

## Study 0044

### Scripture Text: Exodus 25—31; 35—40

In our last study, we saw that God is interested in living among His people; hence, He asked that they build Him a sanctuary. By reason of this sanctuary, God was going to live among His people, and avail them the opportunity to meet with Him and worship Him in an acceptable manner. We can thus state that the sanctuary of the Old Covenant Era played three major roles: (a) the place where the seat of God was established among His people; (b) the place where people could meet with God; and, (c) the place where people could worship God. So, in this study, we would begin to look at the components of the sanctuary that God's people built.

### The Old Covenant Era: The Sanctuary

The sanctuary, which was the place of worship, among others, consisted of a tabernacle located within a courtyard. Within the tabernacle and in the courtyard, there were items of furniture and vessels which played major roles in the worship of God. The tabernacle itself was essentially a tent (15 feet by 45 feet or about 4.5m by 13.5m) which was covered with curtains all around, and was divided within into, an inner court and an innermost court. The sanctuary as a whole and its construction is described in quite some detail in our scripture texts. The descriptions in our scripture text also include the apparel of the priests and the high priest.

The tabernacle in the Old Covenant Era, essentially housed significant and important furniture items and vessels which were used in the worship of God. But even though the furniture items and vessels in the tabernacle were significant for the worship of God, the vessels in the outer court were perhaps one of the most significant. This is because these furniture items and vessels were the first steps to having access into the presence of God, let alone worship God! We should recall that when looking at worship in the pre-Flood Era, we noted the aspect that, acceptable worship was based on a worshipper being in right standing with God. This recall is significant here, because, before the Old Covenant Era worshipper could worship God, he had to be made right, so that his worship could be acceptable before God. The items and vessels in the courtyard therefore, were intended to make the worshipper right with God before he could approach the tabernacle. So, we shall study the courtyard of the Sanctuary in the Old Covenant Era now, and later, we will look at the Tabernacle.

The Courtyard or outer court, was basically an open space (150 feet by 75 feet, or about 45m by 22.5m) cordoned off with a 7½-foot (2.25m) high fence all around, save the entrance which was 30 feet wide, within which the Tabernacle sat in the western most part. Within the outer court, were also an altar of burnt offering, and a laver. All items of furniture and vessels in the outer court meant for the worship of God, were to be made from brass (**Exodus 27:9-19**).

- The Altar of Burnt Offering (Exodus 27:1-8), also called 'brassen altar' (**Exodus 38:30**) was a square furniture (7½ feet by 7½ feet; about 2.29m by 2.29m) with a height of 4½ feet (about 1.37m). It was on this altar that sacrifices/offerings were burnt unto God, and the blood of the sacrifices was poured at the base.
- The Laver (Exodus 30:17-21). This was essentially a big basin with legs into which water was filled. It was placed between the altar of burnt offering and the door of the tabernacle. The priests and high priest had to wash their hands and feet before they went into the tabernacle, so that they wouldn't die when they entered the tabernacle to minister.

Clearly, God was interested in His people and priests being clean, ceremonially and morally, so that they don't die when they come before Him.

It was in the outer court, that the people brought their sacrifices/offerings so that their sins could be atoned for by the priests who killed the animals the people brought, and spilled/sprinkled some of its blood at the brazen altar. The worshipper brought a clean animal to the priest, placed his hands upon the head of the animal, which was then killed, and its blood poured out at the base of the brazen altar. It was also on the brazen altar that the sacrificial animal was burnt in part or in whole, as may be necessary (**Leviticus Chapters 1—7**). On this altar also, was burnt, sacrificial animals in the morning and in the evening every day, besides the sacrificial animals the worshippers brought. The sins of the worshipper who brought the animal whose blood was poured out at the base of the brazen altar, was thus atoned for, and he was thus, made righteous and in right standing with God, and fit to worship Him acceptably and bring his gifts to God.

From all of the above, we note that:

- (a) The gate of the outer court was wide enough to accommodate a number of worshippers at any one time. Signifying that God's sanctuary was open to as many people as want to come and worship.
- (b) Without the sacrifices of the worshipper, he could not approach God. Signifying that no man can approach God's presence to worship, without first being cleansed from sin (ceremonially and morally).
- (c) The laver was made available for the priests to wash in before entering into the tabernacle, lest they die; signifying that no one was exempt from being clean (ceremonially and morally) before approaching God.

Under the Old Covenant, the worshipper gave worship to God through the sacrifice he brought to God, which was presented on his behalf by the priests who ministered in the tabernacle. The worshipper, having been made clean and able to approach God in worship, would then stand at the door of the tabernacle, and worship God. Unfortunately, modern day Apostates got their idea of an intermediary (such as a pastor or minister who would stand on behalf of the people and offer prayers, sacrifices, etc.), from this Old Covenant Era practice. ***Please note that there is no need for a human intermediary today, as Jesus Christ is the intermediary for all who trust in His atoning sacrifice for sin! (1 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 9:15)***

In contrast to worship today, the worshippers in the Old Covenant Era worshipped God by proxy—through the priests, who acted as intermediaries on behalf of the people, even though the people also had to be in attendance. Unfortunately, many of the Old Covenant worshippers did not realize that God was interested in the state of their heart and their obedience, rather than in their sacrifices (**Psalm 51:16-19; 1 Samuel 15:22-23**). Again, in contrast to the post-Flood Era, worship under the Old Covenant Era moved away from a simple altar to an elaborate sanctuary. Also, the worshipper was made ready to approach God in the outer court at the altar of burnt offering before he could proceed to the door of the tabernacle to worship God.

### **EXERCISE**

Please state true or false to the statements below:

1. The sanctuary in the Old Covenant Era was God's throne room on earth.

2. Taking your prayer requests to a pastor to pray to God for you is God's pattern for today.
3. God's sanctuary in the Old Covenant Era consisted of a tabernacle within a courtyard.
4. The courtyard was the place where worshippers were made right before God.
5. No worshipper could worship God acceptably without first being made right.
6. In the Old Covenant Era, worship was limited to certain people.
7. The worshipper did not have to be involved in the worship of God in the Old Covenant Era, all he had to do was bring his sacrifice and offering to the priest, and the priest did everything.
8. God was really more interested in the sacrifices of the people in the Old Covenant Era, than in anything else.
9. Everyone who came to the sanctuary in the Old Covenant Era, had to wash in the laver before proceeding to worship God.
10. The outer court was open to all and sundry.