

2 -- THE OUTER COURT

(The Priestly Garments & the Brazen Altar)

In our first lesson we learned that the Sanctuary was given to Israel by God as a mechanism of instruction to teach the people God's plan of salvation. In the sanctuary we find the science of salvation and we learned that the first step is to come to Jesus who is the only way to the Father. Now let's turn back the pages of time to an incident that took place at the foot of Mt Sinai after Israel's release from Egypt. It was here that the Lord chose the tribe of Levi for the service of the sanctuary which was constructed at that time. The Lord set apart Aaron of the tribe of Levi to be the high priest and thus, the Aaronic and Levitical order of priests was established. This favor was placed upon the tribe of Levi because of their loyalty to God when Israel apostatized in the worship of the golden calf. (Exodus 32:26)

A Look at the Priestly Garments

Garments of The Common Priest – (Exodus 28:39-42) The robe of the common priest was of white linen, and woven in one piece. It extended nearly to the feet and was confined about the waist by a white linen girdle embroidered in blue, purple, and red. A linen turban, or miter, completed his outer garments.

Garments of The High Priest – (Exodus 28:1-38) Over his regular priestly garments the high priest wore an ephod, a two-piece apron. He also wore a breastplate of judgment with twelve precious stones. These were engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. On either side of the breastplate were the Urim and Thummim, the means through which God communicated His will to the people. The high priest also wore a miter, but with a golden crown and engraved upon it were the words "*Holiness To The Lord.*"

Note: Like the fine white linen "walls" that encompassed the sanctuary, the priest's garments were a symbol of the righteousness of Christ.

The Brazen Altar

In the court three places of importance were designated by God. In the center stood the altar of sacrifice with its ever burning logs consuming the sacrificial victim. Between the altar and the tabernacle, stood the laver with its cleansing water. Here we find the symbols of fire, blood, and water which the Lord provided in an effort to teach about the removal of the guilt and defilement of sin.

The repentant Israelite would leave his tent and cross the quiet plaza at the heart of the encampment with his offering in tow, and reaching the gate to the court he was met by the priest who explained to him the significance of the service, and led him to the place of slaughter. There he was taught his role in the ritual, and prepared himself to carry it out. The life of the innocent victim was then taken by the repentant sinner. The slaying of the victim however did not make atonement for the sinner, but instead it provided the means for atonement. The making of atonement was the work of the priest who would officiate the blood on behalf of the repented sinner. (Lev. 4:5-12 & 16-21; 5:13;16:30) The sanctuary teaches us to study carefully the role of the blood and the priest in the work of redemption for the role of both were critical in dealing with the sin problem.

1. What was the altar made of?

Exodus 27:1 You shall make an altar of acacia wood. ...

Note: Acacia wood, also known as “shittim” wood, was less subject to decay than any other wood in that region and was a hardwood not attacked by insects. The altar was made hollow with boards and overlaid with bronze. (Exodus 38:6 & 27:1, 2 & 6)

2. What was its size to be?

Exodus 27:1 You shall make an altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits broad--the altar shall be square--and its height shall be three cubits. (Approx. 7 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 4 1/2 feet.)

3. What were the other parts of the altar?

Exodus 27:2 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.

4. What was the sinner required to do at the brazen altar?

Leviticus 4: 2, 4 Speak to the children of Israel, saying: “If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them, ... He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the LORD.”

Note: When the repentant sinner placed his hands on the head of the animal (in this case a bull) and confessed his sins upon it, the sins were symbolically transferred from the sinner to the animal, then the animal was slain. As stated earlier, the slaying of the innocent victim did not make atonement for the sinner, but provided the means for atonement. The making of the atonement was the work of the priest. Thus, it was at the brazen altar that the sinner, through the sacrifice, was separated from his sin.

5. What then happened to the sin which was transferred to the animal and caught in its blood?

Leviticus 4:17 Then the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil.

Note: The priest would then sprinkle some of the blood before the veil inside the sanctuary, thus symbolically transferring the sin from the people to the sanctuary. (The significance of this will come into clarity when we study the Day of Atonement.)

6. Why did the animal need to be sacrificed?

Hebrew 9:22 ...without shedding of blood there is no remission [forgiveness of sin].

Note: Sacrificing animals was necessary to help the people understand that “*the wages of sin is death!*” It was bloody and shocking, impressing the people with the solemn truth that their sin would one day cause the death of the Messiah (Jesus). Thus, Israel looked forward to the Cross in faith for salvation, while the Christian today looks back to the Cross in faith for salvation. Salvation is by faith alone.

7. Whom did the sacrificial animal represent?

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

Note: Jesus is our sacrifice “*slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8), and the altar, the instrument where the sacrifice was laid, represents the Cross of Calvary. Here we discover that the outer court of the sanctuary represents planet earth. This sin darkened world where the Lamb of God was slain.

8. Why was it necessary for Jesus to die?

Romans 3:23 ... for all have sinned...

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, ...

Hebrew 9:22 ... without shedding of blood is no remission [forgiveness of sin].

1 Corinthians 15:3 ... Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

Note: The sanctuary is priceless because it reveals God's plan to destroy sin and yet save the repentant sinner. Sin is a self-destructive principle. The wages of sin is death. When Adam and Eve sinned, this disease of sin and death passed to the entire human race. God's law and the penalty for breaking it could not be changed, so all people were doomed. But, in an act of incredible love the Father chose to send His Son into the world to die in your place and mine. Later we will discover that at His resurrection Jesus would rise again to mediate His shed blood on behalf of repentant sinners through His work as our Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary (Hebrews 9:11-14). Thus, it is through accepting Christ's death and mediation that the sinner is forgiven and set free.

9. Why did God make such a fantastic sacrifice for us?

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Note: The strongest earthly tie is the love of a parent for a child. When God the Father was willing to allow His Son, Jesus, to suffer and die in our place, He demonstrated in the most powerful language how fervently He loves each of us.

10. What must I do to benefit from Jesus' sacrificial death?

Acts 16:31 Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved,...

Note: Jesus' offer of salvation is a gift. (Romans 6:23) It is freely offered to those who are sorry (repentant) of their wrongs. My part is to believe (John 1:12) it is true and to receive the gift by faith.

11. What is the evidence that the gift has been accepted?

Acts 3:19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

Note: True repentance is a sorrow for sin that results in turning away from it. (Pro. 28:13)

12. Why should I be confident that my life of sin is a thing of the past and that I can live a new victorious life in Jesus?

Philippians 1:6 ... being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; ...

Note: I am confident because Jesus promises to accomplish this work in me by His great power as I cooperate with Him. Jesus Himself actually dwells in the mind & heart of the Christian through the Holy Spirit. Salvation rests upon me allowing Jesus to work in me through the power of the Holy Spirit.

13. Why do some people fail in their Christian experience?

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; ...

Note: People often fail in Christian living because they accept Jesus as Saviour but not as Lord, or "ruler," of their lives. This is revealed in a life of disobedience. Most of us want to have our own way and to run our own lives. When we accept Jesus as Lord, we turn over the running of our lives to Him. We keep our hands off the steering wheel of our lives and ask Him to direct us.

14. How can I know that Jesus accepts me and that I am His child?

Titus 1:2 ... God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.

Note: We know that Jesus receives us when we ask Him, because He cannot tell a lie. He has promised to receive us and He does receive us--not because we feel different, but because He promised (1 John 1:9; 3:1).

15. What does the acceptance of this gift look like in the repentant sinner?

2 Corinthians 5:17 ... if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; ...

Romans 12:2 ... do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

John 13:35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

1 John 3:22 ... we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Ephesians 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,...

Acts 1:8 ... you shall be witnesses to Me...

Note: The power of gospel is seen in a transformed life.

16. What wonderful promises come with Christian life?

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:19 ... God shall supply all your need ...

Mark 10:27 ... with God all things are possible.

John 15:11 ... that your joy may be full.

John 10:10 ... that they might have life ... more abundantly.

Hebrews 13:5 ... I will never leave you, nor forsake you.

Hebrews 13:6 I will not fear. What can man do to me?

John 14:27 ... My peace I give to you; ...

Note: God gives His people the following eight precious promises:

- We can accomplish anything through Jesus.
- All our needs will be supplied.
- Nothing will be impossible for us.
- Our joy will be full.
- We will have more abundant living.
- God will never leave or forsake us.
- We need never fear what men may do to us.
- God gives us His peace

Your Response to Jesus

Will you decide right now to accept Jesus' plan to save you?

ANSWER: _____

Once Saved, Always Saved? (Additional Study)

Can a person be lost once he has accepted Christ as his Saviour? Only in God's Word can we find an answer to this question. The Bible speaks for itself: *"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ... For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."* (Hebrews 10:23, 24, 26)

Nowhere does the Bible teach that our responsibility ends when we become a Christian. God's Word is clear: *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."* (2 Peter 2:20-22)

Christianity is more than one single decision. Jesus said that our salvation is based on the condition that we continue to abide in Him. (John 15:4) And the apostle Paul said, "I die daily." (1 Corinthians 15:31) This means that he chose on a daily basis to deny himself and follow Jesus. The Lord Himself said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

The Bible does not teach that we can turn our backs on truth and still be saved. Ezekiel 18:24 says: *"But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."* **Paul also reminds us, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)**

Some people think they can "talk the talk" without "walking the walk." But Jesus said: *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Matthew 7:21-23)

Paul depicted the constant struggle of the true Christian when he said: *"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. ... But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."* (1 Corinthians 9:24, 25, 27)

To believe that once we are saved we cannot be lost is to believe that God takes away our greatest freedom--the freedom of choice. On the other hand, God does want us to have assurance that He will finish the work He has begun in our lives. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6)

We can be confident that if we continue to follow, He will continue to lead and will never let go of the hand placed willingly in His. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." (Matthew 24:13)