

February 23rd – How We Come Into God’s Presence

*“And the Lord said to Moses: ‘Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.’”
(Lev. 16:2)*

Just after the Exodus, God told Moses that his brother (Aaron) and his sons would serve as priests before the Lord. Shortly thereafter, Aaron and his sons began their priestly service. Aaron’s sons made a critical mistake – they offered an incense offering to God that He did not ask for. As a result, both of Aaron’s sons were killed for offering “profane fire.” In the wake of that tragedy, God gave clear instructions to Aaron through his brother Moses.

He warned Aaron “not to come at just any time into the Holy Place.” Why? Because inside the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant. On top of the Ark was the mercy seat – the place where the Shekinah glory of God would rest as God visited His people. God’s instructions to Aaron were a precautionary warning – He didn’t want Aaron to be in the Most Holy Place when He came to rest on the mercy seat. Exposure to the unveiled glory of God would mean certain death to Aaron.

Instead, God let Aaron know he was to come behind the veil only once a year to make atonement for his sins and those of Israel. God also instructed Aaron to make certain preparations – the sacrifices, the blood, the scapegoat, etc. It’s clear that Aaron was not to come into God’s presence unwanted and unprepared. Think about the preparation you and I make before coming to worship the Lord. Are we coming at “just any time” and any way, or do we carefully consider ourselves and our offerings to God?