

Lesson 12 | February 19, 2023

The Holy of Holies (Most Holy Place)

Study Text: Exodus 25:10–22; 26:31–34; Leviticus 16:1–34; Matthew 27:50–51; Hebrews 4:14–16; 9:1–7, 24–28; 10:19–28; 1 John 2:1–2

Central Truth: We have access to God through the blood of Christ.

Key Verse: Hebrews 10:22

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (KJV).

Let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- Students will recognize the parallels between the Old Testament priests and Jesus as our Great High Priest.
- Students will be drawn into a more intimate relationship with God.
- Students will be motivated to share the gospel with others.

Introducing the Study

Say: This week's lesson centers on the Holy of Holies (KJV), or the Most Holy Place (NLT), the innermost room of the tabernacle. Only the high priest had the privilege and awesome duty of entering the Most Holy Place, and he could do that only once each year. The symbolism of the Holy of Holies pointed to a day when everyone would have direct access to God at any time and at any place.

Opening Activity—Your “Most Holy Place”

Ask. In what location or in what environment do you feel closest to God? Why? (Answers may include some aspect of nature, such as the mountains, a church or cathedral, or an everyday location such as a person's “prayer closet.”)

Say: Through His sacrifice, Jesus Christ provided access to God. While God calls us to come together and worship Him, our worship of Him is not limited to the physical setting of the church building. Neither is the time limited to once a year, once a month, or once a day. He invites us to meet with Him all the time, wherever we are. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The Most Holy Place in the tabernacle was where atonement was made for the sins of the people. The high priest who entered there had to make atonement for his own sins first. Then he was able to offer the sacrifices to make atonement for the sins of others. Now, under the new covenant, we have a High Priest who had no sin of His own, so His sacrifice is sufficient to atone for our sins.

He became both the High Priest and the Perfect Sacrifice. Our Most Holy Place can be wherever we meet with Him.

[Exo 25:10-22 KJV] 10 And they shall make an ark [of] shittim wood: two cubits and a half [shall be] the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. 11 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. 12 And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put [them] in the four corners thereof; and two rings [shall be] in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. 13 And thou shalt make staves [of] shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. 14 And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. 15 The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it. 16 And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. 17 And thou shalt make a mercy seat [of] pure gold: two cubits and a half [shall be] the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. 18 And thou shalt make two cherubims [of] gold, [of] beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: [even] of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. 20 And the cherubims shall stretch forth [their] wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces [shall look] one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. 21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. 22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which [are] upon the ark of the testimony, of all [things] which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

[Exo 26:31-34 KJV] 31 And thou shalt make a vail [of] blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made: 32 And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim [wood] overlaid with gold: their hooks [shall be of] gold, upon the four sockets of silver. 33 And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy [place] and the most holy. 34 And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy [place].

[Lev 16:1-34 KJV] 1 And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died; 2 And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy [place] within the vail before the mercy seat, which [is] upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. 3 Thus shall Aaron come into the holy [place]: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. 4 He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these [are] holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and [so] put them on. 5 And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. 6 And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which [is] for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house. 7 And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD [at] the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. 9 And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell,

and offer him [for] a sin offering. 10 But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, [and] to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. 11 And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which [is] for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which [is] for himself: 12 And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring [it] within the vail: 13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that [is] upon the testimony, that he die not: 14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle [it] with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. 15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that [is] for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: 16 And he shall make an atonement for the holy [place], because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness. 17 And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy [place], until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel. 18 And he shall go out unto the altar that [is] before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put [it] upon the horns of the altar round about. 19 And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. 20 And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy [place], and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: 21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send [him] away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: 22 And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness. 23 And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy [place], and shall leave them there: 24 And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people. 25 And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar. 26 And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp. 27 And the bullock [for] the sin offering, and the goat [for] the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy [place], shall [one] carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung. 28 And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. 29 And [this] shall be a statute for ever unto you: [that] in the seventh month, on the tenth [day] of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, [whether it be] one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: 30 For on that day shall [the priest] make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, [that] ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. 31 It [shall be] a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever. 32 And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, [even] the holy

garments: 33 And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. 34 And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.

[Mat 27:50-51 KJV] 50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. 51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

[Heb 4:14-16 KJV] 14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast [our] profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

[Heb 9:1-7, 24-28 KJV] 1 Then verily the first [covenant] had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. 2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein [was] the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. 3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; 4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein [was] the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. 6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service [of God]. 7 But into the second [went] the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and [for] the errors of the people: ... 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, [which are] the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

[Heb 10:19-28 KJV] 19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 And [having] an high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the profession of [our] faith without wavering; (for he [is] faithful that promised;) 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. 26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and

fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

[1Jo 2:1-2 KJV] 1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world.

Part 1—Place to Meet God

A Place of Atonement

Exodus 25:10–22

[Exo 25:10-22 KJV] 10 And they shall make an ark [of] shittim wood: two cubits and a half [shall be] the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. 11 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. 12 And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put [them] in the four corners thereof; and two rings [shall be] in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. 13 And thou shalt make staves [of] shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. 14 And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. 15 The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it. 16 And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. 17 And thou shalt make a mercy seat [of] pure gold: two cubits and a half [shall be] the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. 18 And thou shalt make two cherubims [of] gold, [of] beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: [even] of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. 20 And the cherubims shall stretch forth [their] wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces [shall look] one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. 21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. 22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which [are] upon the ark of the testimony, of all [things] which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

Say: In the beginning of time when God created humans, He desired fellowship with them. He even walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, when they chose to sin, that relationship was broken. However, God had a plan to provide redemption and restore His relationship with His people. The tabernacle and its furnishings were part of that plan. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

God provided atonement for the sins of His people through sacrifices they made in the tabernacle. This atonement took place in the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies. This room, separated from the Holy Place by a thick veil, was 15 feet by 15 feet.

The ark of the covenant was the only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies. The ark was made from acacia wood covered with gold. It was 45 inches long, 27 inches high, and 27 inches wide (Exodus 25:10–11). Like other items in the tabernacle, the ark had four gold rings for the poles used to carry it. These poles were not to be removed from the ark (verses 12–15).

The importance of this ark was apparent in God’s instructions concerning the tabernacle. He gave instructions for the ark’s construction before any other item, or even the tabernacle itself. It was in front of the ark that the high priest made atonement for the sins of God’s people.

The ark accompanied Israel throughout their journey, and was the only original piece of tabernacle furniture moved to the temple centuries later.

God instructed Moses to place “the testimony” (KJV) or “the stone tables inscribed with the terms of the covenant” (NLT) inside the ark (verses 16,21; 31:18). These tablets would remind the people of Israel of God’s Law and their sinfulness (Romans 7:7). While no one can keep every aspect of the Law, God did provide a way of forgiveness in the “mercy seat” (“atonement cover,” NLT, Exodus 25:17).

On the lid for the ark, known as the mercy seat or the atonement cover, were two cherubim made of hammered gold, one at either end facing each other (verses 18–20). The wings of these cherubim were outspread, covering the mercy seat.

The word used for the mercy seat means “to cover the sins,” “to reconcile,” or “to make atonement.” God’s mercy is the only hope we can have for renewed fellowship with God. There God promised to meet with His people (verse 22) and provide atonement for their sins.

Resource Packet Item 1: The Ark of the Covenant

Distribute the work sheet, and have the students label the parts of the ark as described here. Students may use the terminology from their preferred Bible version.

Discuss

? Why did God give the ark such prominence?

? How is “mercy seat” an appropriate term for the covering of the ark of the covenant?

Access to God

Matthew 27:50–51; Hebrews 9:1–7,24–28

[Mat 27:50-51 KJV] 50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. 51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

[Heb 9:1-7, 24-28 KJV] 1 Then verily the first [covenant] had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. 2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein [was] the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. 3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; 4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein [was] the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. 6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service [of God]. 7 But into the second [went] the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and [for] the errors of the people: ... 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, [which are] the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Say: This world's leaders who live in palaces or presidential mansions are not easily accessible to the citizens of their countries. To get an audience with such a person, one must have special approval and undergo extensive security screenings. Yet, because of Jesus, ordinary people can enter the very presence of the Creator of the universe. We can even live in His presence throughout our lives. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Humanity needed, and still needs, the fellowship with God symbolized by the tabernacle. God created humanity for fellowship with Him; and He provided that fellowship through the tabernacle, though in a limited way. When the priest entered the tabernacle, he represented every worshiper outside the structure. But sin prevented each person from individually enjoying what the tabernacle typified.

Jesus' sacrifice for sin removed the barrier between God and His creation. At the moment of Jesus' death on the cross, the heavy "curtain in the sanctuary of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51, NLT). This symbolized that, through Christ's death, access to God was made available to all.

Several places in the Book of Hebrews, the writer contrasted the temporary and ineffective ministry in the tabernacle with the complete and effective ministry of Christ and His death. In chapter 9, he referred to the layout of the Holy Place, containing the lampstand and table of

showbread (verse 2), and the Most Holy Place, containing the ark of the covenant and the altar of incense (verses 3–4).

Including the altar of incense in the Most Holy Place in these verses in Hebrews seems to contradict other accounts of the tabernacle’s layout. However, the writer mentioning the altar of incense may simply depict its nearness to the ministry performed within the veil. Verse 4 (NLT) further adds “the golden pot that had manna” and “Aaron’s rod” to the contents of the ark.

The priest regularly ministered in the Holy Place (verse 6). But only once a year could he enter the Most Holy Place (verse 7). This latter event occurred on the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16). Entrance into the Holy of Holies was forbidden for all but the high priest. But the sacrifices he offered were not sufficient to do away with the sins of the people. Only one Person could provide that sacrifice: Jesus Christ. Like the high priest who represented the people before God in the Holy of Holies, Jesus entered into heaven to represent us to God. But Jesus did not need to do this year after year (Hebrews 9:25–26). He did not offer himself as a sacrifice over and over. Rather His one sacrifice provided complete forgiveness for sin.

Every person, except those who are taken in the Rapture, will face death, followed by judgment (verse 27). Jesus died once for all time, to “take away the sins of many people” (verse 28, NLT). When He comes again, it will not be to offer himself as a sacrifice again, but to bring ultimate deliverance for His children.

Because Jesus, our Great High Priest, also became the Sacrifice and offered His own blood as the atonement for our sins, we can enter the very throne room of God.

Discuss

? Explain the significance of tearing the curtain in the temple from top to bottom when Jesus was crucified.

? Why was the sacrifice of Jesus more effective than the sacrifices offered under the old covenant?

Part 2—Place of Separation

Separated from God

Exodus 26:31–34; Leviticus 16:1–5

[Exo 26:31-34 KJV] 31 And thou shalt make a vail [of] blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made: 32 And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim [wood] overlaid with gold: their hooks [shall be of] gold, upon the four sockets of silver. 33 And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy [place] and the

most holy. 34 And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy [place].

[Lev 16:1-5 KJV] 1 And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died; 2 And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy [place] within the vail before the mercy seat, which [is] upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. 3 Thus shall Aaron come into the holy [place]: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. 4 He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these [are] holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and [so] put them on. 5 And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

Say: Although God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle to provide a place for God to fellowship with His people, that tabernacle had limitations. The holiness of God required separation between himself and sinful humanity, and no sacrifice they could offer could bridge that separation. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The placement of the ark of the covenant within the Most Holy Place spoke of the separation between God and humanity. Only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. While the mercy seat spoke of access to God, that access was limited. God instructed Moses to make a “veil” (Exodus 26:31, KJV) or “curtain” (NLT) from finely woven linen and colored yarn to separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (verse 33). Every part of the tabernacle was made from the finest materials and to the highest standards. The curtain included embroidered cherubim (verse 31), similar to those guarding the mercy seat. God does not want our second best. He wants to be first place in our hearts.

God gave Moses a warning to pass on to his brother Aaron that, if he entered the Most Holy Place at any time other than the appointed day, he would die (Leviticus 16:2). On that day, he had to follow the instructions God gave to Moses which included bringing a sin offering and a burnt offering for himself and his family (see verse 6). Additionally, he was to wear the “sacred garments” (verse 4, NLT; “holy garments,” KJV). Before putting on these garments, he was to bathe himself. In spite of the priests’ best efforts, such careful actions could never cleanse the heart.

Discuss

? Why did God attach such severe consequences to an unlawful entry into the Most Holy Place?

? How can your life reflect a reverence for the holiness of God?

A New Way to God

Hebrews 10:19–28

[Heb 10:19-28 KJV] 19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 And [having] an high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the profession of [our] faith without wavering; (for he [is] faithful that promised;) 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. 26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

Say: The tabernacle, along with the regulations surrounding it, provided a beautiful picture of a time when Jesus would make a new way for us to come into the very presence of God. God is no less holy than He was in Old Testament times, nor are we any more righteous than were the Israelites, but the death and resurrection of Jesus bridged the separation and tore through the curtain to bring us into fellowship with God. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The death of Christ provided access to God for all believers. We can come boldly into His presence (Hebrews 10:19). We need not bring sacrifices for our sins because Jesus is that Sacrifice. We need not clean ourselves up as Aaron was instructed to do. Instead, Jesus “opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place” (verse 20, NLT). God requires that we come into His presence with “sincere hearts fully trusting him” (verse 22, NLT). He provides the cleansing.

God did not set aside His holiness when He gave the new covenant. He still detests sin and will bring judgment on the sinner. Jesus is the one Sacrifice able to take away sin. Because of His sacrifice, we can approach God with confidence, knowing our sins have been forgiven so they no longer separate us from the most holy God. The Old Testament sacrifices could not provide forgiveness, nor did they allow everyone access into God’s presence, but Christ’s sacrifice has provided us with forgiveness for our sins and unlimited access to God (verse 22).

Our free access to God gives us hope for the future because God can be trusted completely (verse 23). We can cling to that hope when the world around us seems to crumble. While we can certainly worship God alone, corporate worship is also necessary. God commands us to be part

of a community, encouraging one another in our walk with God as we worship and serve together (verses 24–25).

The writer of Hebrews gives a strong warning regarding the consequences of continuing to sin (verses 26–28). Although God has provided forgiveness through His Son Jesus Christ, He is still a holy God who calls His people to live in holiness.

Discuss

? How did Christ's death give us boldness to come into God's presence?

? How can your class practice the commands found in Hebrews 10:24–25?

Part 3—Place of Atonement

A Day of Atonement

Leviticus 16:6–34

[Lev 16:6-34 KJV] 6 And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which [is] for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house. 7 And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD [at] the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. 9 And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer him [for] a sin offering. 10 But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, [and] to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. 11 And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which [is] for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which [is] for himself: 12 And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring [it] within the vail: 13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that [is] upon the testimony, that he die not: 14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle [it] with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. 15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that [is] for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: 16 And he shall make an atonement for the holy [place], because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness. 17 And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy

[place], until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel. 18 And he shall go out unto the altar that [is] before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put [it] upon the horns of the altar round about. 19 And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. 20 And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy [place], and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: 21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send [him] away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: 22 And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness. 23 And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy [place], and shall leave them there: 24 And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people. 25 And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar. 26 And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp. 27 And the bullock [for] the sin offering, and the goat [for] the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy [place], shall [one] carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung. 28 And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. 29 And [this] shall be a statute for ever unto you: [that] in the seventh month, on the tenth [day] of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, [whether it be] one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: 30 For on that day shall [the priest] make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, [that] ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. 31 It [shall be] a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever. 32 And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, [even] the holy garments: 33 And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. 34 And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.

Say: Let's imagine for a moment what might have gone through the mind of the priest as he approached the Most Holy Place—an annual responsibility which carried tragic consequences if undertaken lightly. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

After all of the preparations had been made for entering the Most Holy Place, wearing the holy garments, the priest was ready for the reverent and formidable moment of standing in the presence of God.

After placing burning coals from the altar of burnt offering in a censer (incense burner), the priest entered the Most Holy Place. He then added incense to the coals, filling the room with an aromatic fragrance. He took the blood of a sacrificed bull and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, making atonement for himself. Only after he had been cleansed from sin could he offer the sin offering on behalf of the nation.

The other animals used in the offerings are mentioned in Leviticus 16:7–10. God instructed the priest to bring two goats: one was a sacrifice for sin, the other was a “scapegoat” (verse 26), to be set free in the desert.

After the high priest had offered a sacrifice for himself, he killed the goat chosen for the sacrifice and made atonement for the nation of Israel within the Holy of Holies (verses 15–18). When he came out of the Most Holy Place, he took the blood of the goat and the blood of the bull and cleansed the altar of burnt offerings by sprinkling it with the blood.

After the high priest had made the sacrifices for atonement, he laid his hands on the scapegoat, confessed the nation's sins over it, then had the goat released into the desert, symbolizing the removal of the nation's sins (verses 20–22).

After the high priest finished his work on the Day of Atonement, he washed himself and offered another sacrifice for himself and the people (verses 23–24). The one who led the scapegoat into the wilderness was required to bathe as well (verses 25–26). Then the remainder of the sacrifice was removed for disposal (verses 27–28).

The sacrifices on the Day of Atonement were a yearly ritual (verses 29–34). Yet these sacrifices could not make the conscience of the worshiper clean. As the high priest made atonement each year, he and the people were reminded of their sins.

Discuss

? Why was it impossible for the sacrifices presented on the Day of Atonement to cleanse the consciences of the people?

? How would you describe the emotions you might have felt had you been the priest preparing to enter the Most Holy Place?

Christ Our High Priest

Hebrews 4:14–16; 1 John 2:1–2

[Heb 4:14-16 KJV] 14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast [our] profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

[1Jo 2:1-2 KJV] 1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for [the sins of] the whole world.

Say: When Jesus crossed over the separation between God and humanity, serving as both High Priest and Sacrifice, He gave us the privilege of daily communion with Almighty God. No longer is access limited to a priest who first had to sacrifice for his own sins. The sinless High Priest became the perfect Sacrifice and opened up the way to God. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

When the high priest offered a sacrifice for himself on the Day of Atonement, his awareness of his own sin helped him sympathize with the nation and their need for sacrifices for sin. Jesus, our High Priest, can also sympathize with our needs. At one time He walked among His creation, then He entered heaven. But He is far more than a human high priest; He is the “Son of God” (Hebrews 4:14). And because there is no other who can give us salvation, we can “hold firmly to what we believe” (verse 14, NLT). Jesus does more than observe our difficulties. Jesus identified with us, experiencing all of the temptations we face. Yet He did not sin.

Believers are encouraged to “come boldly unto the throne of grace” (verse 16, KJV). The writer of Hebrews probably had the mercy seat of the tabernacle in mind. Because of Christ, we can approach God with confidence, receive mercy, and find His grace to help us. Instead of a yearly and fearful approach to the mercy seat, we can walk in the presence of God every day in constant communion with Him.

When the apostle John wrote to a group of believers, he referred to Christ as “the sacrifice that atones for our sins” (1 John 2:2, NLT; “propitiation,” KJV). Christ has made perfect atonement for us. The annual ritual on the Day of Atonement beautifully portrayed what Jesus did for us once for all. He is the only Sacrifice that can cleanse us from all sin. All who accept Him as personal Savior can experience forgiveness through His sacrifice.

Discuss

? How does Jesus’ ministry as our High Priest encourage you to bring your needs to Him?

? How well do you use your immense privilege of approaching God with confidence? How can you improve your relationship with Him?

Resource Packet Item 2: Invited to Approach

Distribute the work sheet and discuss the questions. Close the activity with prayer.

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Because of Jesus, we can boldly enter the presence of God, finding forgiveness for sins and grace to supply every need we bring to Him.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- When you pray, be mindful of the tremendous privilege and blessing it is to freely approach God.
- Look for ways you can increase your awareness and reverence for God's presence in your life.
- Share the plan of salvation with someone this week.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Holiness to the Lord.

[Exo 28:29-36 KJV] 29 And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy [place], for a memorial before the LORD continually. 30 And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the LORD: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually. 31 And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all [of] blue. 32 And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, that it be not rent. 33 And [beneath] upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates [of] blue, and [of] purple, and [of] scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: 34 A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. 35 And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy [place] before the LORD, and when he cometh out, that he die not. 36 And thou shalt make a plate [of] pure gold, and grave upon it, [like] the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

Tuesday:

The Tent of Meeting.
Exodus 33:7-11

[Exo 33:7-11 KJV] 7 And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, [that] every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which [was] without the camp. 8 And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, [that] all the people rose up, and stood every man [at] his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle. 9 And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood [at] the door of the tabernacle, and [the LORD] talked with Moses. 10 And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand [at] the tabernacle door: and all the

people rose up and worshipped, every man [in] his tent door. 11 And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

Wednesday:

Cleansing From Sin.

Psalm 51:1–12

[Psa 51:1-12 KJV] 1 [[To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.]] Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin [is] ever before me. 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done [this] evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, [and] be clear when thou judgest. 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden [part] thou shalt make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; [that] the bones [which] thou hast broken may rejoice. 9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. 12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me [with thy] free spirit.

Thursday:

Jesus Grants Forgiveness.

Mark 2:1–12

[Mar 2:1-12 KJV] 1 And again he entered into Capernaum after [some] days; and it was noised that he was in the house. 2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive [them], no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. 3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken [it] up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. 6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, 7 Why doth this [man] thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, [Thy] sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? 10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) 11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. 12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Friday:

Jesus Intercedes.

Romans 8:31–39

[Rom 8:31-39 KJV] 31 What shall we then say to these things? If God [be] for us, who [can be] against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? [It is] God that justifieth. 34 Who [is] he that condemneth? [It is] Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Saturday:

Our Perfect High Priest.

Hebrews 7:17–28

[Heb 7:17-28 KJV] 17 For he testifieth, Thou [art] a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. 18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. 19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope [did]; by the which we draw nigh unto God. 20 And inasmuch as not without an oath [he was made priest]: 21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou [art] a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) 22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. 23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24 But this [man], because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. 26 For such an high priest became us, [who is] holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. 28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, [maketh] the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.