

THE UNSEEN WORLD OF THE BIBLE

Session 8: 'Sacred Space'

27 November 2022

Objectives

Define: 'Holy' for God, for objects, for persons.

Distinguish: Sacred, impure and hostile space.

Explain: Substitutionary atonement.

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Lesson Theme

"Though unclean sinners, we are holy if we are in Christ. Though imperfect, our imperfections are overlooked because of Jesus. It is that simple, yet that profound." M S Heiser, *Supernatural*, p. 82

The First Covenant — Exodus 24

7 [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." 8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant."

Why **blood**? (Symbolizes death)

Why sprinkle it on altars, books and persons? (To purify them ritually)

Substitution: One creature suffers death in place of another.

Holiness — Leviticus 19

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy...' 4 "'Do not turn to idols or make metal gods for yourselves. I am the LORD your God..."

Holy: God, totally other.

Persons, believing loyalty.

Objects, dedicated to God.

Humans must approach God via rituals and rules.

Atonement — Leviticus 17

10 "I will set my face against any Israelite or any foreigner residing among them who eats blood, and I will cut them off from the people. 11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life..."

Atonement:

1. To cover.
2. To appease the offended.
3. To ritually purify persons, places and objects.

Session 8: 'Sacred Space'

Purity (sacred) and Impurity (profane)

1. Yahweh is life, gives life, sustains life.
2. Wherever Yahweh dwells, there is 'sacred space'.
3. Wherever Yahweh dwells not, there results death, defilement, hostility, evil.
4. Every space is sacred, ordinary, hostile or evil.
5. Impurity results from bodily fluids, discharges, disease, death or contact with the dead.
6. Creatures approach Yahweh only by invitation, through purification, lest they risk death.
7. Substitutionary, blood atonement provides ritual purification from impurity

Blood sacrifice ritually purifies approach to Yahweh

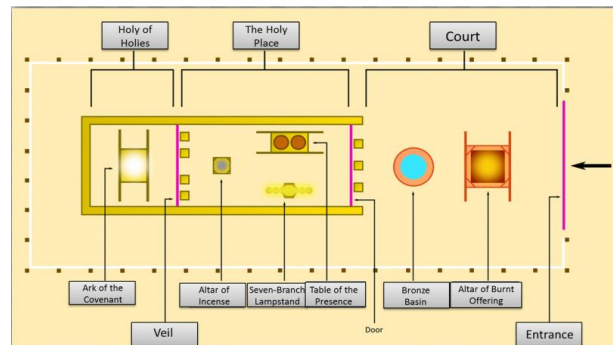
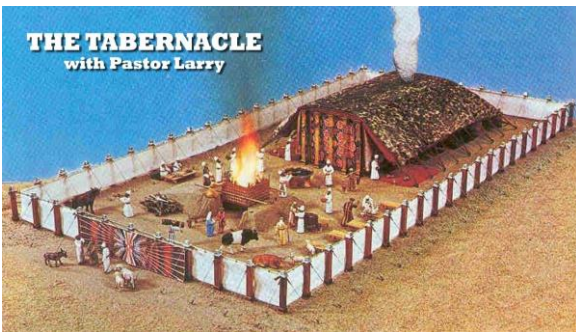
1. Yahweh created humans to live with him forever.
2. Human sin resulted in death for everyone.
3. Human life remains more important than bestial life, because humans are Yahweh's imagers.
4. Sinful humans cannot enter sacred space.
5. Yahweh remains merciful towards sinful humans.
6. So, Yahweh provides a blood substitute that rectifies our defiled, unclean state.
7. Thus, humans may approach sacred space through ritual sacrifice.

Remember Eden — Genesis 2

7 The LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. 8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed... 25 He placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim.

Remember Sinai: Exodus 19

20 The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up 21 and the LORD said to him, "Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish. 22 Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves.



Remember the tabernacle — Exodus 25

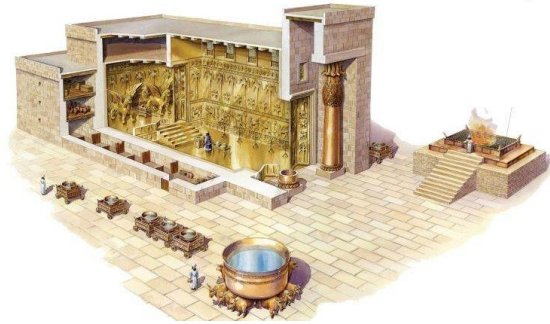
17 Make an atonement cover of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. 18 And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover... 31 "Make a lampstand of pure gold. Hammer out its base and shaft, and make its flowerlike cups, buds and blossoms.

Query: In what ways does the tabernacle remind one of Eden?

Session 8: 'Sacred Space'

Remember the tabernacle — Exodus 25

17 Make an atonement cover of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. 18 And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover.



Remember the camp and the nation — Deuteronomy 4

19 Do not be enticed into bowing down... and worshipping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations... 20 But as for you, the LORD took you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance, as you now are... 25 If you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and arousing his anger, 26 [then] you will quickly perish from the land.

Remember Azazel — Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16

3 “This is how Aaron is to enter the Most Holy Place: He must first bring a young bull for a [purification] offering...” 7 Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 8 He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the LORD and the other for [Azazel].

Possible meanings of Azazel (*The Lexham Bible Dictionary*)

1. the name of a demon: Jewish analogue for Satan.
2. a location: cliff over which Jews threw it, later.
3. an abstract noun: ‘destruction’, ‘removal’.
4. a compound word. Go-away (?âzal) + goat (‘el).

Remember Yahweh’s command — Leviticus 17

3 Any Israelite who sacrifices an ox, a lamb or a goat in the camp or outside of it 4 instead of bringing it to the entrance to the tent of meeting ... that person shall be considered guilty of bloodshed... 7 They must no longer offer any of their sacrifices to the goat [demons, šacîr*] to whom they prostitute themselves.

*plural: šacîrim. ‘a type of demon: the hairy one, a goat (buck) demon, satyr?’ HALOT.

Remember Jesus — Matthew 4

1 Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him.

Session 8: 'Sacred Space'

Hebrews 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.

Remember heaven — Hebrews 9

11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle. 12 He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

Luke 22:20 After the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Remember the promises — Romans 11

25 A partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; 27 "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth... 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. [sanctify = make holy]

Our bodies are sacred space — 2 Corinthians 5

1 We know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

Romans 8:11 The Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you.

1 Corinthians 3:16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?

We are God's holy people — Colossians 1

12 The Father ... has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

How, then, shall we live?

Ten historical sacred spaces

1. The Mountain and Garden of Eden
2. Abraham and the Israelites
3. The tabernacle amongst the Israelites
4. The temple at the centre of the nation
5. Jesus and his apostles
6. The church at Jerusalem, Judea
7. The churches among the Gentiles
8. Christian believers' body
9. Messiah Jesus reigning over the nations
10. Eden restored in New Heavens and New Earth