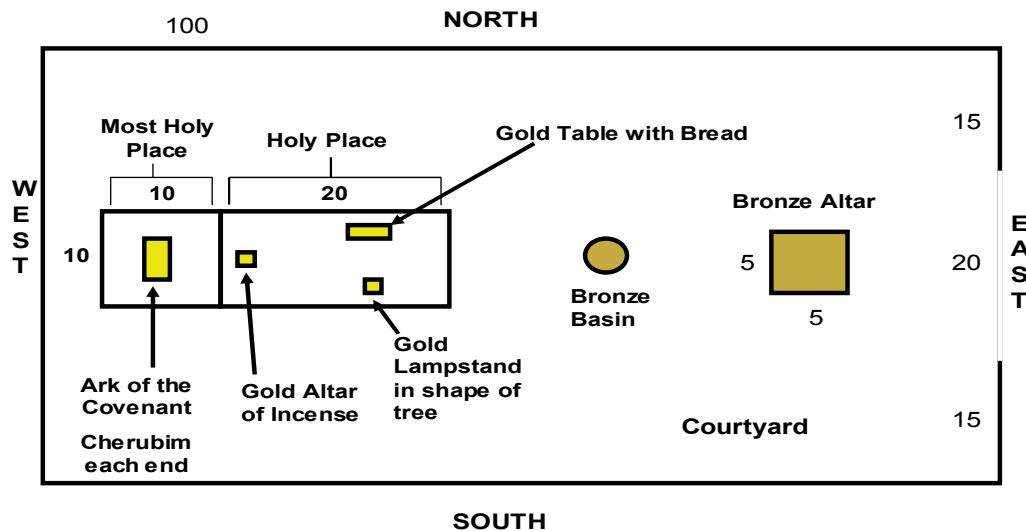


# Leviticus / Old Testament Worship

## The Holiness of God

### 1. Temple construction: God is near, yet inapproachable



The three areas were carefully guarded and separated by heavy curtains. The Courtyard was for ordinary Israelites to bring their sacrifices.

The Holy Place was maintained by ordinary priests, who also conducted all the sacrifices.

The Most Holy Place was only entered one day a year, the Day of Atonement, and only by the High Priest. This is where God symbolically dwelt, his footstool being the Ark of the Covenant, crowned with 2 Cherubim.

The actual sacrifices were carried out on the Bronze Altar, and burned there.

As the smoke rose as an offering to God, incense was burned on the Gold Altar, symbolising that the sacrifice was reaching God's presence (heaven) and was pleasing to him.

→ God was with his people, but they couldn't get easy access.

→ God is both near to us and far from us. Many problems come when we get this balance wrong or overemphasise one at the cost of the other. (Discuss)

**Discuss:**

Imagine a Priest walking from the entrance to the Courtyard, past the altar, the basin, and into the Holy / Most Holy Place. How do the sites he sees on his walk teach him the Gospel? (Have a look at Ephesians 5:25b-27)

What lessons are to learn from Mark 15:37-8?

**2. The High Priest: Only one man can approach God**

The 'ordinary' Israelites weren't able to perform sacrifices themselves, or to enter the Holy Places. The Priests were appointed by God from the tribe of Levi to act as 'mediators' or 'go-betweens'. The High Priest alone could enter God's presence in the Most Holy Place,

i) Read Exodus 28:1-13 and cast your eye over the rest of the chapter. Why do you think there is such emphasis on how the High Priest is dressed? Use Genesis 3:6-10, 3:21, Zechariah 3:1-5, and Galatians 3:27.

ii) What is the significance of 28:9-12 for us? Use Hebrews 8:1-6. What does it mean that Jesus is our Great High Priest?

**3. The Sacrifices: Substitutionary Death.**

There are 4 different animal sacrifices or offerings described in the book of Leviticus. Some of these emphasise the need for the removal of sin, others fellowship with God or the removal of guilt. The basic pattern (though there are variations) is:

- |                            |   |   |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| a) Lay Hands on animal     | → | Substitution of animal for person       |
| b) Kill animal             | → | Sin deserves death, so 'sinner' dies.   |
| c) Sprinkle Blood on altar | → | Evidence for death                      |
| d) Burn Offering           | → | Smoke purifies, makes acceptable to God |
| e) Meal                    | → | Fellowship between man and God          |

We can see these stages worked out in Christ's sacrifice for us. He is our substitute who dies for us, presents his blood before the Father in the true tabernacle of heaven, thus purifying us and allowing us to have fellowship with God.

**Discuss:**

The 5<sup>th</sup> offering is described in Leviticus 2, the 'Grain' or 'Memorial' offering. In 2:2 who is receiving the 'memorial'? Compare this with the rainbow in Gen 9:12-16. Jesus also uses this word in Luke 22:19 when using the bread to institute the Lord's Supper (Communion). How does all this help us understand what he means? To whom is the bread a reminder?

#### **4. *The Day of Atonement***

The most important date in the Jewish Calendar was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when the whole community's sins were dealt with.

Leviticus 16:1-2 If you come in at the wrong time, you'll die: it's serious!  
4 Put on the linen garments.

During the day the HP is to sacrifice a bull for his own sins, (a purification offering), and later offer an ascension or burnt offering for himself. But concentrating on his work for the rest of Israel:

V 7-10 Choose two goats, one to be the sin offering, the other the 'scapegoat'.

V16-17 The Sin offering goat dies, and its blood presented in place of Israel, to cleanse the tabernacle. The Blood is taken into the Most Holy Place, and sprinkled between the Cherubim on the ark.

V20-22 The Scapegoat is driven out into the wilderness, taking the sin away.

V23-4 Aaron takes off his linen clothes and leave them at the entrance to the Most Holy Place.

## **Discuss**

How do the 2 goats symbolise Jesus' work?

Two key Words: Propitiation: God's wrath averted, turned aside through Christ's death. Romans 3:25 'God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement'

Expiation: Our sins wiped clean, removed.

Heb 9:28 'Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people'

There is much pressure in the church to get rid of the first of these concepts. But this is deadly:

Hebrews 9:22 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.'

## **Advanced Discussion! Or some fun homework...**

Read John 20:1-12. Noting some of the odd details, that don't seem to have a lot of relevance, try and picture the scene. What is John trying to make allusion to?

Clue: Note: John staying outside, Peter going in, the word 'linen' repeated and emphasis on the clothes left behind, the position of the angels...