

## Lessons From *the* Sanctuary

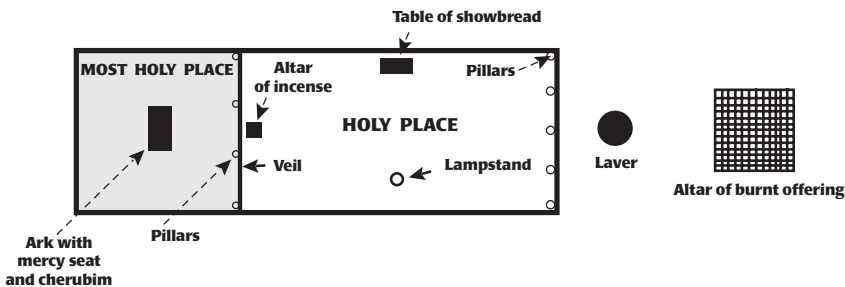


### SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week’s Study:** *Exod. 40:9, 10; Lev. 19:2; 1 Pet. 1:14–16; Exod. 31:2–11; Rom. 3:25–28; 1 Kings 8:31–53; Ps. 73:1–17.*

**Memory Text:** “ ‘Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them’ ” (*Exodus 25:8, NASB*).

The sanctuary is one of God’s major devices to teach us the meaning of the gospel. As we study the sanctuary this week, the drawing below will be helpful:



This week’s lesson focuses on some of the major insights provided by the earthly sanctuary. We will study the sacrificial system later.

\*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 26.

## Place of the Presence

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

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In the Garden of Eden, sin had broken the face-to-face relationship between God and humanity. Sin forfeited our first parents' unhindered communion with God. However, the Creator still desired to draw us to Himself and to enjoy a deep covenant relationship with fallen humanity, and He began this process right there in Eden. Centuries later, in saving Israel out of Egypt and establishing the sanctuary and the sacrificial system, God again took the initiative in bringing humanity back into His presence.

The sanctuary thus testifies of God's unceasing desire to dwell among His people. This is God's idea (*Ps. 132:13, 14*). His ultimate goal is relationship, and the sanctuary services were His chosen means to illustrate that relationship. The sanctuary is the tangible evidence of God's presence with His people on earth.

From the description in Numbers 2, it is evident that the tabernacle was located in the center of the square encampment, where, as was customary in the ancient Near East, the king would place his tent. So, the tabernacle symbolizes that God is the King over Israel.

The Levites, meanwhile, placed their tents around the tabernacle (*Num. 1:53*), and the other tribes put theirs farther around at a "distance" in groups of three (*Num. 2:2*). This illustrates in a tangible way both the nearness and the distance of God.

Another purpose of the sanctuary was to provide a location for a centralized, divinely ordained system of worship. Because God's presence in the midst of the people was jeopardized by their impurities and moral failings, He provided a system of sacrifices and offerings through which unholy people could live and remain in the presence of a Holy God.

So, in this context, the sanctuary revealed details regarding the plan of redemption, which included not only the sacrifices but the ministry of the priesthood, which was an integral part of the plan of redemption, as well.

**With the sanctuary, the Creator of the universe, the One who made all that was made (see John 1:1–3), lowered Himself to dwell among homeless wanderers in the desert. How should this fact alone help us avoid harboring ethnic, class, or cultural prejudices against anyone?**

## “Be Ye Holy”

“And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof: and it shall be holy.

“And thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy” (*Exod. 40:9, 10*).

Exodus 40:9, 10 shows us that the sanctuary was to be regarded as “holy.” The basic idea of holiness is separateness and uniqueness, in combination with one’s belonging to God.

“The typical service was the connecting link between God and Israel. The sacrificial offerings were designed to prefigure the sacrifice of Christ, and thus to preserve in the hearts of the people an unwavering faith in the Redeemer to come. Hence, in order that the Lord might accept their sacrifices, and continue His presence with them, and, on the other hand, that the people might have a correct knowledge of the plan of salvation, and a right understanding of their duty, it was of the utmost importance that holiness of heart and purity of life, reverence for God, and strict obedience to His requirements, should be maintained by all connected with the sanctuary.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1010.

**Read** Leviticus 19:2 and 1 Peter 1:14–16. What is the primary reason for the people to be holy?

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God’s holiness transforms us and sets us apart. His holiness is the ultimate motivation for the ethical conduct of His people in all spheres of life (*see Leviticus 19*), whether that be observing the dietary laws (*Lev. 11:44, 45*), respecting the priest (*Lev. 21:8*), or not conforming to former lusts (*1 Pet. 1:14*). Obviously, God wants us to grow in holiness as we become closer to Him. This change can come about only through a self-surrender of our sinful natures and through a willingness to do what is right, regardless of the consequences.

**Think about yourself, your habits, your tastes, your activities, et cetera. How much of what you are, and what you do, would be considered “holy”? It is kind of a tough question to face, isn’t it?**

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## Instruments of the Sanctuary

**Read** Exodus 31:2–11. What do these verses teach us about the making of the objects in the earthly sanctuary? What link is there with Genesis 1:2? See also *Exod. 25:9*.

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Of all the objects in the sanctuary, the ark of the testimony was the supreme symbol of God’s presence and holiness. The name derives from the two stone tablets of the law, called the “testimony” (*Exod. 32:15, 16*), that were placed inside the ark (*Exod. 25:16, 21*).

On top of the ark was placed the “mercy seat,” with two cherubim overshadowing the cover with their wings (*Exod. 25:17–21*). It is appropriately called the “atonement cover” (*NIV*), for it conveys the idea that our compassionate and gracious God has reconciled the people with Himself and made every provision for them to maintain a covenant relationship with Him.

This is the place where, once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur in the Hebrew), atonement for the people and the sanctuary took place (*Lev. 16:14–16*). In Romans 3:25, Paul refers to Jesus as “atonement cover” (usually translated as “propitiation” or “sacrifice of atonement”), for Jesus Himself is the place of Redemption, the One through whom God has made atonement for our sins.

In the Holy Place, the first compartment, the lampstand continually provided light (*Lev. 24:1–4*), and the altar of incense produced the protective smoke that concealed the presence of God from the priest (*Lev. 16:12, 13*). On the table for the bread of the presence were placed twelve loaves of bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Dishes, pans, jars, and bowls (*Exod. 25:29, 30*) also were placed on the table. Although little information is given about the significance of these items, it seems that they represented the elements of a covenant meal (*recalling Exod. 24:11*) and served as a constant reminder of God’s covenant with the people.

**Read** Romans 3:25–28. What great hope can we take from the promise of salvation “by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (*NKJV*)?

## Center of Divine and Communal Activity

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

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At the dedication ceremony of the newly built temple, King Solomon offered seven kinds of specific prayers that could be offered at the temple. The seven functions exemplify the extensive role of the temple in the lives of the Israelites. The temple was a place for seeking forgiveness (*vs. 30*); for oath swearing (*vss. 31, 32*); for supplication when defeated (*vss. 33, 34*); for petition when faced with drought (*vss. 35, 36*) or other disasters (*vss. 37–40*). It was also a place for the foreigner to pray (*vss. 41–43*), as well as a place to petition for victory (*vss. 44, 45*).

That the temple was intended to be a “‘house of prayer for all the peoples’ ” (*Isa. 56:7, NASB*) becomes evident from the fact that Solomon envisioned the individual Israelite, the foreigner, and the entire population as petitioners.

**The** sanctuary was the ideological center of basically all activity in Israel. Religion was not just part of the believer’s life, even if it was a major part; it was life. What does this tell us about the role that our faith should play in our own lives?

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When the people wanted to receive advice or judgment, or if they repented of their sins, they went to the sanctuary. The sanctuary was also the hub of life during the desert years of Israel. When God desired to communicate to His people, He did so from the sanctuary (*Exod. 25:22*). Therefore, it is appropriately called the “tent of meeting” (*for example, Lev. 1:1, NASB*).

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

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## “Until I Went Into the Sanctuary of God”

Time and again, the Psalms show that the sanctuary plays a significant part in the relationship between believers and God. Well known is the firm conviction David expressed at the end of Psalm 23 that he “will dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (*vs. 6, NKJV*). David’s foremost wish in Psalm 27 was to be in the presence of Yahweh, a presence that was best experienced in the sanctuary. In order to show how much he cherished the sanctuary, David used the full range of expressions to refer to it, calling it the house of the Lord, the temple, the tabernacle, and the tent. It is there that one can meditate and “behold the beauty of the LORD” (*Ps. 27:4, NKJV*).

The activities of God in the sanctuary illustrate some crucial points: He keeps the worshiper safe and hides him in His sanctuary, even in tough times (*Ps. 27:5*). God provides secure refuge and assures peace of mind for all who come into His presence. These expressions connect the beauty of God to what He does for His people. In addition, the sanctuary service with its symbolic significance shows the goodness and justice of God.

The ultimate object of David’s deepest desire was not only simply to be in the sanctuary but for Yahweh to be present with him. That is why David resolves to “seek” God (*Ps. 27:4, 8*).

**Read** Psalm 73:1–17. Which insights did Asaph receive after entering the sanctuary?

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In Psalm 73, Asaph addressed the problem of suffering. He could not understand the apparent success of the wicked (*vss. 4–12*) while the faithful were afflicted. He himself almost slipped (*vss. 1–3*), but going into the sanctuary made the difference for him (*vss. 13–17*). There, Asaph could see the same power and glory of God that David mentions in Psalm 63:2 and recognize that the present conditions will one day change and justice will be done. He could reflect anew on the truth and receive reaffirmation that, in the end, the wicked are on slippery ground (*Ps. 73:18–20*) and the faithful are secure (*vss. 21–28*). For those who seek God, the sanctuary becomes a place of confidence and a stronghold of life, one where God will set them “high upon a rock” (*Ps. 27:5, NKJV*). From the truth that the sanctuary service teaches, we can indeed learn to trust in the goodness and the justice of God.

**Further Study:** Ellen G. White, “The Tabernacle and Its Services,” pp. 343–358, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“For the building of the sanctuary great and expensive preparations were necessary; a large amount of the most precious and costly material was required; yet the Lord accepted only freewill offerings. ‘Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take My offering’ was the divine command repeated by Moses to the congregation. Devotion to God and a spirit of sacrifice were the first requisites in preparing a dwelling place for the Most High.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 343.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Dwell more on the question of God’s justice. We see so little justice in this world now. Why, then, without the ultimate hope of God’s justice, would there be no hope of justice at all?
- ❷ Someone wrote: “The tabernacle is a piece of holy ground amid 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? 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 appreciation of His holiness (1 Sam. 2:12–17). How can you avoid losing a sense of God’s holiness? Why are prayer, study, and obedience crucial in helping us to preserve the awareness of His holiness?
- ❺ “The most important part of the daily ministration was the service performed in behalf of individuals. The repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle, and, placing his hand upon the victim’s head, confessed his sins, thus in figure transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice. By his own hand the animal was then slain, and the blood was carried by the priest into the holy place and sprinkled before the veil, behind which was the ark containing the law that the sinner had transgressed. By this ceremony the sin was, through the blood, transferred in figure to the sanctuary.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 354. How does this quote help us to understand the ways in which “salvation by faith” was revealed in the sanctuary service?

## The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** *Psalms 27:4–14*

► **The Student Will:**

**Know:** Comprehend God’s beauty, truth, and goodness in the sanctuary message.

**Feel:** Emulate David’s experience in the sanctuary.

**Do:** Choose to experience not only “sanctuary prayer” but “sanctuary life.”

► **Learning Outline:**

### I. Know: Beauty, Truth, and Goodness in the Sanctuary

**A** David’s quest was centered in the sanctuary (*Ps. 27:4*). Was this only temporary, or was it his life goal?

**B** David desired to “see the beauty of the Lord” reflected in the sanctuary. What did this actually involve?

**C** David also desired to “inquire [investigate God’s truth] in His temple.” What is the “present truth” of the sanctuary message to be investigated closely in these last days?

**D** David also saw “the goodness of the Lord” in the sanctuary (*Ps. 27:13, NKJV*). What experiences were included in this encounter (*Ps. 27:6–12*)?

**E** The sanctuary message is a way of life; it is possible now to enter the heavenly sanctuary boldly by faith and remain there (*see Heb. 4:16; 6:19, 20; 10:19–22; 12:22–24*). Does this refer to a prayer experience or to something more, as well?

### II. Feel: Making the Sanctuary Experience Real

**A** How can we emulate David’s desire to be at the sanctuary? How can we experience God’s beauty, truth, and goodness in the sanctuary as a way of life?

### III. Do: Living the Sanctuary Life

**A** Choose to experience “sanctuary prayer” and more unceasing “sanctuary life.”

► **Summary:** We may learn and experience lessons of beauty, truth, and goodness in the sanctuary.



## Learning Cycle

### ► **STEP 1**—Motivate

**Spotlight on Scripture:** *Psalms 27:4*

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** The lessons of the sanctuary may be encapsulated by three qualities: “beauty, truth, and goodness,” which are summarized in David’s song for the sanctuary (*Psalms 27*).

**Just for Teachers:** In *Psalms 27:4*, David boldly identifies his single-minded goal in life, his one great request: “One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life” (*NIV*). The “house of the LORD” is another term for the sanctuary. David’s single-minded quest was focused upon the sanctuary! In *Psalms 27*, he summarizes the threefold experience he wished to have in the sanctuary. Verse 4 gives two facets of this experience: “to behold the *beauty* of the LORD, and to inquire [after truth] in his temple” (*NKJV*). (The Hebrew word translated as “inquire,” *baqar*, refers to careful examination of evidence in order to determine the truth of a matter.) Toward the end of the psalm (in the verse exactly paralleling verse 4), David pinpoints the third aspect of the sanctuary experience that he longs to have: “to see the *goodness* of the LORD” (*vs. 13*). Beauty, truth, goodness—these three things constitute, according to the philosophers, the “triple star of value,” what is really worth living and even dying for. (See Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 595, for the same emphasis upon these three qualities.) David insists that all of these values are encapsulated in the message of the sanctuary. This week, let’s explore how this is so!

**Opening Activity:** Ask the class, “If you had only one request to make of the Lord, only one goal to seek in life, what would you choose?” Let the various members of the class share their answers, and then read the inspired answer to this question in *Psalms 27:4, 13*.

**Consider This:** When David wrote *Psalms 27*, he was “a hunted fugitive, finding refuge in the rocks and caves of the wilderness.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 164. Discuss: Was David’s central focus upon the sanctuary unique to this time of special circumstances, or did it remain the passion of his life? (*See 2 Sam. 7:1–13; 1 Chronicles 22, 28 and 29:1–9; and the numerous Davidic psalms referring to the sanctuary.*)

## ► STEP 2—Explore

**Just for Teachers:** This week we will look at important lessons that we can learn from the sanctuary. We have summarized these under the categories supplied by David in his inspired encapsulation of the sanctuary experience (*Ps. 27:4, 13*): beauty, goodness, and truth. Psalm 27 may be called the “Song for the Sanctuary”—it has more references to the sanctuary than any other psalm.

### I. Bastion of Beauty (*Review Psalm 27:4 with your class.*)

The Hebrew word *no‘am*, here translated as “beauty,” is a dynamic term, describing beauty that moves the beholder by its loveliness, its pleasantness. David longed to behold in the sanctuary this beauty of the Lord—a beauty that the Lord has within Himself (His character) and also a beauty that the Lord imparts. The psalmist writes elsewhere: “Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary” (*Ps. 96:6*). “Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (*Ps. 29:2, 96:9*). At least 14 different Hebrew words for “beauty” are employed by the inspired biblical writers in their description of this aesthetic experience in connection with the sanctuary.

The wilderness sanctuary was “a magnificent structure. . . .

“No language can describe the glory of the scene presented within the sanctuary . . . ; all but a dim reflection of the glories of the temple of God in heaven.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 347–349. Imagine just the precious metals: according to Exodus 38:24, 25, the construction of this portable wilderness tent utilized over a ton of gold (29 talents, 730 shekels = 2,205 lb = 1,000 kg) and almost four tons of silver (100 talents, 1,775 shekels = 7,583 lb = 3,440 kg). Visualize the unsurpassed beauty of the Solomonic temple, which Ellen G. White indicates was “the most magnificent structure ever reared by human hands” and yet only a “faint reflection” of the “vastness and glory” of the heavenly sanctuary.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 414.

To assist your imagination, consider that, in 1 Chronicles 22:14, David collected for use in the temple 100,000 talents of gold—about 3,500 tons (worth billions of U.S. dollars in today’s monetary value)—and one million talents of silver—about 35,000 tons. From this beautiful sanctuary we learn that (1) God is a great lover of that which is beautiful (*Exod. 28:2, 40; 2 Chron. 3:6*); (2) God’s character as revealed in the sanctuary is beautiful—for example, His holiness (*Lev. 19:2, Ps. 96:9*); (3) God’s ways of salvation, typified in the sanctuary (*Ps. 77:13*), are stunningly beautiful; and (4) He longs to give us that same beautiful character (*1 Pet. 1:16*).

**Consider This:** In what ways should our church “sanctuaries” (architecture and decorations) be beautiful today?

## II. Temple of Truth *(Review Psalm 27:4, part b, with your class.)*

David not only longed to see the beauty of the Lord in the sanctuary but “to inquire [after truth] in His temple” (NKJV). The sanctuary message is not only an experience of awesome beauty; it is also a reflective, diligent search for truth.

In the 150 psalms, there is an average of one explicit reference to the sanctuary per psalm, and these references give insights into many truths connected with the sanctuary, such as worship and praise (*Ps. 96:9, 150:1*), judgment (*Ps. 11:4, 5*), and prayer (*Ps. 28:2*). The psalmist went to the sanctuary when he was trying to understand why the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer, and in the sanctuary (perhaps while watching the fire consuming the sacrifice, representing divine retribution upon sin) he “understood their end” (*Ps. 73:17, NKJV*). The present truth of the sanctuary message for these last days is particularly concentrated in the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation, which we will study in later lessons. Every one of us must study the sanctuary message for ourselves, diligently seeking to understand its truth in the light of Scripture.

**Consider This:** What aspects of the “present truth” of the sanctuary message are most central and also most strongly challenged today?

## III. Garrison of Goodness *(Review Psalm 27:5–13 with your class.)*

It is not enough to see the beauty of sanctuary typology or to grasp the truth of the sanctuary for these last days. The sanctuary is not just an object of aesthetic contemplation or intellectual stimulation. It is a living reality. David shows how the “goodness of God” found in the sanctuary is experienced in practical life. He describes how he found protection and vindication in the sanctuary (*vss. 5, 5a, 11, 12*) and that this understanding led him spontaneously to joyous worship (*vs. 6b*). And at the very apex of the psalm, David sets forth the ultimate meaning of the sanctuary as personal fellowship with the God of the sanctuary: “You have said, ‘Seek my face.’ My heart says to you, ‘Your face, LORD, do I seek’ ” (*vs. 8, ESV*). The psalm for the sanctuary ends with a hope for the future when final vindication will come along with a full revelation of the Lord in His sanctuary (*vs. 14*).

**Consider This:**

1. How is the subject of the sanctuary a message of beauty, truth, and goodness for you?
2. What is the relevance of the sanctuary doctrine for your personal life? In what ways is it a living reality?

### ►STEP 3—Apply

**Just for Teachers:** The floor plan of the wilderness sanctuary is actually in the shape of a cross (see Sunday’s daily study). The arrangement of the various articles of furniture in the sanctuary illustrates the main steps in coming to Jesus and remaining in connection with Him in worship and prayer. Follow the priest in God’s “way of the sanctuary”:

- Come into His presence (courts) with thanksgiving (*Ps. 100:4*).
- Experience repentance, confession, and forgiveness at the altar of sacrifice, which represents the Cross (*Heb. 13:10–13, Leviticus 4—see Lesson 5*).
- Find cleansing from sin and daily renewal at the laver (*Titus 3:5*; Greek word *loutron* for “washing” also means “laver”).
- Find daily spiritual nourishment from God’s Word at the table of showbread (*John 6:48, 63; Deut. 8:3*).
- Receive the power of the Holy Spirit at the lampstand (*Rev. 4:5*).
- Offer prayers of intercession at the altar of incense (*Rev. 8:4*).
- Find deep cleansing at the throne of God, represented by the ark (*Lev. 16:30; see Lesson 6*).

#### Thought Question:

How do these steps coincide with the beginning of the Christian life and also with the maintenance of the Christian walk?

#### Application Question:

How can these steps be applied in a practical way in one’s daily prayer life? (Some have called this “sanctuary prayer.”)

**Activity:** Develop your own “sanctuary prayer” based upon the steps above.

### ►STEP 4—Create

**Just for Teachers:** The book of Hebrews gives a most powerful lesson from the sanctuary: we may NOW enter the heavenly sanctuary by faith, with boldness and by faith—even “live” in the heavenly sanctuary. (*Read Heb. 4:16; 6:19, 20; 10:19–22; 12:22–24.*)

**Activity:** Invite your class to experience “sanctuary prayer” as described in the previous section and then, even better, to choose “sanctuary LIFE”!