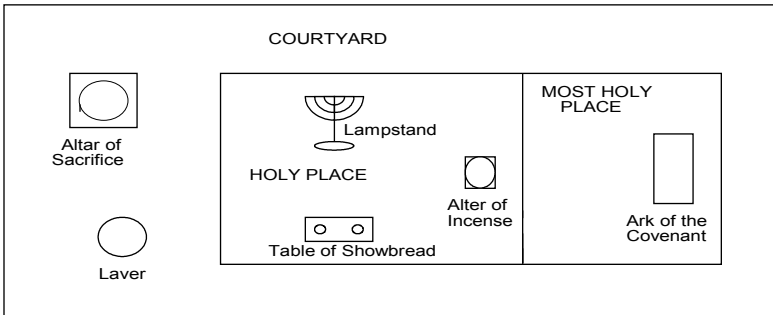


God Wants To Be Your Friend

When man sinned in the Garden of Eden, in mercy God withdrew His glorious presence from the earth. Sin had caused a separation between God and man. God did not choose to leave man – man chose to leave Him! And God is recorded in Exodus 33:20 as saying *“No man can see my face and live,”* meaning that sinful man could not live in the glorious presence of God. God could no longer walk with Adam and Eve *“in the cool of the evening”* as He had in the beginning. Yet in spite of this, God refused to abandon this world to the serpent, Satan. Though sin had brought this separation, God still longs to be with the man He has made.

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

The detailed instructions God gave for building the sanctuary are found in the book of Exodus. As seen in the diagram below, the sanctuary had three basic apartments. The Courtyard – The Holy Place – The Most Holy Place.



1. **The Courtyard** contained the altar of burnt offering and the laver (a type of basin used for ceremonial washings).

2. **The Holy place** contained the table of showbread, a seven-branch lamp stand, and the golden altar of incense.
3. **The Most Holy place** was separated from the Holy place by a veil and contained the Ark of the Covenant, in which was placed the Ten Commandments.

New Testament texts teach us that the furnishings in the sanctuary represented Christ. For example:

John 6:35 *“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger”.*

(Represented by the table of showbread in the Holy Place)

John 8:12 *“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world”*

(Represented by the lamp stand in the Holy Place)

Hebrews 10:20 *“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh”*

(Represented by the veil that separated the Holy from the Most Holy Place)

In addition to the directions in building of the sanctuary, we find in Leviticus God gave detailed instructions on how to perform all the rituals and sacrifices that were to take place in the sanctuary. Certain things were to be performed by the priests every day on behalf of the people. These rituals were known to the Israelites as “The Daily.” These represented the work of Christ on behalf of mankind. Example:

The most common sacrifice was “The Burnt Offering” – This offering clearly represented Christ’s sacrifice.

Leviticus 1:3,4 says that the burnt offering would be a *“male lamb without blemish.”*

I Peter 1:19 connects this part of the sacrifice with Christ: *“But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish.”*

And again in Leviticus 1:9 it says that the burnt offering would be an *“offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.”*

Now compare Ephesians 5:1,2 in the New Testament and note the connection to this part of offering - *“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.”*

It is clear that this sacrificial offering represented Christ who willingly gave His all for us.

Other ritual sacrifices included:

“The Meat or Meal Offering” – to signify thanks to God for His provision. *“The Peace Offering”* – signified thanksgiving to God for peace, with Him or a fellowman. *“The Sin Offering”* – for sins of ignorance and the *“Trespass Offering”* – for willful sin.

Again the New Testament helps us understand that the sacrifices were intended to remind the people that sin leads to death and to point them to the Savior –

Hebrews 10:3 says, *“But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.”*

Romans 6:23 says, *“The wages of sin is death.”*

John 1:29 says that Jesus is, *“the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”*

In addition to the daily rituals there were seven annual or yearly ceremonies. All these ceremonies pointed to the work of Christ. The Feast of Passover pointed to His death; the Feast of Unleavened Bread pointed to His burial; the feast of Firstfruits pointed to His resurrection. Following those were the Feast of Weeks, which pointed to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and then the Feast of Trumpets pointed to warning of judgment; the Day of Atonement, which pointed to final judgment, and finally the Feast of Tabernacles, which pointed to the time when judgment was over and all God’s people are gathered in their heavenly home.

All of these ceremonies and rituals were “*a shadow of good things to come.*” They all pointed forward to Christ’s coming and man’s eternal salvation.

Hebrews 10:1 says, “*For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of these things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.*”

The “*good things to come*” was the knowledge of a heavenly sanctuary that is to take the place the earthly sanctuary and a righteous, divine High Priest that is to take place of the fallible human priest.

Hebrews 4:14-16 “*Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*”

Hebrews 8:1,2 – “*Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on 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 pitched, and not man.*”

The earthly sanctuary and its services served as a visual aid until “*the time of reformation,*” when the old “covenant” or arrangement with all its visual aids and symbols would be replaced with the new covenant or new arrangement. This new arrangement is much better because instead of visual aids, God himself in the person of Jesus Christ came to show them the Way of Salvation.

Hebrews 9:8 - 12 “*The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: **Which was a figure for the time then present,** in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. **But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come,** by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not*

made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

What is the work of Christ's as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary today?

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

We are reconciled to God by His death. In other words, we are "set right," (justified) or won back to God by the death of Christ. However, being won back, many times some still have the tendency to stray away again. Therefore we need His help to stay close to God once we have been won back. The following text helps us to understand what it means to be "saved by his life."

Hebrews 7:25 - *"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."*

He is there continually to help us, to keep us close, to restore us if we fall. He is not there pleading with His Father to forgive us; They are One, working together to save us. Christ is pleading with us to come to Him, to stay close, to remind us of His sacrifice that won us back to Him and continually reminding us that He wants to keep us with Him forever.

Hebrews 4:16 tells us, *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

We can go directly to God ourselves. It is not necessary to go to a rabbi, or a priest, or a preacher for intercession with God.

Where did the idea that we must have a human intercessor with God come from? It came from the picture of God in the Old Testament, where some see God as a God of anger and wrath.

We go back to Exodus 20 and the time that God came down on Mt. Sinai and gave the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:18,19 – *“And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”*

In an awesome display of power, God got their attention, and they listened, but they were afraid and wanted someone between them and God. Since they saw that Moses was close to God, they wanted him as a “go-between.”

But think this through. Was Moses a man? Yes. Then who was between God and Moses? No one. What was the difference? The difference was that the people didn't know God that well and not knowing him, they were afraid of Him as many are yet today because of the lies of Satan about God's nature.

As we learned in a previous lesson, we can't go up to heaven to learn about God, so He, in the person of Jesus Christ came down to make a contact with us. This is what it means when the Bible says He is our intercessor. Remember - Jesus came to show us what God is really like and to teach us that there is no reason to be afraid of Him. Jesus is the only “go between” we need.

Having said that, there is one who stands between us and God. But he is not trying to connect us with God, rather he is trying to separate us from God. He is an enemy. Who is the enemy? Satan, the accuser! Satan has done everything he can to keep us from the truth about God.

How do you relate to God? Is there someone or some-thing in-between you and God? Is God your friend? He wants to be – Jesus tells us exactly how God wants to relate to us:

John 15:14,15 - *“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servant; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”*

It is wonderful to be His servant – We want to hear Christ say to us *“Well done thou good and faithful servant.”* We rejoice that we are considered the children of God – *“What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God”*

But our Heavenly Father wants us to come even higher and closer still, He wants us to be His faithful, loyal friends! Proverbs 18:24 says *“there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

God is extending His hand in friendship to you! Won't you reach out and grasp it? Won't you continue to study to learn more about our gracious heavenly Father?

Response Questions:

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