

Dare to Draw Near

RESPONDING TO GOD'S INVITATION

Lesson 9 Reflection: *The Holy of Holies*

Reflection We have come to our final lesson as we dare to draw near to God. This week we considered the innermost part of the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies. This was the place where the manifest presence of God dwelt in Old Testament times. This was the place where God told Moses, "There I will meet with you, there I will commune with you." **Exodus 25:21-22**

The Holy of Holies was separated from the other room in the Tabernacle, the Holy Place, by a heavy curtain. This curtain had no opening. There was no access into the innermost chamber. It was off limits.

But if you could get past that curtain you would have entered a 15 by 15 by 15 foot room, a perfect cube, lined with white linen curtains embroidered with gold cherubim. There was only one piece of furniture in this room, really two fitted together, the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat.

The ark of the covenant was basically a chest that held a golden pot of manna, the budded rod of Aaron and the two stone tablets containing the ten commandments. These items all point to the Lord Jesus Christ and speak of His authority to judge and His holiness.

The mercy seat was a solid gold lid that covered the ark. On the mercy seat were two cherubim carved from solid gold. Their wings stretched forward as they looked down at the mercy seat. The mercy seat pictures Jesus as the covering for our sins. His perfect sacrifice satisfies the holiness of God. Between the cherubim was the place where the glory of God resided.

But no one was allowed in this sacred space. Only one day a year, only one person, the high priest, and only after elaborate preparation including many blood sacrifices, was he allowed to approach the mercy seat. The sacrifice he offered there allowed God to pass over the sins of the people of Israel for one year. The next year, the high priest had to go through the same elaborate

ceremony again in what we now call Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. This ceremony was repeated over one thousand five hundred times, until one afternoon in the spring on Passover, just as the priest prayed before the altar of incense and just as Jesus died on the cross, the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom. The way was opened up for all to come into the Holy of Holies!

Entering into the Holy of Holies

We don't have anything in this world that compares to the Holiness of God. It is other-worldly! By definition: Holy means "set apart" and there is a purity essence to it, and the quality of otherness or transcendence.

Two interesting points about the word Holy:

"H" Holy and "h" holy:

1. "H"oly is what God is – it's His very being.

Sometimes when we list the attributes or characteristics of God, we say that He is merciful, loving, powerful, all-knowing. And then we tack on to the list that He is Holy. But in reality, Holy is NOT an attribute of God. It is what He is -- it's what makes Him God. He is The Holy.

2. The characteristic of "h"oly applies to His people, who reflect their Holy God. Holiness in this sense is a characteristic of anything associated with Him. We are told "to be holy because God is Holy." We call things holy that are connected with God - holy ground, holy people, holy place, etc.

Therefore entering into the Holy of Holies is entering a holy place, a set apart place, occupied by God Himself. The Holy!

There are similarities across the experiences of many Biblical stories of people who encountered the presence of God.

- *They have a moment of awe mixed with fear*
- *They recognize/acknowledge His Holiness,*
- *And then they are changed and do whatever He tells them to do. They become willing and obedient.*

Read about two of these encounters in **Isaiah 6:1-9** and **Acts 9:3-9**.

We have spent this study discussing and practicing ways to draw near to God. Through our journey we have progressed through the Tabernacle:

- We knelt at the bronze altar and renewed our salvation, but we weren't content to remain there.
- We moved on to the bronze laver and learned that we can always turn to the Lord in repentance and confession so that He washes us clean and we experience His forgiveness.
- Then we laid down our vows, our soul ties and our idols. We are walking in forgiveness so we can fit through the narrow doorway into the Holy Place.
- Once inside, we invited the oil of the Holy Spirit to fill us, and we let the Light of Jesus guide us and shine through us to others as we passed by the golden lampstand.
- We joined with other believers and are sustained by the word of God as He feeds us with the bread of life at the table of showbread.
- And we finally surrendered our will, our whole selves, to Him as we send up our prayers to join with His at the altar of incense.
- Now we stand at the entrance to the Holy of Holies.

Will you dare to draw even nearer?

Hebrews 10:19-22

¹⁹ So, brothers and sisters, we are completely free to enter the Most Holy Place without fear because of the blood of Jesus' death. ²⁰ We can enter through a new and living way that Jesus opened for us. It leads through the curtain—Christ's body. ²¹ And since we have a great priest over God's house, ²² let us come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith, because we have been made free from a guilty conscience, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

Prayer Exercise

Join us on the video at the 1:01 mark for our prayer exercise!

Lecture Notes:

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