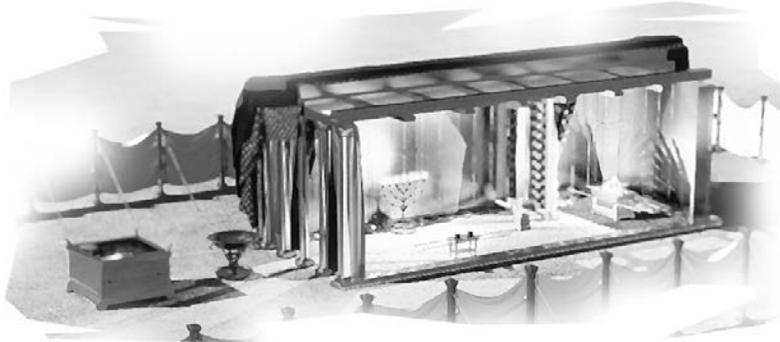


Lessons From the Sanctuary¹

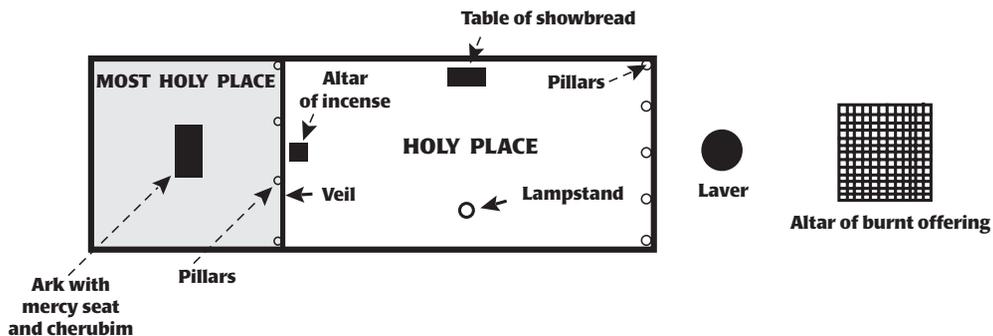


SABBATH—OCTOBER 19

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 40:9, 10; Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:14–16; Exodus 31:2–11; Romans 3:25–28; 1 Kings 8:31–53; Psalm 73:1–17.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Have them make a sacred [holy] tent [sanctuary] for me. I will live among them’ ” (Exodus 25:8, NIV).

THE SANCTUARY IS ONE OF GOD'S IMPORTANT TOOLS IN TEACHING US THE MEANING OF THE GOSPEL (GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS). As we study the sanctuary this week, the drawing below will be helpful:



This week's lesson shows some of the important lessons taught by the earthly sanctuary (God's home on earth). We will study the sacrificial system² later.

1. sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times. Here the high priest offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

2. sacrificial system—in the Jewish sanctuary (house of worship) service, animals were sacrificed (put to death) as a symbol to show that the people of Israel received forgiveness of sins. This service helped to point people to the future sacrifice (death) of Jesus Christ on the cross for their sins.

SUNDAY—OCTOBER 20**PLACE OF THE PRESENCE (GOD)
(Exodus 25:8)**

According to Exodus 25:8, what was the purpose of the earthly sanctuary in the wilderness? What wonderful truth does this teach us about God’s love for us?

In the Garden of Eden, sin had broken the face-to-face relationship between God and humans. But the Creator still wanted to bring us closer to Himself and to enjoy a deep relationship with sinners. He began this relationship right there in Eden. Many hundreds of years later, God saved Israel from Egypt and started the sanctuary and the sacrificial system. God again took the first step in bringing humans closer to Him.

So, the sanctuary shows God’s desire to live among His people. This is God’s idea (Psalm 132:13, 14). God’s goal is relationship, and the sanctuary was His chosen way of doing it. The sanctuary is the proof of God’s presence with His people on earth.

Numbers 2 describes the tabernacle (sanctuary; house of God) as being located in the center of the square camp. In the Near East in Bible times, the king would place his tent in the center. So, the tabernacle is a sign that God is the King over Israel.

Meanwhile, the Levites³ placed

their tents around the tabernacle (Numbers 1:53). And the other tribes put theirs farther around “at a distance” (Numbers 2:2, NASB) in groups of three. This shows both the nearness of God and, at the same time, how far off He is from us because our sins separate us from Him.

Another purpose of the sanctuary was to be a center for a God-supported system of worship. Because God’s home was in the middle of fallen people, He required a system of sacrifices and offerings. In this way, unholy people could live and remain near to a Holy God.

So, the sanctuary showed God’s plan for our salvation. This plan included the sacrifices and the ministry (work done for God) of the priesthood. They were an important part of the plan of salvation, too.

With the sanctuary, the Creator of the universe was the One who made all that was made (read John 1:1–3). He lowered Himself to live among homeless people (the Jews) in the desert. How should this fact alone help us avoid having negative feelings against groups of people or individuals we do not like?

MONDAY—OCTOBER 21**“BE YE HOLY” (1 Peter 1:14–16)**

Exodus 40:9, 10 shows us that the sanctuary was to be thought of as “holy.” The basic idea of holiness is

3. Levites—the tribe of Israel that was set apart to be the priests and assistants who worked in the sanctuary.

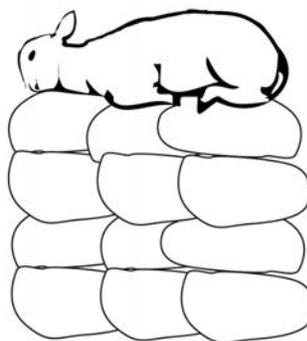
that it is separate and special and belongs to God.

“The sanctuary service was the connecting link between God and Israel. The sacrificial offerings were designed to symbolize [stand for] the sacrifice of Christ. In this way they kept in the hearts of the people a strong faith in the Savior to come. Then the Lord would accept their sacrifices, and they would desire His continuing presence among them. And the Lord wanted the people to have a correct knowledge of the plan of salvation. He also wanted them to have a right understanding of their duty. So, it was very important that the people always be holy and pure in heart and life and obey all the rules of the sanctuary strictly.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 2, page 1010.

According to Leviticus 19:2 and 1 Peter 1:14–16, what is the basic reason for the people to be holy?

God’s holiness changes us and makes us special. His holiness is the real reason for all kinds of people to act properly (read Leviticus 19). They should follow strict laws on diet (Leviticus 11:44, 45). They should respect the priest (Leviticus 21:8). And they should give up their past lusts for wrong things (1 Peter 1:14). Clearly, God wants us to grow in holiness as we get closer to Him. This change can come if we give up our sinful natures and are willing to do what is right.

Think about yourself, your habits, your tastes, and your activities. How “holy” are you in everything you do? Do you think this question is rather tough to answer?



The sacrificial offerings symbolized the death of Christ.

TUESDAY—OCTOBER 22

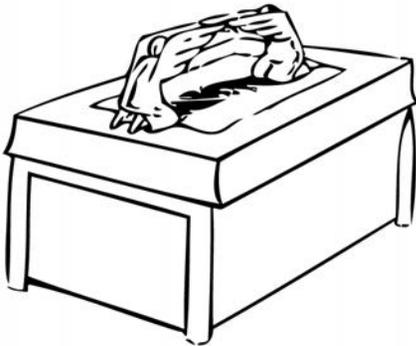
TOOLS OF THE SANCTUARY (Exodus 31:2–11)

Read Exodus 31:2–11. What do these verses teach us about how the furniture and other things were made for the earthly sanctuary? What connection is there with Genesis 1:2? (Read also Exodus 25:9.)

Of all the things in the sanctuary, the ark of the testimony was the best symbol of God’s presence and holiness. The name comes from the two stone tablets of the law, called the “testimony” (Exodus 32:15, 16). They were placed inside the ark (Exodus 25:16, 21).

On top of the ark was the “mercy seat,” or cover. Two cherubim

(angels) protected the cover with their wings (Exodus 25:17–21). It was called the “atonement [forgiveness] cover” (NIV). This is because it suggests the idea that our merciful and kind God has reconciled⁴ the people with Himself and therefore made it possible for them to continue a relationship with Him.



The ark was the best symbol of God’s holiness.

This is the place where the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur* in the Hebrew) was held once every year. Atonement (forgiveness and cleansing) for the people and the sanctuary took place on that day (Leviticus 16:14–16). In Romans 3:25, Paul speaks of Jesus as “atonement cover” (usually translated as “propitiation [sin-payment],” KJV, or “sacrifice of atonement,” NIV). That is because Jesus Himself is the place of redemption (freedom from sin). God has made atonement (forgiveness) for our sins through His Son Jesus.

In the Holy Place, or the first compartment (room) of the sanctu-

ary, the lampstand continually gave light (Leviticus 24:1–4). The altar of incense (perfume) created the protective smoke that hid God from the priest (Leviticus 16:12, 13). Then 12 loaves of bread were put on the table. The 12 loaves represented the 12 tribes of Israel. Dishes, pans, jars, and bowls (Exodus 25:29, 30) also were placed on the table. Little information is given about what these things meant. But they seemed to represent the important parts of an agreement, or meal, between God and His people. (Read Exodus 24:11.) This meal served as a reminder of God’s promise of a good relationship with His people.

Read Romans 3:25–28. What great hope can we learn from God’s promise that “people are made right . . . because of their faith. They are not saved by obeying” (NIV)?



Protective smoke from the altar of incense (perfume) hid God from the priest.

4. reconciled—brought back into a right relationship.

WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 23

**CENTER OF GOD'S ACTIVITY
IN THE SANCTUARY
(1 Kings 8:31–53)**

Read 1 Kings 8:31–53. What more does this verse teach us about the work of the sanctuary?

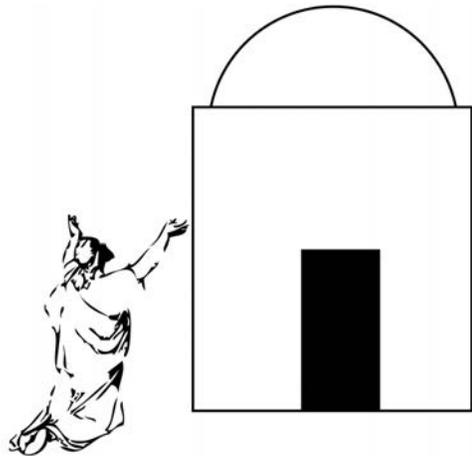
At the dedication ceremony of the newly built temple, King Solomon offered seven reasons for prayers that could be offered at the temple. The seven reasons show how important the role of the temple was in the lives of the Israelites. The temple was a place for (1) asking for forgiveness (verse 30); (2) for oath swearing (verses 31, 32); (3) for praying for help when a battle was lost (verses 33, 34); (4) for praying during a famine (verses 35, 36); or (5) when other sad events happened (verses 37–40). It was also a place (6) for the foreigner to pray (verses 41–43) and (7) for praying for victory (verses 44, 45).

The temple was designed to be “‘a house where people from all nations can pray’ ” (Isaiah 56:7, NIV). This becomes very clear when we understand that Solomon pictured each Israelite and each foreigner—in other words, all people—as worshipers.

The sanctuary was the perfect center for all activities in Israel. Religion was not just a part of the believer's life. Instead, it was life. What does this tell us about how important our faith should be in our own lives, too?

When the people wanted to receive advice or judgment, or if they repented (turned away) from their sins, they went to the sanctuary. The sanctuary was also the center of life during the desert years of Israel. When God wanted to talk to His people, He did it from the sanctuary (Exodus 25:22). So, the sanctuary is called the “Tent of Meeting” (for example, Leviticus 1:1, NIV).

Think about your prayer life. How deep, how rich, how faith-supporting and life-changing is your prayer life? Perhaps the first question you need to ask yourself is: *how much time do I spend in prayer?*



Solomon pictured the temple as a house of prayer for all people.

THURSDAY—OCTOBER 24

**“UNTIL I WENT INTO THE
SANCTUARY OF GOD”
(Psalm 73:1–17)**

Often the Psalms show that the sanctuary plays an important part in the relationship between believers

and God. At the end of Psalm 23, David showed his strong belief that he “will live in the house of the LORD forever” (verse 6, Nlrv). David’s greatest wish in Psalm 27 was to be with God. The best place for it was in the sanctuary. David wanted to show how much he loved to talk about the sanctuary. So, he used many words for the sanctuary. He called it the “house of the Lord,” “temple,” “tabernacle,” and “tent.” It is in the sanctuary that a person can think deeply and “look at the beauty of the LORD” (Psalm 27:4, Nlrv).

The activities of God in the sanctuary teach us some important lessons. God keeps the worshiper safe and hides him in His sanctuary, even in tough times (Psalm 27:5). God gives a safe place and promises peace of mind for all who come into His presence. These sentences connect the beauty of God to what He does for His people. In addition, the sanctuary service with its symbols shows the goodness and justice of God.

The greatest goal of David’s deepest desire was not only just to be in the sanctuary but for God to be with him. That is why David is determined to “seek” God (Psalm 27:4, 8).

Read Psalm 73:1–17. What insights did Asaph learn from entering the sanctuary?

In Psalm 73, Asaph discussed the problem of suffering. He could not understand that the wicked seemed to be successful (verses 4–12) while the faithful were suffering. He himself

almost slipped (verses 1–3), but going into the sanctuary made the difference for him (verses 13–17). There Asaph could see the same power and glory (beauty) of God that David is talking about in Psalm 63:2. Asaph recognizes that the present conditions (state) will one day change, and justice will be done. Asaph had new thoughts about the truth and now believed that in the end the wicked are on slippery ground (Psalm 73:18–20) and the faithful are safe (verses 21–28). For those who look for God, the sanctuary becomes a stronghold of life, where God will put them “on a rock that is very high” (Psalm 27:5, Nlrv). From the truth that the sanctuary service teaches, we can learn to trust in the goodness and the justice of God.

FRIDAY—OCTOBER 25

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, “The Tabernacle [House of God on Earth] and Its Services,” pages 343–358, in *Patriarchs [Leaders and Forefathers] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*.

“Careful planning was necessary for the building of the sanctuary. A large amount of the most expensive things was required. But the Lord accepted only freewill offerings. ‘Receive the gift for Me from every person whose heart makes him willing’ (Exodus 25:2, NLV) was God’s command to the group of people through Moses. Being faithful to God and willing to sacrifice were the first

requirements for those building a home for God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 343.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Think more deeply about the question of God’s justice. We see so little justice in this world now. Without the hope of God’s justice, why would there be no hope of justice at all?

❷ Someone wrote: “The tabernacle [sanctuary] is a piece of holy ground in a world that has lost its way.” What does that mean to you?

❸ Read 1 Peter 1:14–16. In what way do you understand God’s holiness? For you, what does it mean to be holy yourself? How can we become holy?

❹ The sons of Eli are an example of people who were “close” to God but who lost their way because they failed to respect God’s holiness (1 Samuel 2:12–17). How can you avoid losing

respect for God’s holiness? Why are prayer, study, and obedience important in helping us to understand His holiness?

❺ “The most important part of the daily work in the sanctuary was the service done for individuals. The repentant [sorrowful] sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle. He then put his hand upon the animal’s head and confessed his sins. In this way the sinner placed [put] his sins away from himself onto the innocent sacrifice. By the sinner’s own hand the animal was then killed, and the blood was carried by the priest into the Holy Place and sprinkled before the veil. Behind the veil was the ark. Inside the ark was the law that the sinner had broken. Through this ceremony the sin was symbolically moved to the sanctuary.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 354. How does Ellen G. White help us to understand several examples of how the sanctuary service pictured people being saved by faith?