Mosaic sanctuary. But other differences are many: Instead of a single lampstand in the holy place, Solomon’s temple had ten; in addition to

the cherubim on the mercy seat, Solomon’s temple had two 18-foot tall cherubim in the most holy place.

9. But if the temple was *different*, can we be sure it was *correct*?

When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and *the glory of the LORD filled the temple*.—2 Chronicles 7:1

What can I add to that?

It may be worth noting that the only physical object that actually came over from the Mosaic sanctuary to the temple was the ark and its contents, the ten commandments and the Book of the Law. Another aspect they had in common was proportions. In most of the major features, the temple was twice the size of the sanctuary, so the most holy place, for instance, was a 20 cubit cube, instead of a 10 cubit cube.

10. How long did Solomon’s temple last?

Construction of the temple was completed in the eleventh year of Solomon’s reign, 958 B.C. (1 Kings 6:38) Though often neglected during the reigns of ungodly kings (Ahaz, for example, in 2 Chronicles 28, and Manasseh in 2 Chronicles 33), the temple remained until finally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar’s army in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25:3–4) All told, it lasted 372 years.

Why was the temple destroyed?

“But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. And now, because you have done all these works,” says the LORD,... “therefore I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.” (Jeremiah 7:12–14)

Many specifics might be mentioned, but the basic problem was disobedience. For all our human intelligence, isn’t it a mystery that we can find it so hard to understand something so simple?

11. So what did the Jews do *this time* without the sanctuary?

Then *the LORD* will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone.—Deuteronomy 28:64

Centuries before, God had said what would happen if His people proved unfaithful. Not surprisingly, He was right. The Babylonians took many of the Jews captive, and forcibly resettled others in different locations around the empire. There were, of course, some who did not serve gods of wood and stone. Daniel, Ezekiel, and, in later years, Mordecai, for example.

By the way, the book of Daniel has some of the most interesting material on the workings of the heavenly sanctuary. It's easy for us to think of the whole process of God forgiving sin as some sort of "magical" thing that He does just because He feels like it. Daniel helps us see that there really is a logical basis for every step of the process. Unfortunately, we won't be able to cover all that in this series.

12. When the temple was destroyed, what happened to the ark?

The Bible gives no answer to this. Jewish historical sources say that the prophet Jeremiah managed to hide the ark in a cave just before the destruction of the city. Where's the cave? Who knows? But it is interesting to note that there is still interest in the subject today.

Everyone from Hollywood to evangelical Christians seems to have an interest in it. What was that movie? Raiders of the Ark—something like that. And there's the Wyatt Archaeological organization, who claim to have seen it. I don't know a lot about either of these, but isn't it amazing that a 3400-year-old box could spark such interest. Well, it is a gold box, so maybe that helps explain it.

13. So there had to be a *another* temple? When? Where? How?

Before we look at what *was*, let's take a look at what *might have been*. Ezekiel chapters 40–48

present a single vision in which the prophet is given a detailed view of a new temple, a new division of the land of Canaan, and a near-heavenly reign of peace and righteousness. Though key features resemble earlier designs, there are also major differences. Ezekiel's temple, for instance has a square courtyard, rather than rectangular, but the holy and most holy places are nearly the same dimensions as they had been in Solomon's temple.

Ezekiel was writing during the time of the Babylonian exile. The sanctuary, indeed, the whole city of Jerusalem, was in ruins. Were the plans given Ezekiel intended for actual construction? Perhaps, but when later leaders such as Ezra and Nehemiah began the restoration of the city and the temple, there is no evidence they made any effort to follow them.

14. Then what was the point of Ezekiel's vision?

And the man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you were brought here so that I might show them to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see."—Ezekiel 40:4

The name of the city from that day shall be: "THE LORD IS THERE."—Ezekiel 48:35

There are two points that are obvious: God wanted this vision recorded and reported, so there must be some importance to it; and, the final goal remained the same as always—God dwelling among his people.

People have long debated the significance of Ezekiel's vision. He himself was likely the first to do so. Notice:

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, *searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating* when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.—1 Peter 1:10–11

If something as central to God's plans as the sufferings of Christ was not entirely clear to the prophets, it wouldn't be too surprising if there were other issues that weren't immediately un-

derstood. This is just one of them. Progressive revelation is still going on, so don't give up.

There have been several main ideas about this vision over the years. Some say it was all symbolic; others say God intended it to be built at the end of the captivity; still others think it is supposed to be built at some point in the future. Personally, I lean toward a combination of the first two views, but I don't think anyone has the final word on the subject yet.

You know, that sort of thing really bothers some people. They want all the answers right now. That might be nice, but I find it kind of exciting that there are still a few mysteries left in the Bible. It gives me a chance to just maybe make some small contribution to the understanding of the saints.

15. Ezekiel's temple was never built, but there was another temple, right?

After the exile, when the Jews were allowed to return to their land, one of the first things they set out to do was rebuild the sanctuary—with somewhat mixed results.

When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD,... many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy.—Ezra 3:10, 12

It was a bit of a rocky start, with half the participants at the groundbreaking ceremony weeping instead of cheering. The problem was a lack of size and elegance. With a budget more limited than Solomon had at his disposal, the builders set out to construct a far more modest sanctuary. One boost they got from Cyrus was the return of many of the gold and silver utensils that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Solomon's temple. (Ezra 1:7–11)

Opposition from the surrounding population (later known as the Samaritans) stopped the work for several years, but in 520 B.C., the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high

priest, to finish the job. One prophecy which stretched their imaginations was

"The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former," says the LORD of hosts.—Haggai 2:9

This was hard to believe for many reasons, but chief among them was the absence of the ark. Hidden in a cave somewhere unknown, it was beyond their reach. Thus the Roman historians Tacitus and Cicero both noted that the most holy place stood empty. Only by the personal presence of Christ more than half a millennium later, would this temple be more glorious than Solomon's.

16. What about "Herod's temple"?

Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body.—John 2:19–21

Herod, never popular with the Jews, needed something to boost his approval rating. Recognizing that the sanctuary was more than 500 years old and in need of significant maintenance, he settled on a reworking of the temple complex as a way to make the Jews happy glorifying himself. The Jews, however, were wary that he would tear down the old structure and simply never rebuild. So Herod devised a method of construction that was more like an endless remodeling. This is why the Jews said the temple had taken forty-six years to build.

Actually, the work on the sanctuary proper only took about a year and a half. Another eight years took care of almost all the outer buildings of the complex. From there on out it was all decoration and embellishment, more for Herod's (and his successors') glory than for God's. This continued through the entire life of Jesus, and went on till just before the outbreak of the Jewish War in A.D. 62.

17. And what became of Herod's temple?

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to

them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, *not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*”—Matthew 24:1–2

This was unthinkable. In fact, the only imaginable scenario which might destroy the temple was the end of the world as a whole. This is why the disciples asked

When will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the *end of the age*?
—Matthew 24:3

Thirty-nine years later, in the summer of A.D. 70, the Roman army crushed the heart of the Jewish revolt, destroying Jerusalem, and burning the temple. In an effort to reclaim the molten gold of the temple, even the pavement stones were pried from their places. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, more than a million Jews lost their lives, and nearly 100,000 were taken captive.

No Christians died, however, because Jesus had warned, “when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” (Matthew 24:15–16)

On the strength of this instruction, the Christian community had relocated to the town of Pella after Roman ensigns had first invaded the sacred precincts of Jerusalem three years before.

18. Another sanctuary?

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.—Hebrews 8:1–2

Yes, there is another sanctuary which took the place of Herod’s temple. But that didn’t happen when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Herod’s temple had lost its importance long before. Just days before the crucifixion, as Jesus left the temple for the last time, after pronouncing the woes on the scribes and pharisees, He said

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!

How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! *Your house is left to you desolate.*—Matthew 23:37–38

This is what prompted the disciples to “show Him the buildings of the temple.” (Matthew 24:1) It’s like the disciples were afraid that He might have overstated things, so they wanted to “bring Him back to reality.”

“Look at these buildings! Look at the size of those stones! Look at the gold!”

“Not one stone shall be left here upon another.”

Ouch! So much for the disciples version of reality. But Jesus saw things more clearly than the disciples did.

The “fullness of the Godhead” had been driven from His own temple by unbelief, pride, selfishness. The sanctuary, established so God could dwell among His people, had come so thoroughly under the control of evil that Jesus was unwelcome there. It was no longer “My Father’s house,” but now only “your house.”

It was not long, however, before Jesus was to enter “into heaven itself... to appear in the presence of God for us.” (Hebrews 9:24) The work of the sanctuary would continue!

19. Why didn’t God start with the heavenly sanctuary? And why stretch it out over such a long time?

The path of the just is like the shining sun, that *shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.*—Proverbs 4:18

This is one of those questions that the Bible doesn’t answer directly. But verses like the one above speak to what we call “progressive revelation.” For reasons of His own, God doesn’t often publish His whole plan in advance. He lets things develop over time, and gives out information on what the military would call a “need-to-know” basis.

Let’s look at that military analogy, for a moment. If you picture history in terms of a war between God and Satan, there could be perfectly good reasons for keeping long-term plans under wraps. I can’t tell you what all might fit

into this category, but God could well have left Satan in the dark on a lot of issues to preserve an element of surprise.

And in the first two chapters of the book of Job there's a good example of selective "information management." Job was deliberately left out of the loop so that his faithfulness could be tested, and by passing the test he proved Satan wrong.

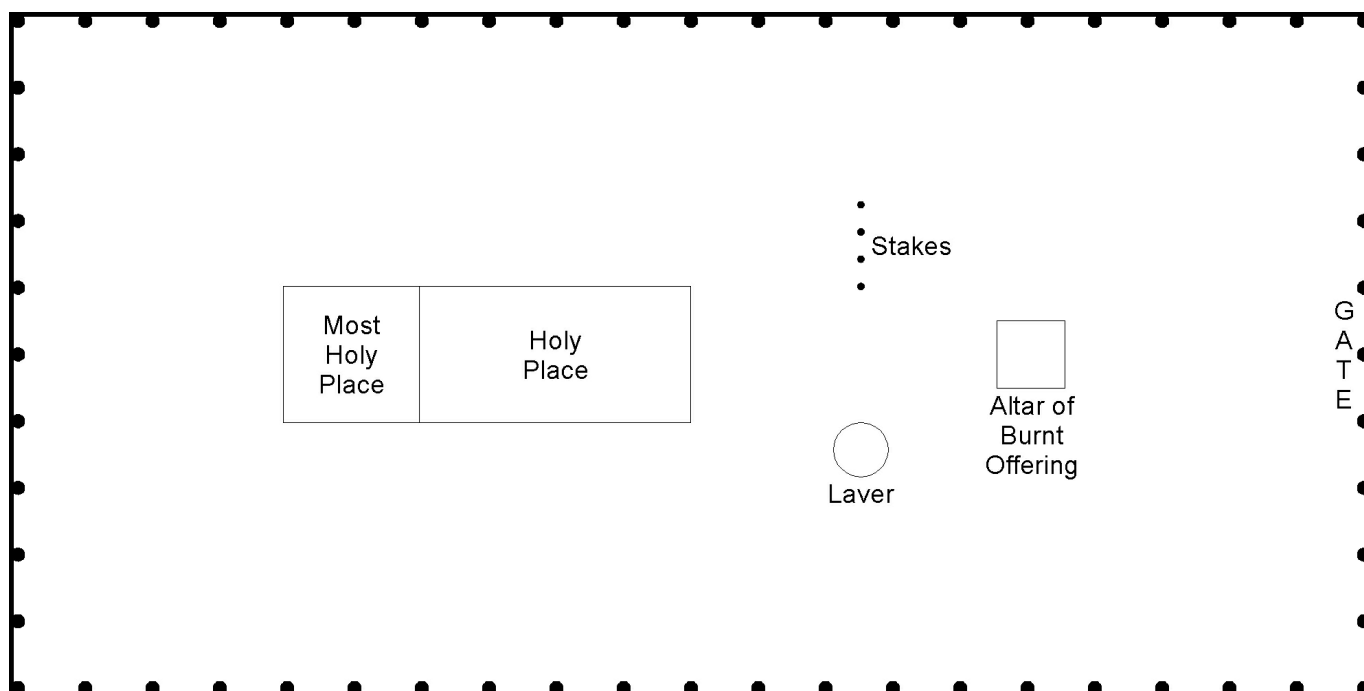
We have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as *a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns* and the morning star rises in your hearts.—2 Peter 1:19

This verse is another example of the "progressive revelation" concept in the Bible. What makes this one especially interesting is the focus on prophecy. This is one of the most amazing evidences of God's wisdom, but we seldom think of it. Much of the sanctuary service, the symbolism of the sacrifices, the timing of the feasts, etc., is really prophetic. And even though it wasn't clear to human beings from the very beginning what God was going to do, we can look back at it now and see that He knew. That's one reason we study the sanctuary.

God did something really important when He put all the symbolism in the sanctuary and its services. Many of the symbolic details are not just symbolic of things that were known and understood at the time, but they are actually prophetic symbols of things that were to come many years later.

Even when we haven't understood things in advance of their fulfillment, we can still see that historic events like the crucifixion *were* fulfillments of what God had established centuries before.

This progressive revelation is one of the best reasons I can think of for studying the Bible in general, and the sanctuary in particular.



Lesson Three— The Meaning of the Court

Review:

Lesson One—The purpose of the sanctuary is to remove the barriers of sin and guilt that keep us from face-to-face communion with God.

Lesson Two—The development of the sacrificial system and of the sanctuary services illustrate “progressive revelation.”

IN this lesson we will focus on the services and symbolism of the courtyard. The next two lessons will look at the holy place and the most holy place in a similar manner. As we saw in Lesson Two, the various sanctuaries constructed through the centuries differed from one another in certain respects, but maintained the basic layout and function. Since the Bible gives the most information about the Mosaic sanctuary, we will primarily focus on it as we consider the meaning of its different parts and services.

1. What was the court?

The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits, the width fifty throughout, and the height five cubits, made of fine woven linen.
—Exodus 27:18

The court marked out the boundaries of the sanctuary with a pure white linen curtain, broken only by the colorful section which marked the single gate. Inside were the altar of burnt offering, the laver, and the holy places. Into this area the individual worshipers would come to offer sacrifices and seek God’s presence.

All the dimensions of the sanctuary are given in “cubits” (the length of a man’s arm from elbow to fingertips). Since this varies from person to person, it is generally standardized to 1½ feet (18 inches). The curtains of the court were 100 cubits long, by 50 cubits wide, and 5 cubits tall. This works out to 150 feet, by 75 feet, by 7½ feet.

2. Does the white linen curtain mean anything special, or is it just a curtain?

Well, it’s just about impossible to find anything in the sanctuary that isn’t symbolic of some aspect of the plan of salvation.

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.—Revelation 3:5
Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?” And I said to him,

“Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”—Revelation 7:13–14

The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.
—Revelation 19:8

The linen represents righteousness, and specifically Christ’s righteousness worked out in the believers’ life experience. This is not a passive righteousness. No, these are the ones who have overcome, who have gone through the great tribulation and come out victorious, who have washed their robes, and have done righteous acts.

Isn’t that what we all want? Just like we talked last time about seeing the glory of God shining over the veil, and wanting to see more of it and become like God. That’s the Christian’s natural response.

Fortunately, God has plans to accomplish that in our lives, and the sanctuary helps make those plans clear.

One other thing—did you notice that all these verses came from the book of Revelation? There’s a reason for that. The sanctuary is full of symbolism, and it is the prophetic books that deal most directly with symbolism. We’ll be referring to the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation quite a bit.

Unfortunately, many people have given up on these books, because they think they cannot be understood. But the sanctuary helps open up these books, and they help explain the sanctuary.

3. So the curtain represents the righteousness of the believer?

All the hangings of the court all around were of fine woven linen.—Exodus 38:16

The righteousness of *believers*. Not just individuals, but all God’s people together. From the outside, the white linen formed an unmistakable boundary of righteousness. Everything inside was holy; everything outside was common. This is God’s plan for His church.

That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, *not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing*, but that she should be holy and without blemish.—Ephesians 5:27

Now the manifold wisdom of God might be *made known by the church* to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,—Ephesians 3:10

God doesn’t want a spotless church just for the fun of it. He has a special need that can only be filled by the church. He needs His church to show the rest of His creation—the principalities and powers in the heavenly places—His wisdom in the plan of salvation.

Stop and think for just a second, and you’ll see how logical this is. One major aspect of the plan of salvation is granting eternal life to sinners. That’s a pretty risky thing! Just look at the mess that sin has made out of our world so far.

Don’t you think the “principalities and powers” might have some questions about the wisdom of taking sinners to heaven? That’s why only the church—all those converted sinners—can provide the demonstration that makes it clear God’s plan is safe and actually makes sense.

4. So the curtain is God’s church, but does the individual believer show up anywhere in this?

The sockets for the pillars were bronze, the hooks of the pillars and their bands were silver, and the overlay of their capitals was silver; and all the pillars of the court had bands of silver.—Exodus 38:17

These pillars were not solid bronze (imagine the weight!), but were made of acacia wood, and then bronze-plated. The “capitals” were the silver-plated upper portion of the pillars, and the “bands” wrapped around the pillars to hold on the “hooks” which held up the curtain.

Here we have an illustration of the true believer—just dead wood, but covered over with the character of Christ, crowned with glory, and holding “the confession of our hope” in Christ’s righteousness. (Romans 4:7, 1 Peter 5:4, Hebrews 10:23)

5. How was the gate different from the rest of the curtain? Was there some special meaning to it?

The screen for the gate of the court was woven of *blue, purple, and scarlet thread*, and of fine

woven linen. The length was twenty cubits.—Exodus 38:18

I am the *door*. If anyone *enters by Me*, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.—John 10:9

The single gate of the sanctuary represents Christ, the only means of access to God. He is “the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

The special screen or curtain which marked the gate was woven, with fine white linen as the warp (the threads running lengthwise), and blue, purple, and scarlet as the woof (threads running crosswise). We do not know the exact pattern.

The three colors each have symbolic significance. Blue represents loyalty, purple is associated with royalty, and scarlet is the color of blood and sacrifice.

You’re probably familiar with the expression “true-blue,” which we still use today. But, Biblically speaking, the meaning of loyalty comes from Numbers 15:38–41, where the Israelites were instructed to put tassels or fringes of blue on their clothing so they would “look upon it and remember... and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.”

Notice that loyalty and sacrifice (blue and scarlet), when combined, indicate royalty (purple). We are told that Jesus was “*obedient* to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.” (Philippians 2:8–9) What name is that? “And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Revelation 19:16)

It almost seems redundant to use purple thread at all, since blue and red woven together would look purple already. Perhaps this is to show that Christ did not *become* royalty because of the cross, but that His kingship—though laid down for the duration of His life on earth—is from eternity.

One other thing about the gate: In Exodus 27:13–16 it is specified that the gate was to be positioned at the east end of the sanctuary. Is it just a coincidence that anyone entering the

sanctuary would have to turn his back to the rising sun? Remember that most of the pagan religions of the day were based on sun worship. When God showed Ezekiel the wickedness of apostate Israel, He took him “into the inner court of the LORD’s house,” and showed him, “at the door of the temple of the LORD... about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.”—Ezekiel 8:16

6. What all was actually inside the court?

The two objects the Bible mentions in the court were the altar of burnt offering and the laver. Let’s take them one at a time.

You shall make an altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide—the altar shall be square—and its height shall be three cubits. You shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it. And you shall overlay it with bronze.—Exodus 27:1–2

The altar symbolizes the sacrifice of the incarnate Christ. Made of perishable wood (as in the pillars, a symbol of humanity), the altar was made invulnerable by its bronze sheeting (a symbol of invincibility).

Think of the “mountains of bronze,” in Zechariah 6:1, and the fourth beast in the vision of Daniel 7 which had “nails of bronze” and “trampled the residue [of nations] with its feet.”

At each corner of the altar was a bronze plated “horn” which curved up and out. The primary symbolism of a horn is strength and power.

The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation.—Psalms 18:2

Perhaps the most encouraging text of this nature is Revelation 5:6, where the Lamb is said to have “seven horns”—perfect or infinite strength.

A slight variation on this idea of power is the special usage of horns in apocalyptic prophecies such as Daniel 7 & 8, and Revelation 13 & 17, where they are clearly identified as “kingdoms.” (Daniel 7:23–24)

Another connotation of the horn, however, is as a container for anointing oil.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed [David].—1 Samuel 16:13

The Bible speaks of anointing prophets, priests, and kings. Is it only coincidence that Jesus filled all three of these positions? (Matthew 21:11, Hebrews 4:14, John 18:37)

Nearby the altar were a number of stakes set in the ground to which the waiting sacrificial animals were tied. Perhaps this area became congested at times, and more space was needed to secure a lamb or a goat. Consider this scripture:

Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.—Psalms 118:27

In the sanctuary, animals were always slain before being placed on the altar, so this is not talking about tying an animal down on top the altar. It must refer to an animal standing by, marked for sacrifice, but not yet slain.

It is fascinating that the verse just before this was sung by the children of Jerusalem as Jesus approached the city. “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!” (Psalms 118:26, Matthew 21:9) Did any of them realize what was coming to the One riding the donkey? Perhaps this is the idea behind Hebrews 12:1—the “living sacrifice.”

7. What about the sacrifices?

We will look more closely at the various sacrifices in Lesson Six. But we should notice what happened at the offering of the very first sacrifice in the newly built sanctuary.

The glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and *fire came out from before the LORD* and consumed the burnt offering.—Leviticus 9:23–24

This was the “sacred fire.”

A fire shall always be burning on the altar; *it shall never go out.*—Leviticus 6:13

Without this element of divine purification, the sanctuary service would come to an immediate standstill. What God intends to do with this fire is shown in the book of Isaiah:

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a *live coal* which he had taken with the tongs *from the altar*. And he touched my mouth

with it, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; *your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.*”—Isaiah 6:6–7

There is no replacement for the sacred fire, as we see in the case of Nadab and Abihu, who offered incense before the Lord using “profane fire,” and were “devoured” by “fire which went out from the LORD.” (Leviticus 10:1–2)

8. But what is this fire? What does it symbolize?

For our God is a *consuming fire.*—Hebrews 12:29

The Bible says this *four times*. Exodus 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:24, 9:3; Hebrews 12:29

Then there appeared to them divided tongues, *as of fire*, and one sat upon each of them. And *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.*—Acts 2:3–4

And it shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy.... When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, *by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning*, then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, *a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night.*—Isaiah 4:3–5

Whoa! The “spirit of judgment.” The “spirit of burning.” That sounds a little rough!

Well, perhaps the Holy Spirit knew all about “tough love” even before the psychologists came up with it.

But look at the result—cloud and smoke by day and flaming fire by night. This is sanctuary language, through and through.

Let’s look at one more:

I will bring [the people of the land] *through the fire*, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested.... I will say, ‘*This is My people*’; and each one will say, ‘*The LORD is my God.*’”—Zechariah 13:9

There it is again. Fire, refining, cleansing. But look at the result—“This is My people,” “The LORD is my God.” This is what the sanctuary is all about, getting God and His people back together again.

So what is the fire? The Holy Spirit, purifying our hearts and characters.

9. What about the laver? It probably symbolizes something important, too, right?

You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die.—Exodus 30:18–20

The Bible gives very little information about the Laver—what we might call a large basin. It is generally believed to have been round, but that is because the “sea” which took its place in Solomon’s temple was round. Similarly, the Laver is understood to have been positioned slightly toward the south of the courtyard because it is specified that way in the description of Solomon’s temple, but it’s not clearly stated in regard to the Mosaic sanctuary.

He made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the bronze mirrors of the serving women.—Exodus 38:8

The brass for the laver came from probably thousands of mirrors donated by the women of Israel. Lacking silvered-glass, a polished brass surface was the best mirror they had.

Notice who the mirrors came from? Some things never seem to change.

This is an interesting side note, which might easily be overlooked were it not for the book of James. But like so much of the sanctuary, it has its own contribution to make to the overall picture.

For if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a *mirror*; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who *looks into the perfect law of liberty* and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.—James 1:23–25

Here a mirror is compared to “the Word” and the “perfect law of liberty.” As the old illustration

goes, looking at yourself in the mirror and then forgetting about the grease spot on your forehead, is pointless. But the mirror can’t do anything to get you clean. Some other means must be sought.

So it is with the law. The law can show us where we have fallen short, but it has no means of “cleaning us up.” Hence, the whole idea of salvation-by-law-keeping is doomed right from the start. Always has been, always will be.

If you have any doubts about this, just look at Romans 7:7–24. You probably remember the passage—“For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.”

But God took the mirrors and did something special by extending their function and usefulness. Without doing away with the moral obligation of the law, He added water, flowing from the smitten Rock, (Exodus 17:6) and gave us the opportunity to purify our lives, “just as He is pure.” (1 John 3:3)

10. I really want to live a better life, but how do I go about this “purifying”?

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy *He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*—Titus 3:3–5

Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might *sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word.*—Ephesians 5:25–26

There is something interesting here in the word “washing” that Paul used in these verses. The Greek word is “loutron,” and it appears in the Bible only these two times. Unlike any of the other words translated wash or washing, “loutron” comes from a root that ties it right back to the laver.

The laver symbolizes the “washing of water by the Word.” And it is this washing—filling our minds with the Word of God, letting it reshape

our thoughts and habits—that will bring us to Ephesians 5:27 and make it possible for us to fulfill Jesus’ longing desire for “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but... holy and without blemish.”

11. Can that really happen?

Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”—John 3:9

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of [the washing of] water [by the Word] and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”—John 3:5

Yes, it can happen. God says it will happen. The sanctuary shows us how it can be done. And we can have absolute confidence in God’s Word, because it is “the Word of His power” which upholds “all things,” including you and me. (Hebrews 1:3)

12. The diagram has “stakes” on it. What’s that all about?

The stakes were for tying the animals before they were sacrificed. They are not mentioned in the Bible, but are described in other Jewish writings about Zerubbabel’s temple. In Solomon’s temple it is said there were bronze rings fixed into the pavement for the same purpose.

Let’s take a moment to look at these stakes. Are they important? Does it matter exactly where they were?

I’m going to say it probably isn’t worth losing a lot of sleep over. How do I know that? Because God didn’t tell us anything about them.

There’s a lot of stuff that God hasn’t told us. Sometimes we can see good reasons for it, and sometimes we can’t. But just because *we* can’t see reasons, doesn’t mean there aren’t any.

What do you suppose is the most common reason for God not mentioning something? That’s right, *it isn’t important*. And God wants to focus our attention on the important stuff.

My favorite example of this is Omri, the most powerful and politically important king of the northern kingdom of Israel. (He was also Ahab’s father, which isn’t much of a recommendation.) For a century and a half after his

death, the surrounding nations referred to Israel as “Omri-land.” But God gives him only eight verses. (1 Kings 16:21–28)

Now, historians might want to study Omri. I enjoy a little history now and then, and I might even find Omri’s story interesting. Maybe. But do I think it’s going to be a real factor in my salvation? No, probably not, or God would have said a bit more about him.

OK, now that’s an important principle. That’s why I spent that much time talking about it—not because of the stakes. OK?

Lesson Four— The Meaning of the Holy Place

Review:

Lesson One—The purpose of the sanctuary is to remove the barriers of sin and guilt that keep us from face-to-face communion with God.

Lesson Two—The development of the sacrificial system and of the sanctuary services illustrate “progressive revelation.”

Lesson Three—The courtyard illustrates the means of forgiveness the Lord offers those willing to trust Him.

IN this lesson we move into a consideration of the holy place, the first apartment of the tabernacle. Not content to merely concern Himself with our past (the forgiveness of sins in the court), God used the sanctuary to point us to the path of spiritual health and strength, showing us how to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18)

1. “First apartment of the tabernacle”? Isn’t the tabernacle the same as the sanctuary?

[The Levites] shall attend to... all the needs of the tabernacle; but they shall not come near the articles of the sanctuary and the altar.—Numbers 18:3

People occasionally use the two terms interchangeably, but most Bible translations are quite consistent in using “tabernacle” to describe the “tent-like” part of the sanctuary, which was divided into two sections, the holy and the most holy.

When you see “tabernacle” in the Bible, it usually represents one or the other of two Hebrew words. One of these means “dwelling” and the other means “tent.” The context of the verse shows whether it is the “tabernacle” or just a regular tent or dwelling.

Considering that the Hebrews were originally a nomadic people—think of Abraham—it’s not hard to see how “tent” and “dwelling” would mean just about the same thing.

2. So what was this “tent” like?

And for the tabernacle you shall make the boards of acacia wood, standing upright. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a

half shall be the width of each board.—Exodus 26:15–16

The Lord’s instructions to Moses specify that twenty of these “boards” were to be used to form each of the two longer walls (southern and northern) of the tabernacle, and another eight were to form the west wall. Since each “board” was a cubit and a half, the length of the tabernacle was thirty cubits, or forty-five feet, while the width is specified as ten cubits, or fifteen feet.

Right about now all the architects and mathematicians should be scratching their heads. Think about that back wall for a minute: it has eight “boards,” and each one is a cubit and a half wide. That makes twelve cubits, but the tabernacle is only ten cubits wide. Something doesn’t add up!

Actually it works out right. The ten cubits is an inside dimension, and the back wall had to be long enough to stretch the ten cubits *plus* the width of the side walls. So that makes each of the side walls a full cubit thick.

That’s why the word “boards” is in quotes. They were wooden, all right, but more of a box-like panel than a normal flat board.

You shall overlay the boards with gold,—Exodus 26:29

So the basic shape of the tabernacle is thirty feet long, fifteen feet wide, and fifteen feet high. Entirely covered in gold, it would make an impressive sight, even before the curtains, veil, and screen were in place.

3. What’s the difference between a “curtain” a “veil” and a “screen”?

You shall also make curtains... to be a tent over the tabernacle.—Exodus 26:7

You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim.... The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy.—Exodus 26:31, 33

You shall make a screen for the door of the tabernacle, woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver.—Exodus 26:36

The curtains were the “roof” of the tabernacle, the veil formed an interior wall that separated the holy from the most holy place, and the screen (called a “hanging” in some translations) was the “front door” of the sanctuary.

4. Were all these things just “things,” or were they symbols, too?

[God] stretches out the heavens *like a curtain*, and spreads them out *like a tent to dwell in*.—Isaiah 40:22

The curtains which formed the roof of the tabernacle were more complex than might first appear. There were actually four layers, all made to God’s specifications. The innermost layer was to be made of “fine woven linen and blue, purple, and scarlet thread,” and was decorated with “artistic designs of cherubim” woven into them with gold threads. (Exodus 26:1)

This first curtain formed the inner ceiling of the tabernacle, and—with its embroidered cherubim—represented the surrounding universe of God’s created beings, all watching to see the workings of His government, and His progress in this task of saving sinners.

It’s hard for us to imagine sometimes, but we have to remember that none of the unfallen angels, and none of the “sons of God” who “shouted for joy” when the earth was created (Job 38:7), have any personal experience with sin. They know it’s bad, but it’s still something of a mystery to them. They probably spend a lot of time wondering how we can be so stupid. And, since God wants to take sinners back to heaven someday, they have a really good reason to watch what’s going on with us down here.

Someday we’re going to be their neighbors, and I imagine they want to keep the neighborhood from going to the dogs, so to speak.

That sounds a little funny, but it’s probably not very funny to them. They all loved Lucifer... before he became Satan. I suspect there was a lot of pain there, and I don’t think they’ll be too casual about making sure it doesn’t happen again.

The second curtain was made of white goat’s hair—invisible normally, because it was covered

over by the third and fourth layers, but representing a righteousness that doesn’t change just because no one can see it.

The third layer was made of ram skin, dyed red (representing sacrifice). The fourth layer, which formed the outer covering of the tabernacle, was made of seal skin and provided a thoroughly waterproof protection. (Exodus 26:14, 36:19)

There are some differences of opinion on the last layer. The word in question isn’t Hebrew, and some translations go with “seal skin,” others go with “badger skin,” and some just say “leather.”

5. What about the veil?

You shall make a *veil* woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim.—Exodus 26:31

The veil is described much the same as the inner curtain, or ceiling. We do not, however, know the exact pattern of either, so it’s left to our imaginations to picture the rich colors of the background with the bright gold of the cherubim shining in the flickering light of the lampstand and the mysterious radiance of the Shekinah glory shining over the top of the veil.

The veil had a special use whenever the sanctuary was being transported. The priests would unhook it from the rod which held it in the air, and then—holding its top edge at arm’s length overhead—they would back into the most holy place and cover the ark with it. The whole process was reversed when it came time to set up in a new place.

During the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the sanctuary was set up in about fifty different locations, so they went through this procedure about once every nine and a half months, on average.

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*, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.—Hebrews 10:19–22

The symbolism of the veil is spelled out in the New Testament. It is Christ's flesh (the Greek word is *sarx*), His humanity, that allowed God to come close to His people without overwhelming them with His glory. It is His humanity which allowed some of that glory to spill over into our world so that our hearts might be reconciled to God. It is His humanity which was torn and broken so that we could gain access to the most holy.

And the Word became *flesh* and *dwelt* among us, and we beheld His *glory*, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.—John 1:14

This is pure sanctuary language! God became flesh [*sarx*], and dwelt [tabernacled] with His people so that they could see the Shekinah glory of the Father.

And though that glory will appear threatening to the "sinners in Zion" (Isaiah 33:14) in the day of judgment, it was so veiled during His life on earth that "the darkness did not comprehend it." (John 1:5) Nevertheless, "in Him was life"; He was the "light of men" (John 1:4); and to all who received Him "He gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12)

You know, just one passage like this is enough reason to study the sanctuary.

You may ask, "what's so great about that? So John used a few words from the sanctuary... what difference does that make?"

Here's the thing. When you find a scripture that is so obviously linked as this is, it tells you that what you know about the sanctuary is also true about Christ. The purpose of the sanctuary is the purpose of Christ's life. The promises of the sanctuary are the promises Jesus holds out to His people.

6. That *sarx* business sounds like Greek to me. What's the point?

Now the works of the flesh [*sarx*] are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness....—Galatians 5:19

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh [*sarx*]) *nothing good* dwells.—Romans 7:18

When the Bible speaks of the "flesh" it's not just talking about the physical body. The thought in these verses is the "lower" or "corrupt" nature. The bad news is that, like Paul, we all have one, and there's nothing good in it.

7. It's obvious that people have moral problems, but what has that got to do with the veil? Didn't the veil represent Jesus' flesh?

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: *God was manifested in the flesh*.—1 Timothy 3:16

Jesus Christ our Lord, who was *born of the seed of David according to the flesh*.—Romans 1:3

Why is this important? "The seed of David according to the flesh." David was a lot like us. At one point God said he was a "man after His own heart." (1 Samuel 13:14) Another time, God sent the prophet to convict him of adultery and murder. (2 Samuel 12:7)

And this is one of Jesus' ancestors! This is where He got His "flesh" from! But it gets worse—look at this next verse.

God sent His own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh*.—Romans 8:3

The really amazing thing here is that the Bible tells us that Jesus came in the flesh, the same kind of flesh that you and I struggle against.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same.... *In all things He had to be made like His brethren*, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.—Hebrews 2:14, 17

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.—Hebrews 4:15

8. But the veil was a beautiful thing; this makes it sound like Jesus' flesh was like ours—and that's not so pretty.

In the days of His flesh... [Jesus] learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest.—Hebrews 5:7–10

This is why Paul called it “the mystery of godliness: *God... manifested in the flesh.*” (1 Timothy 3:16) Jesus was fully human, as weak as we are; but instead of relying on His human power, He recognized His weakness and depended fully upon His Father.

Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, *the Son can do nothing of Himself*, but what He sees the Father do.”—John 5:19

I can of Myself do nothing.... I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.
—John 5:30

Though He was perfected through suffering (scarlet), He was ever loyal to His Father (blue), and maintained the purity of His soul (white). In the end it is “the Lamb who was slain” who is “Lord of lords and King of kings” (purple). (Revelation 5:12, 17:14)

The beauty of the veil accurately depicted the life of Christ, hundreds of years in advance.

More than the life of Christ, really, because Jesus’ life is the pattern for our lives. 1 John 2:6 says, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”

Jesus’ method is to be our method. As He depended on His Father, we are to depend on Him. “Without Me you can do nothing,” He said. (John 15:5) But Paul says “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)

It’s almost funny—in a tragic sort of way—how hard we find it to believe that promise.

9. The tabernacle sounds like a beautiful structure, but what was in it?

There were three articles in the holy place—the table of showbread, the seven-branched lampstand, and the altar of incense. Each of these shows us something of God’s plan for our growth in His service. We’ll consider them one at a time.

You shall also make a *table of acacia wood*; two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall *overlay it with pure gold....* And you shall *set the showbread on the table* before Me always.”—Exodus 25:23, 30

The table of showbread was a beautiful golden table designed to hold the twelve loaves which were always to be before the Lord. It sat along the north wall of the tabernacle, to the right as one entered.

The loaves are described in Leviticus 24:5–9. Though they are called “cakes” in almost all Bible translations, they were unleavened loaves, and quite large. Because of their size, it was necessary that they be pierced to prevent them from puffing up in the oven. It’s easy to see here a foreshadowing of the pierced hands and side of Christ.

Following a recipe which called for fine flour, salt, and oil, twelve loaves were baked every Friday, and placed on the table the next day, the Sabbath. The old loaves were then given to the priests to eat, as an enacted parable of God’s provision of all our needs.

Since every meal offering was to be accompanied by a drink offering, golden pitchers and bowls were used to serve the unfermented grape wine. The priests, of course, were forbidden to partake of strong drink, and fermentation was ruled out by the prohibition of leaven. (Leviticus 10:8–9, Leviticus 2:11)

I’m always surprised at the intensity of argument this can stir up. Seems like the 70-some warnings against drunkenness in scripture ought to be enough to settle the question.

The table of bread and wine tells us of the body and the blood of Christ, and foreshadows the Lord’s supper. But, more personally, they tell us that we must each eat the bread and drink the wine for ourselves. Looking at food, hearing about food, even smelling food, won’t cure our hunger and strengthen our bodies.

10. What about the lampstand?

You shall also make a *lampstand of pure gold*; the lampstand shall be of *hammered work*. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and flowers shall *be of one piece.*—Exodus 25:31

The solid gold lampstand was to have three branches coming from each side of the central pillar, making a total of seven.

This is one of the obvious marks which identify the sanctuary setting of Revelation chapter four, where “seven lamps of fire” were seen “burning before the throne.” (Revelation 4:5)

In the earthly tabernacle, the lampstand stood to the south, on one’s left upon entering. Made of a single piece of beaten gold, the lampstand gives mute testimony of the cost—both to Christ and to His followers—by which the privilege of shedding light to others is gained. Thousands of hammer blows, slowly formed the artistry, but would also weaken the metal. To offset this, the gold must be annealed in the furnace flame.

Only by such discipline can God prepare those who would do Him service.

The flames of the lampstand burned olive oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. As the prophet was told, there is no substitute for the Spirit’s presence: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.” (Zechariah 4:6)

There is a rabbinical tradition that the wicks used in the lamps were made from the worn out garments of the priests. Even when no longer fit for their regular service, these scraps of white linen show us a picture of a love that just has to minister, even at the expense of life itself. This is what Christ in the ultimate sense, and countless Christian martyrs have done in a lesser degree.

A final lesson from the lampstand is the Lord’s requirement that it never be lighted with any fire but that which burned on the altar of burnt offering. If we are to accomplish anything of value, if our witness to others is to be a saving influence, we must never depend on our own wisdom. The “sparks” we can “kindle” may seem intelligent or even profound, but in mercy God warns us that the end result of turning from His instruction is that we will “lie down in torment.” (Isaiah 50:11)

11. And what was the role of the altar of incense?

You shall make an *altar to burn incense on*; you shall make it of acacia wood. A cubit shall be its length and a cubit its width—it shall be square—and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall

be of one piece with it. And you shall overlay its top, its sides all around, and its horns with pure gold.—Exodus 30:1–3

The altar of incense was placed at the far end of the holy place, immediately in front of the veil which partitioned off the most holy place. Like so many other articles of the sanctuary, its gold-covered wood points us to the divine-human nature of Christ.

This altar was never the scene of sacrifice, yet its horns were stained with blood. We’ll see why in Lesson Six when we look at the daily services of the sanctuary.

Upon this altar, coals from the altar of burnt offering were spread each morning and evening. Then the priest would sprinkle on the incense, and the fragrant smoke would rise and drift throughout the camp of Israel and beyond.

Scripture makes a clear application of this symbolism in Psalms 141:2. “Let my prayer be set before You as incense.”

As the incense rose to heaven at all hours of the day and night, so we are admonished to “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Morning and evening is probably the Lord’s Minimum Daily Requirement for prayer. Daniel did one better, praying at morning, noon, and night.

Even though we’re told to pray without ceasing, it seems clear that this would be something like being in a “mindset” of prayer—including God in our frame of reference—rather than stopping all else and devoting ourselves to *nothing but* prayer. Still, times for more complete reflection and communion are necessary, probably at least morning and evening.

And yet prayer must not be mindless. “When you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do.” (Matthew 6:7) Worse yet would be to pray in a way which fails to recognize the merits of Christ, offering instead some imagined goodness of our own. God was very clear about “counterfeit” incense!

As for the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the

LORD. Whoever makes any like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people.—Exodus 30:37

12. It seems like a lot of the meaning coming from the holy place has more to do with us than it does with Jesus. Isn't the sanctuary supposed to be symbolic of Christ?

For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."—2 Corinthians 6:16

Perhaps the greatest truth of the sanctuary is that even as it shows us Jesus, it also shows God's plan for every one of us.

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God?—1 Corinthians 6:19

Remember the "flesh" Paul wrote about? Nothing good naturally dwells in our flesh—and that's a problem. But it's a problem that Jesus has already dealt with and found the solution for. God's goal is for the Holy Spirit to dwell in each of us.

Paul told the Ephesians that he prayed for them that "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:17, 19)

"All the fullness of God"! That's a tall order. But the Bible means what it says. Something to think about, isn't it?

Just as the sanctuary is God's dwelling place, so we are to be temples for His dwelling. In our lives, through our actions and words, He seeks to reach others, and in the process of working for them we are brought to feel our own need of Him. Our need for the bread of life, for the Holy Spirit, for communion with our Heavenly Father—and how to meet these needs—these are the most practical lessons of the holy place.

Lesson Five— The Meaning of the Daily Services

Review:

Lesson One—The purpose of the sanctuary is to remove the barriers of sin and guilt that keep us from face-to-face communion with God.

Lesson Two—The details of the sacrificial system and of the sanctuary services were developed over time as God saw fit. We refer to this as “progressive revelation.”

Lesson Three—The sanctuary’s court, with its enclosing curtain, altar of burnt offering, and brass laver, encourage and invite the believer to accept the means of forgiveness the Lord offers those willing to trust Him.

Lesson Four—The holy place, the first apartment of the tabernacle, illustrates God’s provision of the Holy Spirit, the scriptures, and the privilege of prayer.

NOW that we have gone over the various elements of the courtyard and the holy place, we can look more carefully at how these things fit into the symbolic program for dealing with sin.

If you’ve looked at your handout, you’ve probably noticed that this lesson is quite a bit shorter than the first three were. But this one covers some really vital information, so it’s important we understand it well. If I confuse you somehow, just raise your hand and ask questions till we get it straightened out, OK?

Please note the word “symbolic.” Nothing that happened in the earthly sanctuary was sufficient by itself to actually atone for sin. No sacrifice of lamb or goat or ox was sufficient to solve the problem. It required the life and death of the Son of God, so these ceremonies and sacrifices—even though they were God’s specified means for His people to demonstrate faith in Old Testament times—were never His actual means of forgiveness. They were symbols.

Does that mean, then, that sinners in Old Testament times were not forgiven? No, it means that the basis of forgiveness and atonement was not in those sacrifices—but that true-hearted believers could still access the “real thing” through faith.

This is just an example of the “progressive” nature of the plan of salvation. God has a plan, and each step unfolds according to His wisdom.

Remember how Galatians 4 says it was when “the fullness of the time had come,” that “God sent forth His Son.” (verse 4)

You know, this is an important point, so let me just take a moment here before we really get going.

Did you ever stop to think that the very fact that we are still here in this sinful world is evidence that God’s “progressive” work isn’t finished yet? There are necessary developments yet to come—or at least there better be.

Some people sort of have the idea that the plan of salvation was all finished at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. But if that were true, why would God have allowed nearly two thousand more years of truly horrendous suffering since then?

Just because His schedule was full, maybe? Or because He likes to watch 1,000 children starve to death every day?

No, God will end sin at the first possible moment. But there are “developments” that haven’t happened yet. I find that kind of exciting, actually, because it means there’s still something for me and my generation to do in all this.

We’ll see more of how faith worked (and still works) as we go along. But for now, let’s look at the services that God set up in the courtyard and the holy place. There were quite a number of special circumstances that made for slight variations in what was done, but the general features remain throughout. Collectively, all these services are referred to as the “daily” services

1. What was the overall point of the “daily” services?

So the priest shall make *atonement* for them, and it shall be *forgiven them*.—Leviticus 4:20

So the priest shall make *atonement* for him concerning his sin, and it shall be *forgiven him*.—Leviticus 4:26

So the priest shall make *atonement* for him, and it shall be *forgiven him*.—Leviticus 4:31

No surprises here. God's goal in the sanctuary is always at-one-ment with His people. That meant meeting their need for forgiveness.

Remember Isaiah 59:2—"But your iniquities have separated you from your God."

2. What was the main point of this daily service?

Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight.... This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you.—Exodus 29:38–39, 42

This "continual burnt offering" was the first ceremony in the sanctuary each morning and the last each evening. Because of this, it was often called the "morning and evening sacrifice." On behalf of the nation as a whole, it indicated that Israel had chosen God, and that they recognized their need of forgiveness and their dependence on Him. The offering of these sacrifices were times of prayer, heart searching, and confession of sin for the people.

Most sins were dealt with through these twice-daily offerings. Some people have the idea that every time little Ahimaaz hit Joabab, he needed to sacrifice a lamb. But not long after the Exodus the population of Israel was about a million and a half! An individual sacrifice for every person just wouldn't have worked.

This daily sacrifice is the picture brought to mind by John the Baptist's declaration that Jesus was the "Lamb of God." (John 1:29, 36) But there is more involved here than we usually think of. Whenever an animal was sacrificed as a burnt offering, there were to be accompanying offerings of grain, salt, oil, and grape juice. These enhance the mental image with reminders of God's sustaining and preserving, the power of the Holy Spirit, and yet another depiction of the constantly repeated thought that sin is costly to the point of blood.

It's interesting to note that God indicated a special relationship between this most basic and foundational of all sacrifices and the sign of the Sabbath. Numbers 28:9–10 specified that on the Sabbath, the morning and evening sacrifice was to consist of three lambs, instead of the usual one. Just as the daily sacrifice was the basic acknowledgment of Israel's need of forgiveness, the Sabbath was the basic sign of their need of sanctification (Exodus 31:13, Ezekiel 20:12)

3. But weren't there other sacrifices besides this "continual burnt offering"?

This is the law of the *burnt offering*, the *grain offering*, the *sin offering*, the *trespass offering*, the *consecrations*, and the sacrifice of the *peace offering*.—Leviticus 7:37

There were quite a few different offerings, even a few special ones not mentioned in this verse. Some were for special occasions, some were to express thankfulness to God, and some were used when asking for special counsel from the Lord. One thing they all had in common was the requirement that the animals offered as sacrifices must be "without blemish," a clear portrayal of Jesus' sinlessness. (Numbers 28:3)

There's an often-overlooked indication of God's mercy built into the sacrificial system. In order to prevent sacrificing from becoming a "rich man's game" the law allowed those unable to afford one of the larger animals like an ox, goat, or lamb to bring "two young pigeons." (Leviticus 5:7) And if that was beyond reach, they could bring instead "one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour," or about two quarts. (verse 11)

For the sake of time and space, we won't study all these different sacrifices in detail. First we'll focus on the sin offering and then take a look at a few special cases of interest.

4. If sins could be forgiven through the morning and evening sacrifice, what was the point of the sin offering?

If a person... is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter—if he does not tell it, he bears guilt.—Leviticus 5:1

If a person touches any unclean thing... and he is *unaware of it*, he also shall be unclean and guilty.—Leviticus 5:2

If a person swears, speaking thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good, whatever it is that a man may pronounce by an oath, and he is unaware of it—*when he realizes it*, then he shall be guilty.—Leviticus 5:4

If a person commits a trespass, and *sins unintentionally in regard to the holy things of the LORD*, then he shall bring to the LORD as his trespass offering a ram without blemish from the flocks.... *He shall make restitution* for the harm that he has done in regard to the holy thing, *and shall add one-fifth* to it.—Leviticus 5:15–16

If a person sins and commits a trespass against the LORD by *lying* to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or about a pledge, or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbor, or if he *has found what was lost and lies concerning it*, and swears falsely—in any one of these things that a man may do in which he sins.... He shall *restore its full value, add one-fifth more to it, and give it to whomever it belongs*, on the day of his trespass offering.—Leviticus 6:2–5

The sin offering (sometimes called the trespass offering) was especially designed to guard certain problem areas. Each of the special cases given for the sin offering is one that we find easy to rationalize or overlook. God is saying, “Yes, you have to tell the whole truth.” “No, carelessness is not an excuse.” “You need to understand that spiritual things are especially important.” “No, you can’t cheat people and get away with it.”

Let’s take a moment to look at these “unintentional” sins. How do these verses fit with “to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin”? (James 4:17)

Well, for an Israelite at that time, touching something unclean was far more likely a result of carelessness than of theological confusion. Though uncleanness had a moral element to it, for the Israelites it was also their first-line defense against infectious diseases. Maybe it was because germs don’t care whether or not you know they’re there, that God attached a penalty to carelessness.

By the way, the swearing here isn’t the four-

letter-word type of swearing, it’s the “I promise” type of oath—and then forgetting to do what you said you’d do.

What’s more, since these sins fell into the sin offering category instead of the “continual burnt offering” category, they cost a bit more. God understands human psychology and the concept of what we call “punitive damages.”

5. What was the procedure for sin offerings?

If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally by doing something against any of the commandments of the LORD... or if his sin which he has committed comes to his knowledge, then he shall... lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering. Then the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour all the remaining blood at the base of the altar.... The priest shall burn it on the altar for a sweet aroma to the LORD. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.—Leviticus 4:27–31

These are the instructions for a sin offering brought by one of the “common people.” When the offering was for a sin of the high priest or of the whole nation, there was one interesting difference:

The anointed priest shall take some of the... blood and *bring it to the tabernacle of meeting*. The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and *sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary*. And the priest shall put some of the blood *on the horns of the altar of sweet incense* before the LORD, which is in the tabernacle of meeting.—Leviticus 4:5–7

One more detail is given two chapters later:

This is the law of the sin offering.... *The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it*. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of meeting.... But no sin offering from which any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of meeting, to make atonement in the holy place, shall be eaten.—Leviticus 6:25–26, 30

Though not explicitly mentioned in this passage, the act of laying one's hand on the head of the sacrificial animal indicates a confession of sin, and the transferring of that sin to the animal. Then, in perhaps the most powerful symbol in the Bible, the sinner must kill the lamb himself.

Right here, the role of the sinner ended. He had nothing to do with the process from here on out. Though I imagine many people stood for a while and watched, it was up to the priest to finish the job.

There's an important point here. When you have honestly confessed your sins and claimed Jesus as your High Priest and intercessor, you need to let go of the guilt, and rest in faith that "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it." (Philippians 1:6)

What happened next depended on who offered the sacrifice. The priest either went into the holy place of the tabernacle and sprinkled the blood before the veil and smeared it on the horns of the altar of incense, or he smeared blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard. In either case, the remaining blood was poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering.

Any time the blood was not carried into the tabernacle, however, the priest was required to eat at least some of the sacrifice. But if the blood had been taken into the tabernacle, he was forbidden to eat it.

On special occasions when there were hundreds of sacrifices, this would be a bit much. Rabbinical tradition says that they established the rule that the priest must eat a piece that was at least the size of a grape.

6. What is the importance of the blood going into the tabernacle, and the priest eating the sacrifice?

The sinner's guilt, confessed over the head of the animal, was now further transferred into the sanctuary, either through the blood, or in the person of the priest. We will see the importance of this more fully when we study the yearly service.

7. So, is that all there was to the daily service?

No, there were other services that were appointed for special circumstances, but the offerings for sin were the heart of the whole system. That's appropriate, really, since sin is the biggest problem we all face.

Lesson Six— The Most Holy Place and the Day of Atonement

Review:

Lesson One—The purpose of the sanctuary is to remove the barriers of sin and guilt that keep us from face-to-face communion with God.

Lesson Two—The development of the sacrificial system and of the sanctuary services illustrate “progressive revelation.”

Lesson Three—The courtyard illustrates the means of forgiveness the Lord offers those willing to trust Him.

Lesson Four—The holy place, the first apartment of the tabernacle, illustrates God’s provision of the Holy Spirit, the scriptures, and the privilege of prayer.

Lesson Five—Through the daily services of the sanctuary the guilt of sin was placed first upon the sacrificial victim, and then lodged in the sanctuary itself. This atoned for the sinner, but defiled the sanctuary.

THE daily services we looked at in our last lesson were the foundation of all that was done in the sanctuary. Without these rites, sinners would have been left hopelessly conscious-smitten before the Lord. But God was “reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19) and He sought to inspire faith in human hearts that He still loved them and would accept their love in return. The iniquities and guilt which had separated them could be removed through faith, and at-one-ment would be restored.

Just as that work formed the greatest portion of the sanctuary’s operation, so the message of forgiveness through Christ is the central concept of God’s message to the world. This must never be displaced. But, still—there is more.

It sounds like one of those Paul Harvey, “The Rest of the Story” things, doesn’t it?

1. What was the most holy place like?

A lot like the holy place, in terms of its construction, since the same curtains and wall panels were used in both. It was, however, smaller—only half as long as the holy place—and in the form of a cube, ten cubits long, wide, and high. None but the high priest were ever permitted to

enter its premises, and that only briefly on a single day of the year.

2. What was in it?

And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits shall be its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it.... And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you. You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat.... And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony.—Exodus 25:10–22

The ark was essentially a wooden box, covered with gold, with a solid gold lid. Rising from this were two cherubim, hammered out of the single lump. It was a beautiful piece of workmanship, but its value and importance were not so much its construction as its contents and its use. Under the mercy seat, were the two tablets of God’s holy law, and between the cherubim was the Shekinah glory, the visible presence of God.

3. If the daily services in the courtyard and holy place provided forgiveness, what was the point of the most holy place?

And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it. And they shall make an ark of acacia wood.... And there I will meet with you.—Exodus 25:8–10, 22

Of all the various parts and pieces of the sanctuary, the first one God gave plans for was the ark of the covenant. The ark is the dwelling place

of the Shekinah, the throne of God. The most holy place was “most holy” because of the ark.

Take another look at that question for just a minute. It’s easy to think that the “legal “ aspects of forgiveness are all that matter. It’s kind of like “I sacrificed a lamb, so everything is OK now—let’s get back to real life.”

But the legal stuff isn’t the purpose of the sanctuary. Forgiveness is a *necessary step in the process*, but the purpose is... (anybody remember what the purpose is?) That’s right, to restore us to the point of open communion with God.

4. So God lived in the most holy place, but all the services went on elsewhere?

The LORD said to Moses: “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat. Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place.”—Leviticus 16:2–3

Just a quick note on the wording of that last verse. That version does something just a bit different from most others on this verse, and it may be worth the trouble to try explaining what’s going on.

Notice that the words “Holy Place” are capitalized. That might be confusing because these lessons have spoken of the “holy place” and the “most holy place” without capitals. Question 4 is about the *most* holy place, so it almost looks like the verse isn’t even on topic, since it just talks about the “Holy Place.” It’s just about enough to get a person confused.

Well, there’s good news and bad news. The bad news is that the confusion started a long time ago, way back when Moses wrote Leviticus. The good news is that there really isn’t any confusion if you know what’s going on.

The Hebrew word for “holy place” is “ko’-desh,” which means “set apartness” as in “specialness” or “holiness.” With only a couple exceptions in the Old Testament, there wasn’t any word for “place” in “holy place,” it was what we call a “supplied word” so it is italicized in most Bible versions. That means that the

holy place was just the “ko’-desh.”

The problem is that the word they used for “most holy place” was also “ko’-desh,” unless they were talking about both parts of the tabernacle in one sentence. Then “holy place” was “ko’-desh,” and “most holy place” was “ko’-desh ko’-desh.” That’s where we got the phrase “holy of holies” which is sometimes used to describe the most holy place.

So if they use the same word for two different things, how can you tell what they’re talking about? Sounds like a mess!

Well, that’s where the good news comes in. There’s really no problem if you pay attention to the context. Notice how the verse talks about the “Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark.” That’s pretty obviously the most holy place, since that’s where the ark was.

These lessons use the New King James Version of the Bible, and you’ll notice that it has those words capitalized. For some reason or other they didn’t bother to explain their system at this point in the text, but in Leviticus 6:30 and 10:18, where the words “holy place” [not capitalized] are used, there’s actually a little footnote that says “The Most Holy Place when capitalized.” So the verse we just read really means most holy place, even though it says holy place. Did that all make sense?

OK, well let’s get back to Question 4. [Re-read question.]

Almost all the services went on in the courtyard and the holy place. But there was one day a year when the focus shifted to the most holy place. This is what the Jews called Yom Kippur, or “The Day of Atonement.” Actually, because of its supreme importance, over time it came to be known as simply “The Day.”

This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month... [the priest] *shall make atonement* for the *Holy Sanctuary*, and he shall make atonement for the *tabernacle of meeting* and for the *altar*, and he shall make atonement for the *priests* and for *all the people* of the assembly. This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the

children of Israel, for all their sins, *once a year*.
—Leviticus 16:29–34

5. Didn't the daily sacrifices make atonement? Why have a whole extra occasion for something that's already been done?

A very good question, but one to just keep in mind for right now, because we're not ready to answer it yet.

Another thing to think about is why it should be necessary to make an atonement *for* all the things that were used the rest of the year to *make* atonement for the people. Just mull that over for a while; we'll get around to looking at it eventually.

6. What actually happened on Yom Kippur?

The Biblical description of the ceremony is found in Leviticus 16. Remember that with only a single exception near the end of the day, all the rites were carried out by the high priest. For the sake of space, the following list does not include the five times the high priest bathed and put on clean clothes, nor the ten times he washed his hands and feet.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest:

- A. Performed all the regular morning rituals of the continual burnt offering, the trimming of the wicks on the lampstand, and the offering of incense in the holy place.

Even though it was the day when judgment would be passed upon the people, the means of forgiveness were still available.

- B. Changed clothes, taking off his special garments, and putting on a pure white set of clothes much like those worn by regular priests, but made of more costly material.
- C. Confessed his own sins and those of his household on the head of a bull which was to be sacrificed.
- D. Accepted from the people two white goats, as perfect and nearly identical as possible. Lots were cast to decide which of the goats would become the "Lord's goat," and which would be the scapegoat.

Jewish tradition says that the high priest put a

red cord around the neck of the Lord's goat and another around the horns of the scapegoat. I guess if you've got identical goats, you'd better do something to keep them straight.

There's some interesting symbolism in this: the red cord brings to mind the blood of sacrifice, obviously fitting for the neck of the one goat that was to be killed, but what about the horns of the other. This may be a bit metaphorical, but since horns symbolize power and might, it's easy to see the sacrifice of Christ binding the power of Satan and marking him for death.

- E. Sacrificed the bull and caught its blood in a bowl.
- F. Entered the most holy place with two handfuls of incense and a censer filled with coals from the altar of burnt offering. The smoke from the incense provided a fragrant cloud which would partially shield him from the radiance of the Shekinah. The censer was left on the ground in front of the ark.

As always, the incense represented prayer and intercession. The fragrance would have carried far beyond the walls of the sanctuary to where the people were waiting and praying.

- G. Retrieved the bull's blood from the courtyard and returned to the most holy place. This blood was sprinkled once on the mercy seat and seven times before the ark.
- H. Returned to the courtyard and sacrificed the "Lord's goat," catching its blood in a bowl. He then went the third time into the most holy place, and sprinkled the blood of the goat as he had that of the bull.

Notice that there is no mention of confessing sins on the head of the Lord's goat. The confessing has been done by the people when their sins were forgiven them and transferred to the sanctuary. The atonement that is now under way is not for the people, it's for the system that atoned for the people.

- I. Passed through the holy place, making atonement for the golden altar of incense and the separating veil with the blood of the

bull and the goat, now mixed together in a single bowl.

No mention is made of making an atonement for either the lampstand or the table of showbread. Weren't they important?

Sure. But this process of making atonement *for the sanctuary* is only for those parts of the sanctuary that had played a role in the process of making atonement *for the people*. We'll come back to this idea later.

J. Left the tabernacle and went to the altar of burnt offering where he applied the blood of the sacrifices to the horns of the altar and sprinkled blood on the altar itself.

At this point, the Bible says he has "made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar." (Leviticus 16:20) This is important in regard to understanding the role of the scapegoat—which comes up in our next item.

K. Confessed the guilt of all the sins of the people—just now removed from the sanctuary—over the head of the scapegoat, and turned the goat over to a "ready" man who was to take it away into the wilderness.

There's been a fair amount of confusion and argument about the scapegoat over the years. The point in question is the symbolism of the goat—does it represent Jesus, Satan, or something else again. There are several lines of evidence (linguistic, typological, literary) that have pretty much settled the issue in favor of identifying the scapegoat as a representative of Satan. Probably the simplest and most persuasive is just the fact that all the atoning is done before the goat gets involved. There is no blood sacrifice from this goat. He is punished, but there is no redemption because of it. That doesn't sound like a symbol of Jesus' death, but it does fit rather nicely with Satan.

L. Completed the services of the day by offering the normal evening burnt offerings and seeing to the proper disposal of the various animals which had been earlier sacrificed.

7. That's all very interesting... but is it important?

Are the day and ceremony important in a literal sense? No, for two reasons: First, because the ceremonial system ended at the death of Christ in A.D. 31, and second, because the ceremony hasn't even been performed since Rome destroyed the temple in A.D. 70.

But those two points don't affect the larger message that the ceremony symbolized. Notice this verse:

[The high priest] shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests *and for all the people of the assembly*.—Leviticus 16:33

Notice this point: the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement were directed first towards making atonement *for the sanctuary*. But not just the sanctuary in general, but *only those parts which had played a role in the earlier process of atoning for the sins of the people*—the priesthood, the ark of the covenant, the veil, the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering.

The veil is not specifically listed in the Biblical record, but is believed to have been included with the golden altar in the phrase "the tabernacle of meeting." The "Mishna," a rabbinical commentary on the Bible and Jewish history, says that the blood of the bull and the goat were sprinkled on the veil just after the priest left the most holy place.

And yet, at the end of the day, God's list of the "atoned-for" includes all of the above, *plus* "all the people of the assembly."

Somehow, the atonement for the sanctuary also affected the people, even though they had already been atoned for through the daily offerings. And this result was important enough that God required the people to take a keen interest in the proceedings:

Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; *you shall afflict your souls*, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. And *you shall do no work* on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement.—Leviticus 23:27–28

God took this very seriously. Anyone who didn't "afflict his soul" was to be "cut off from his people," and anyone who worked was to be "destroy[ed] from among his people."

8. OK, it seems important to God, but I don't understand how it's important to me...

Let's put another piece of the puzzle on the table where we can see it.

Have you ever had someone hide a piece or two of a jigsaw puzzle? Usually they want to be the one to put in the last piece, so they keep one rolled up in their sock or something where no one can see it. Isn't that annoying? You can waste hours looking for that one piece with the big bump and a little bit of red on the right side.

Then he shall... make *atonement* for the house, and it shall be *clean*.—Leviticus 14:53

The priest shall make *atonement* for you, to *cleanse* you, that you may be *clean* from all your sins before the LORD.—Leviticus 16:30

Aaron made *atonement* for them to *cleanse* them.—Numbers 8:21

You shall *cleanse* it and make *atonement* for it.—Ezekiel 43:20

Notice how cleansing is equated with atonement. If a house is atoned for, it is clean. If the people are atoned for, they are clean. In Numbers, it was the Levites; in Ezekiel, it was the altar. Atonement equals cleansing. Now read from the book of Daniel:

And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then *the sanctuary shall be cleansed*." Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, "Understand, son of man, that *the vision refers to the time of the end*."—Daniel 8:14–17

The book of Daniel, along with the related material from the book of Revelation, is some of the most fascinating the Bible has to offer.

If you haven't studied Daniel and Revelation, you *really* need to. Just Daniel 8 and 9, for instance, have these incredible prophecies of the life of Christ, the "great apostasy" that Paul talked about in 2 Thessalonians, the judgment day, the tribulation, and the second coming.

Unfortunately, a lot of people have given up on these books, but that's like saying God just got carried away and stuck some extra stuff in the Bible without any good reason for it. Like as if He was getting paid by the page, or something.

While we can't look at all the details right now, two things are obvious: the sanctuary is going to be cleansed, and it's going to happen in the time of the end.

From what we just learned about atonement and cleansing, we could we could just as easily say the sanctuary will be "atoned for" in the time of the end. But the only way the sanctuary was ever "atoned for" was through the ceremony of the Day of Atonement. So that means there will be a Day of Atonement in the time of the end.

But the sanctuary was destroyed in A.D. 70, so how can that be? Is the Jerusalem temple going to be rebuilt, as some people expect? Will there then be a ceremony with bulls, lambs, and sheep?

But wait! Jesus disowned the temple before He died. He said, "*Your house* is left unto you desolate." (Matthew 23:38) And the meaning of the sacrifices ended with the death of Christ. How can there be a Day of Atonement ceremony with animal sacrifices? Wouldn't that be denying the that Jesus was the "Lamb of God"?

Right about now, you're probably saying, "It's stuff like this that makes people give up studying the Bible." You're right. People don't like confusion, and when things get too hard, we tend to just shut down.

Well, cheer up! I've got good news. 1 Corinthians 14:33 says "God is not the author of confusion." He doesn't just leave us guessing about something that's important. And the Day of Atonement *is* important; remember the "you shall afflict your souls" and the "you shall do no work" verses?

9. So... is there going to be a sanctuary to be cleansed at the end time or not?

Do you remember Lesson Two, where we followed the sanctuary down through history? Where did we end up? With the sanctuary in heaven!

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.—Hebrews 8:1–2

For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.—Hebrews 9:24

Let's look at this a bit more closely. *If* there is a sanctuary in heaven that is to be cleansed in a last-days Day of Atonement, we should be able to find the things involved in that cleansing—the priesthood, the ark of the covenant, the veil, the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering. Let's see what we can find.

High Priest:

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*.—Hebrews 8:1

Regular Priests:

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection.... They shall be *priests of God and of Christ*, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.—Revelation 20:6

The Ark:

Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and *the ark of His covenant* was seen in His temple.—Revelation 11:19

The Veil:

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence *behind the veil*, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever.—Hebrews 6:19

The Altar of Incense:

Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much *incense*, that he should offer it with the prayers

of all the saints upon the *golden altar* which was before the throne.—Revelation 8:3

The Altar of Burnt Offering:

And another angel came out from the *altar*, who had *power over fire*.—Revelation 14:18

10. But all these things are in heaven. Does anything in heaven need to be atoned for? Does anything in heaven need to be cleansed?

Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be *purified* with these [“the blood of calves and goats”], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.—Hebrews 9:23

The word “purified” is the Greek word “*kath-ar-id'-zo*.” (Any doctors or nurses will recognize it as the root of our English word “cathartic.”) *Kath-ar-id'-zo* is used thirty times in the New Testament, and is translated “clean” or “cleanse” or “cleansed” twenty-four times. “Purified” sounds a little more dignified, so that may be why most translators have favored it over more humble synonyms. Then again, you only “purify” things that are *really* dirty, as in contaminated with infection or poison. Perhaps the translators were trying to point out how vital it is that these things be—not just “cleaned”—but “purified.”

11. We're not talking about anything physical, like mud or dust. What makes these things “dirty”?

Let's go back to a thought we covered in Lesson Three. We were talking about the white curtain around the courtyard, and how it represents Jesus' plan for His people to be a “glorious church.”

That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, *not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing*, but that she should be holy and without blemish.—Ephesians 5:27

This isn't just because Christ thinks it would be a nice thing. This is important! He needs His church to serve as “Exhibit A” to the rest of the universe:

Now the manifold wisdom of God might be *made known by the church* to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,—Ephesians 3:10

This is a special need that can only be filled by the church. He needs His church to show the rest of His creation—the principalities and powers in the heavenly places—His wisdom in the plan of salvation. And the biggest question mark in that regard is the question of bringing sinners to heaven and making them immortal.

Down through the centuries Jesus has forgiven innumerable sinners, but He has also been making some pretty incredible promises.

We tend to like the idea of forgiveness! And rightly so, since we all need it so badly. But sometimes the promises that go along with forgiveness make us a bit nervous. Just take a look at these two.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to *cleanse us from all unrighteousness*.—1 John 1:9

They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will... cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.—Ezekiel 37:23

The problem, as you might have guessed, is that God's promises haven't all been, shall we say, "verified" just yet. How many people do you know who have been cleansed "from all unrighteousness"? For that matter, how many people can God point to, and say "They shall not defile themselves anymore... with *any* of their transgressions"?

It's kind of funny. A minute ago I said that we like forgiveness, but the promises make us nervous. Well, just put yourself in the position of one of those "principalities and powers in the heavenly places."

I'm thinking they probably like the promises a whole lot, but I'll bet they're more than a little nervous about all the forgiveness that's been going on. Remember, God has big plans for these forgiven sinners. These people are going to be made *immortal*! (1 Corinthians 15:53–54) Angels aren't even immortal—just God. (1 Timothy 6:16) And if that's not enough, then He wants these ex-sinners to sit on Christ's

throne (Revelation 3:21), reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12), and judge both the world and angels. (1 Corinthians 6:2–3)

If I were an angel in heaven, I think I'd have some real questions about giving all that to people like you and me.

Can you see why the sanctuary, God's system of forgiveness, is contaminated by the confessed and forgiven sins of His people, and why it needs to be "cleansed"? Can you see why the "principalities and powers in the heavenly places" need to see the "manifold wisdom of God"? Can you see why it needs to be "made known *by the church*"?

12. Is all this really possible? After all, we're only human.

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, *let us go on to perfection*, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.—Hebrews 6:1

This verse acknowledges the "foundation" of Christianity, "repentance from dead works and... faith toward God," but then says, "Now let's put up the building!"

The importance of a solid foundation is a common idea in the New Testament. Paul especially liked the illustration, and used it seven different times in his epistles. But perhaps the most intriguing example is from Jesus Himself, when He spoke of someone who "laid the foundation," but was "not able to finish" the building. Jesus said that everyone who saw the uncompleted structure would mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." (Luke 14:29)

That's the idea here in Hebrews six: foundations are good, but by themselves they're kind of pointless.

Now, look where the passage takes us in order to build on the foundation—

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered

for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever.—Hebrews 6:19–20

This is most holy place language, through and through. Where Jesus, our “forerunner” has gone, He invites us to follow. As Gabriel told Daniel, the vision of the cleansing of the sanctuary is for the time of the end. But that is like the old saying, that you always find things the last place you look for them. That makes sense, because it’s really foolish to keep looking after you’ve found what you’re looking for.

The time of the end is like that. The reason the “cleansing of the sanctuary” is at the time of the end is just that God *can’t end* the plan of salvation until the sanctuary is cleansed.

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. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, *how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*—Hebrews 9:11–14

God needs this demonstration of a cleansed sanctuary and a cleansed people to “make manifest” His wisdom to the universe. Only then can He move forward with His plans for the rest of eternity. If that thought doesn’t make the sanctuary important to God’s people, nothing will.

Lesson Seven— The Big Picture

Review:

Lesson One—The purpose of the sanctuary is to remove the barriers of sin and guilt that keep us from face-to-face communion with God.

Lesson Two—The development of the sacrificial system and of the sanctuary services illustrate “progressive revelation.”

Lesson Three—The courtyard illustrates the means of forgiveness the Lord offers those willing to trust Him.

Lesson Four—The holy place, the first apartment of the tabernacle, illustrates God’s provision of the Holy Spirit, the scriptures, and the privilege of prayer.

Lesson Five—Through the daily services of the sanctuary the guilt of sin was placed first upon the sacrificial victim, and then lodged in the sanctuary itself. This atoned for the sinner, but defiled the sanctuary.

Lesson Six—The most holy place contained the ark of the covenant, and God’s law, the definition of righteousness and sin. On the Day of Atonement the sanctuary was cleansed of its defilement from the process of atoning for the people.

THIS final lesson will focus on an idea which we saw briefly in our last lesson, but didn’t take the time to explore in depth—the fulfillment of God’s Sacred Calendar.

I might just mention that we haven’t covered everything in the sanctuary—even though this is the final lesson. There is a lot more that we could look at. The clothes of the high priest, for instance, have a lot of fascinating symbolism, but the lessons haven’t spent any time on them.

I suspect the reason for this is that much of the symbolism of the sanctuary is repetitive. For example, there are probably a dozen symbols of God’s love in the high priest’s clothing. When you sit down to just study it out, it can almost get to be too much. It’s kind of like, “Oh look! Here’s another thing that shows that God loves us!”

Don’t get me wrong—that’s certainly not a bad thing. After all, how many times does God show us that He loves us in our daily lives? How many times is it illustrated in the Bible? In one sense, it’s pretty hard to over emphasize God’s love.

But, for the sake of time, it’s probably best that the lessons don’t try to document every symbol of the sanctuary. We’d have a lot more lessons to work through. Instead, I think they’re trying to focus on the pieces of truth that the sanctuary portrays more clearly than other parts of scripture.

We saw that there is to be a “cleansing” or “atoning for” of the sanctuary down in the “time of the end.” (Daniel 8:14–17) But there is no temple in Jerusalem—and even if one should be rebuilt there someday, Jesus is serving as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary and that’s where the cleansing is to take place. (Hebrews 9:23)

That much is clear enough, but it points to an important truth: the sanctuary services were an enacted prophecy of future events. As they went about the ceremonies God had set up, the Jews were acting out the future history of salvation. That’s what we want to look at in this lesson

1. “Future history”? Isn’t that an oxymoron?

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things.—
Hebrews 10:1

“Future history” is what predictive prophecy is all about. For us, it’s oxymoronic; for God, it’s pretty normal. Our job is trying to understand it.

That’s another good reason for studying the sanctuary, by the way—because it has the “shadow,” which can help us figure out what the reality is.

2. Does that mean that the sanctuary is all about the “time of the end,” like it said in Daniel chapter 8?

“Much,” but not “all.” The prophetic aspect of the sanctuary is split between two major time periods. Jesus’ return to earth at the time of the end is the second of the two, but the time of His death and resurrection came first. And since those prophecies have already happened, we can use them to check out the accuracy of the later prophecies.

This seems to be the pattern God uses. There’s a direct parallel to this in the prophecies of

Daniel 8 and 9. Daniel 8:14 is the verse we read in our last study, about the 2300 days until the cleansing of the sanctuary.

We don't have time to mess with all the details of this prophecy right now, but just be aware that Daniel 8 doesn't say when the starting point is.

That chapter by itself is like a mechanic who says it will take him three days to fix my car, but doesn't say when the three days will start. Makes it a bit hard to plan.

God took care of the problem in Daniel 9, where there is a related prophecy about the life and death of Jesus that starts at the same time as the one in Daniel 8, but doesn't go as far into the future. Verse 24 says that this second prophecy is "to seal up [the] vision and prophecy" of Daniel 8. In other words, if you get the shorter prophecy figured out right, you also know when the longer prophecy started.

Make sense?

3. The symbolism of the sacrifices is pretty vague as far as specific "history" is concerned. Is that the "prophecy" you're talking about?

No, there are prophetic details that are much more specific, especially concerning the last week of Jesus' life. These come from God's directions for the Passover ceremony. Let's look at some of them:

On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.—Exodus 12:3

On the tenth day of the month of Nisan, four days before the Passover, the head of every household was to select a lamb to be sacrificed.

On "Palm Sunday," the ninth day of Nisan, Jesus rode into Jerusalem, hailed as the "Son of David" by the multitudes. This alarmed the religious authorities, but when He returned the next day (the tenth of Nisan, four days before His crucifixion that coming Friday) and chased the moneychangers from the temple a second time, it was just too much. Mark says "The scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the

people were astonished at His teaching." (Mark 11:18) As predicted, the "Lamb of God" was set aside for death on schedule.

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year.—Exodus 12:5

The sinlessness of Christ is clearly stated in scripture, but at the time of His death—on Passover when every lamb was to be examined prior to the sacrifice—we have the testimony of Pilate no less than three times proclaiming, "I find no fault in Him." (John 18:38; 19:4; 19:6)

Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.—Exodus 12:6

The Passover was the fourteenth day of Nisan. Despite the high priest's desire that Christ's arrest be accomplished "not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people," Jesus died on the very day predicted.

You shall not... break one of its bones.—Exodus 12:46

The two thieves' legs were broken, so that they might be taken down from their crosses for the Sabbath, but Jesus—already dead from His superhuman struggle against guilt, doubt, and despair—was spared this further abuse. John recognized the prophetic fulfillment, and said, "these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'Not one of His bones shall be broken.'" (John 19:36)

There are more examples: Jesus rose on the day of the "Wave Sheaf," an offering of the first fruits to God. The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples fifty days after Passover on the day of Pentecost.

Taken together, the fulfillment of the spring-time feasts is beyond coincidence. These things had been prophesied; now they had been fulfilled.

4. Impressive. But what's the "future history" part? This is all in the past.

Let's look at that verse from Hebrews 10 (see question 1) in more complete context:

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. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.—Hebrews 10:1–2

Notice the logic here: the Old Testament sacrifices, though “offered continually,” were unable to make the believers “perfect.” And the proof of this is the on-going nature of the services. If the sacrifices had gotten the job done, the believers “would have had no more consciousness of sins,” meaning there would have been no more need for sacrifices.

5. Is that possible?

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.—Hebrews 10:4

No—not possible. Because the “blood of bulls and goats” was just a “shadow.” But notice—what the shadow *couldn't do* is what the reality *does*.

For by one offering He [Jesus] has *perfected forever* those who are being sanctified.—Hebrews 10:14

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,” then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” Now where there is remission of these, *there is no longer an offering for sin*.—Hebrews 10:16–18

6. No offering for sin? That doesn't sound good...

Actually, it's a wonderful thing. There is no offering, because there is no need for it. With God's law written in the hearts and minds of His people, rather than just on the tablets of stone, they don't need an offering for sin because they've stopped sinning. God's not one to keep a grudge, so He says “I'll forget all their sins.”

7. What's this got to do with the sanctuary?

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, and having a *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 10:19–22

Notice the scripture reference here—these verses come right after the quotation of the new covenant passage we just looked at. And this is sanctuary language again. Hebrews is telling us that the new covenant is connected with the sanctuary.

Is it a fluke? A coincidence? Let's look at the follow-up to another quotation of Jeremiah 31. This one is in Hebrews 8, and quotes even more of the original passage:

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them,” says the LORD. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”—Hebrews 8:8–12

The original passage is Jeremiah 31:31–34. Hebrews 10 quotes only a part of the original, but it's quoted fully here in Hebrews 8. This is the largest single Old Testament quotation in the New Testament. Almost enough to make you think it's important, isn't it?

That's the new covenant, and right on its heels come fourteen verses about the two sanctuaries, one on earth and the other in heaven. This link between the new covenant and the sanctuary seems quite deliberate.

The first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second

veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the *Holiest of All*, which had the *golden censer* and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the... tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat....

Notice the “golden censer.” The only time the golden censer was in the most holy place was on the Day of Atonement. This passage is not just talking about the sanctuary; it’s talking about the *cleansing* of the sanctuary. OK, let’s go on—

Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year.... 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....* 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. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, *cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*—Hebrews 9:1–14

8. But it’s been almost 2,000 years since Jesus died, and it hasn’t happened yet. Is something wrong here?

None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.—Hebrews 8:11

The new covenant isn’t just some magic trick that God decides to do one day. It’s a part of the whole “progressive revelation” idea we saw in Lesson Two. When God’s people “know Him” as they one day will, we will see the fulfillment of this promise and prophecy.

Speaking of “progressive revelation”: Do you remember what Stephen said in his last sermon just before he was killed? It’s in Acts 2:17 —“And it shall come to pass in the last days,” says God, “that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.”

Where did Stephen come up with this? Well, it’s actually a quotation from Joel 2:28. Because the full and final fulfillment of the new covenant comes about through a greater knowledge of God, He has promised to provide the gift of prophecy—His most direct line of communication to human beings—in the last days. Looks like we’ve got some learning to do!

9. After two thousand years—there’s more to learn about Christianity?

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.—Habakkuk 2:14

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.—Matthew 24:14

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.—Revelation 14:6

Remember in our last lesson, how we saw that the plan of salvation couldn’t end until the “cleansing of the sanctuary” had demonstrated the “manifold wisdom of God” for all the “principalities and powers in the heavenly places” to see? Notice the parallel here? Only after the gospel has gone, not just to “the world” in general, but to “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people,” will the end come.

The day is coming when “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” And while many will reject that knowledge, God says all His children will “know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.”

So how are you going to relate to this? You pretty much have two options: You can say, “I’m not going to hold my breath till *that* hap-

pens; after all, I've got a life to live," or you can say, "*It's going to happen!* God said so, and there is *nothing else* in my life that is as important as being a part of it when it plays out."

So... which is it going to be? Think about it.

10. But *when* is all this supposed to happen? Does the sanctuary tell us that, too?

Well, no, the sanctuary doesn't give us the whole schedule for every piece of God's plan. But it *does* let us know more or less where we are in the process. Let's get back to the idea of the Sacred Calendar.

Remember how the spring festivals (Passover, Wave Sheaf, Pentecost) were all fulfilled on time and in order by Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension? Well, the yearly cycle of festivals had more to it than just the spring. In the fall, there were three more festivals: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles completed the Sacred Calendar.

We've looked at the Day of Atonement because it was an integral part of the sanctuary service, but the other two festivals may need some introduction. The Feast of Trumpets came nine days before the Day of Atonement, and the trumpets in question were used to alert everyone that the Day of Atonement was coming. Because the atonement was a life-or-death issue, God made sure everyone knew about it in advance.

The week-long Feast of Tabernacles began five days after the Day of Atonement. It commemorated the final harvest of the year, and was a joyous time of gathering with friends and family for feasting and fellowship in Jerusalem.

11. What does the harvest represent? What does all this mean?

Look at the pattern of these festivals: first, there's a warning given, then the cases of all are decided for life or death, and finally there is a big happy get-together to celebrate the harvest. What do you suppose this might be depicting? Not sure?

Let's follow through a part of the book of Revelation. We'll start with something we've already looked at, chapter 14, verse 12:

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come."—Revelation 14:6–7

This verse is a warning: the day of judgment "has come." Not too surprisingly, Revelation next takes up the topic of what happens to those who are found faulty in the judgment. It's a pretty sobering picture, and it stretches all the way through chapter eighteen. This is some of the most graphic—and discussed—prophetic imagery to be found in all the Bible. These chapters deal with the "mark of the beast," the "seven last plagues," and "Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots."

Along the way, we have this portrayal of Christ:

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.... [Then] He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.—Revelation 14:14, 16

This is helpful, because it lets us know what the Scriptures are talking about. It's the second coming of Christ. Listen to the way it is described in Matthew 24:

"They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels... [to] gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:30–31)

Earlier in the book of Matthew, Jesus explained what was involved in gathering "His elect," and who would be given the job:

"At the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" [The] "harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels." (Matthew 13:30, 39–40)

The point here is just that the Biblical idea of harvesting or reaping necessarily includes the

idea of judgment and separation of the wheat from the tares.

Notice the images here in Revelation chapter fourteen: First a worldwide warning, then a judgment, and finally a harvest. Sounds a lot like the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, doesn't it?

12. What about the Feast of Tabernacles? Does it fit in here, too?

Finally, when all the wicked are dealt with, we get to chapter nineteen and its scenes of tumultuous joy:

After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!"... And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"—Revelation 19:1, 6–9

The warning has been given, the judgment has separated the tares from the wheat, friends and loved ones have been reunited by the resurrection, and the righteous are arrayed in the same "fine linen, clean and bright" that formed the defining outer curtain of the sanctuary; Now it's time for praise, rejoicing, and the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In other words, after the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, comes the rejoicing and celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles—this time in the New Jerusalem.

13. So—when does this all happen?

The warning message and the judgment of the dead began years ago. (Yes, there is Biblical support for a more specific answer than that, but that level of prophetic interpretation is bey-

ond the scope of these lessons. If you're interested, ask for a series of Bible lessons on prophecy.) But the judgment of the living—actually separating the tares from the wheat—and the final harvest of God's followers from this earth have not yet started.

Why not? Because the Lamb's bride hasn't "made herself ready." (Revelation 19:7)

Because the Church cannot yet be presented to Christ as "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but ... holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:27)

Because "the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" have not yet seen a clear display of the "manifold wisdom of God" demonstrated "by the church." (Ephesians 3:10)

Because so many of us (maybe *all* of us) need a neighbor or a brother to teach us to "know the Lord." (Jeremiah 31:34)

Won't you consider taking up this calling as your life mission?

Why not put all conflicting goals aside, and choose to be one whose full focus is to see the sanctuary finally closed down, and God forever at-one with His people.