

Monday - Week Twelve

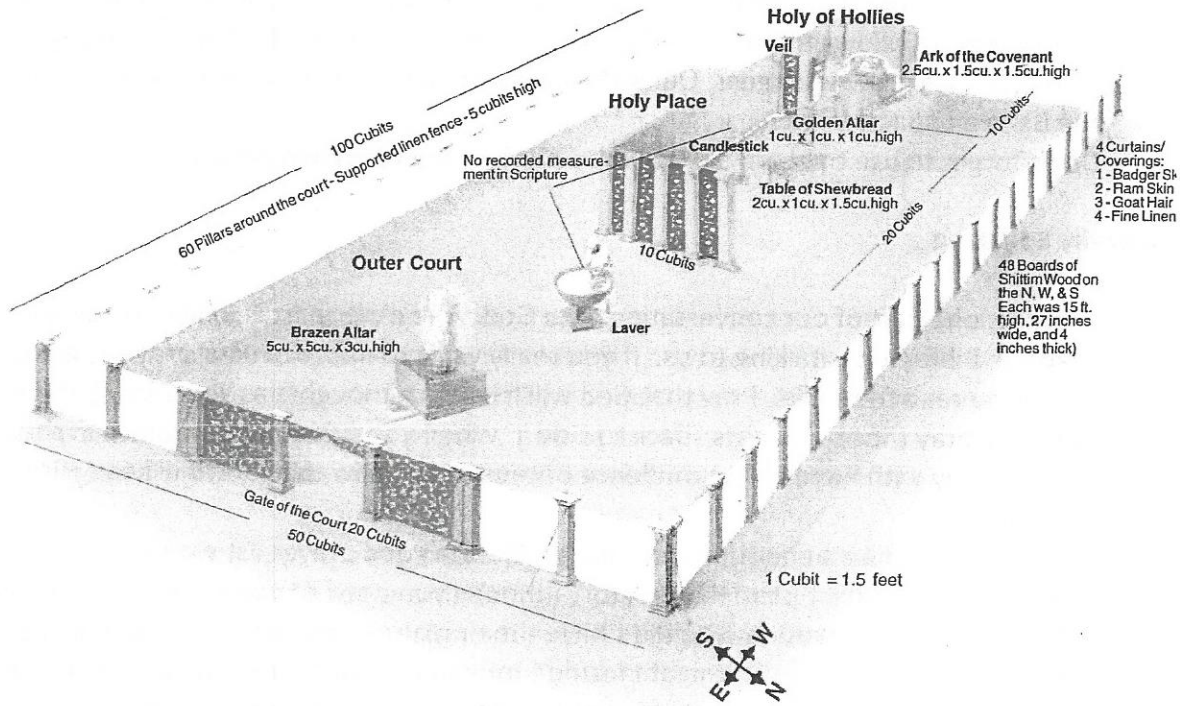
Lesson Thirty-three:: Israel's worship

Read: Exodus 25-31

Summary: Israel's worship life was quite structured; everything had lessons for the Israelites as they worshiped the Lord.

Background and Comments

- Study this picture as you read through the chapters in Exodus.



Lessons for Today

- All of these articles of furniture and structures were supposed to point the people to God ... much the way our stained glass windows, steeples, altar, and other church furniture point people heavenward.

Read: Psalm 56; Mark 12.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for our church building. Guide us to keep it beautiful ... let it reflect our love for You. At the same time, remind us that true worship is a matter of the heart. Amen.

Tuesday - Week Twelve

Lesson Thirty-four: The Golden Calf

Read: Exodus 32-34

Summary: We can hardly believe that the Israelites committed this sin after God had been so gracious to them. We need to remember that the sinful human heart is capable of any sin.

Background and Comments

- The Israelites sin began with fear. Moses had been on the mountain 40 days and nights; the Israelites began to fear that Moses had died. In response they worshiped God by mixing the true religion and the heathenism of Egypt. They wanted their god to be visible.
- The Israelites “engaged in revelry” (32:6). This throwback to Egyptian worship practices no doubt involved sexual immorality and drunkenness.
- When Moses went up the mountain the second time he didn’t eat or drink for 40 days and nights. God sustained His life without food or water!

Lessons for Today

- It appears that some of the Israelites had worshiped the false gods of the Egyptians while they lived in Egypt. They returned to their false religion when things got tough. When is the last time that you were tempted to slip back into a wrong way of thinking? How can you protect yourself from that in the future?
- Moses’ prayer for the Israelites rested on three points:
 1. God, this is YOUR people.
 2. God, if You destroy these people what will the Egyptians think?
 3. God, You promised to bless these people!His third point was his strongest point. When you pray do you “remind” God of His promises? He loves to hear and keep His promises!
- What authority Moses had! He came down the mountain and singlehandedly brought order from the chaos. There is great authority in being morally right. Have you seen that in your life?

Read: Psalm 57; Mark 13

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, keep me from sliding back into sinful habits and thoughts. When challenging times arrive in my life focus me on Your promises instead of sinful tendencies in the past. Amen.

Wednesday - Week twelve

Catechism Review

Read Questions 63-78

1. Sometimes we don't clearly identify the authorities God has given to us in our lives. Write down some of these people - be as specific as possible.

2. The fourth commandment is so important because God uses the authorities in our lives to bless us. If we turn our back on that authority we are also turning our back on God's blessings. Can you think of an example in your life when you got hurt because you disobeyed this commandment?

3. Society has made a frontal attack on all God's commandments. The fourth commandment is no exception. Authority is almost a dirty word these days. How can you model the fourth commandment to young people (think long and hard about this question!)

4. How can the discipline parents (or teachers, etc) give children mirror the discipline God gives us? (Be specific)

Read: Psalm 58; Mark 14

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, give parents and teachers incredible wisdom as they bring young people up in Your ways. Guide our young people to submit to their authority and love. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Thursday - Week Twelve

Lesson Thirty-five: The Spies

Read: Numbers 13 and 14

Summary: God had brought Israel to the edge of the Promised Land. Their rebellion stopped them from entering this beautiful home God had waiting for them.

Background and Comments

- Canaan was so beautiful that it took two of the spies to carry back a cluster of grapes! This should have been an incredible encouragement to the Israelites that God was about to richly bless them.
- Moses came to the Israelites' rescue once again with his fervent prayers. Moses even used God's own words in his prayer (compare Exodus 34:6,7 and Numbers 14:19). Moses accomplished more with his prayers than most people accomplish in their whole lifetime!
- God's judgment had "poetic justice" to it.
 1. The Israelites said that God had brought them out to the dessert to die. Now they would die in the dessert.
 2. They grumbled that their children would die in the dessert. Now those children would be the only ones not to die in the dessert.
 3. They had threatened to kill Caleb and Joshua; now these two spies would be the only spies who would live.

Lessons for Today

- Unbelief always dwells on the negative. The 10 faithless spies reported the military strength of the heathen nations in Canaan (and even exaggerated it with the remark about being like grasshoppers) instead of focusing on the beauty of the land God had promised to give them. Caleb and Joshua tried to focus the people on God's promises ... but to no avail. Think about the last time you began to look at everything negatively. What was the cause of that negativity? How could focusing on God's promises helped the situation?
- This decision haunted the Israelites for 40 years. Decisions are important - decide well!

Read: Psalm 59; Mark 15

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, guide me to make God-pleasing decisions today. I pray in the name of Jesus; Amen.

Friday - Week Twelve

Life Questions

Topic/Question: How should a Christian make decisions about end of life issues (turning off a ventilator, etc.)? What about so called “mercy killing”?

Bible References and Considerations

- Two truths need to be understood right away in this (and every) discussion of what is right and wrong. First of all we need to use the Word of God to answer the question; sometimes we allow the world or emotions make decisions for us ... that is wrong. Secondly we need to act out of faith. We need to humbly ask, “What does God want me to do?”. Sometimes how we make decisions is just as important as what decisions we make.
- The first and most important principle to remember about end of life issues (and beginning of life issues too!) is that God has authority over life and death. King David wrote, *My times are in Your hands* (Psalm 31:15). Also see Deuteronomy 32:39, Psalm 139:15-16, and Matthew 6:27. We need to remember that we do not have the authority to end life (not even our own!). This is also comforting for us; we simply seek to make decisions according to the Lord’s will and leave the rest up to Him.
- Today we hear people say that they want to die because their *quality of life* is not as high as it once was. Certainly we cannot argue that their lives are not as full and rich as they were when they did not need constant medical attention. Yet when we turn to God’s Word we see that God puts an absolute value on life itself ... not on the quality of that life.

Practically Speaking

- A “do not resuscitate order” tells the medical staff that if a person’s heart stops they should not attempt to restart the heart. Again the question “why” comes up. If a family has come to the conclusion that if their aged loved one’s heart stops then God is bringing their life to an end such an order can be a God-pleasing thing.
- If it becomes clear that a breathing machine is the only thing prolonging the death that God will use to call someone home, then it could be wrong to selfishly continue to use the machine.

Read: Psalm 60; Mark 16

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, give me wisdom in this difficult area. When I am faced with these sorts of decisions make things clear to me, Lord. Remind me that my times are in Your hands. Amen.