

# St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups. Oct 28<sup>th</sup> 2007

## Deeper into Worship 3 – The Holy Place

1 Chronicles 23:28-32; Psalm 27:4-9 & 13-14



### Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of our series, which looks at a model of prayer based on the layout of the temple in Jerusalem. Week 1 looked at entering God's presence with thanksgiving and praise. Week 2 explored confession and repentance at the altar of sacrifice. Today we go up the steps of the sanctuary into the Holy Place. 1 Chr 23:28-32 describes how only the tribe of Levites could serve as priests in the temple. It was their role to assist the high priest in the service of the house of the Lord. They took charge of the practical aspects of the various offerings made, and the cleansing requirements to maintain holiness in the temple of God. It was a great (and rare) privilege to be chosen to minister in the Holy place.

All Christians have access to the draw close to God in the Holy place of Prayer. Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross we have access; we have become a Royal priesthood (1:Peter2:5). Now we don't need to go to a temple or a church to pray, we ourselves can become a temple of God's Holy Spirit, offering our spiritual sacrifice as we pray.

The Holy place contained 3 items of beautifully decorated gold furniture to signify God's majesty.

- **Table of Shewbread** – On which 12 pieces of unleavened bread were placed to represent the 12 tribes of Israel. A reminder of the Mana that God provided for them in the wilderness years. For us, it reminds us of the line in the Lords prayer 'give us today our daily bread', and encourages us to pray to God for our basic material, physical and emotional needs
- **Menorah** – A 7 branched lamp stand which the priest had the responsibility for keeping alight. Since the days of the early church the Menorah has signified the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit. It reminds us we need to pray to be filled with God's Holy Spirit, and to ask for the spiritual resources or gifts that will enable us in his service.
- **Altar of incense** - The third piece of furniture and the main focal point of the Holy Place was the Alter of incense, situated at the end of the sanctuary in front of the veil which separated the Holy place from the Holy of holies. As its name suggests it was an altaer where the priests placed incense, the smoke from which continually rose towards heaven symbolising the prayers of the people ascending to the throne of God. For us the altar of incense can represent the place of intercessory prayer where we pray for the needs of others. Notice the term altar which speaks of sacrifice – Charles Brent once said 'Intercessory prayer may be defined as loving our neighbour on our knees'. It is a costly business, it takes our time and energy and love.

The act of intercession seeks to restore God's right order. When we intercede, we join with the work of the Spirit in making God known in the world. We need to be silent before God, inviting the Holy Spirit to lead us and burden us with the prayers for people or places that He would have us pray. We may be prompted by a name or picture that comes into our mind, maybe by a deep sense of compassion or even tears for a situation – we take these as signs from the Holy Spirit and we pray into these situations as we feel led.



### **Witness: Questions to discuss**

1. We have been looking at lots of symbols that help us worship and pray. Bring with you something which you find helps you pray (this could be anything!) and share it's relevance with the group.

2. Discuss whether you currently use any 'structures' which you find helpful when you pray? (Some people use the acronym ACTS, or the Lords Prayer). Are you finding this concept of modelling prayer on the temple layout helpful or difficult?
3. The Holy Place depicts the immanent presence of God. Do you feel confident that God hears you when you pray – Why?/Why not? Share recent experiences of asking God to meet your needs (physical, material emotional or spiritual) and the outcome of these prayers. You may want to reflect on the idea that our lack of basic needs will detract from our service of God
4. What experience do you have of waiting on God in intercessory prayer? How do you sense God leading you in prayer (Note how many different ways God uses - each relationship is unique)
5. Try using the Prayer from Mark Stibbe's book (copied overleaf), or a similar format, to lead your time of prayer together

**Prayer from P 126 of Mark Stibbe book Drawing near to God – The Temple Model of Prayer**

Dear Father, I climb the steps to the Holy Place. Thank you for giving me access to your sanctuary through the death and resurrection of your son, our great high priest.

I pause in the porch of reverence for your holiness .....

I now stand before the golden table of showbread.

Thank you for encouraging us to pray, 'give us this day our daily bread'.

Thank you that you are a father who welcomes our asking, encourages our seeking, answers our knocking. Today I ask you to help me with the following needs that are much on my heart.....

Lord I come now to the Holy Lamp stands. I thank you that you want to help me minister effectively today. Increase in me the Spiritual gifts of ..... and draw me closer to yourself, through Jesus.

And now I come to the Golden Altar of incense. Help me in the silence now to hear what you are saying and to know the mind of Christ.....

Silence and listening

I pray for me friends .....

I pray for our small group .....

I pray for the family .....

I pray for those in need .....

I pray for my church .....

I pray for my church leaders .....

I pray for our mission partners .....

I pray for my community .....

I pray for my country .....

I pray for my work colleagues .....

I pray for the nations, particularly .....

And I pray especially for the peace of Jerusalem

Lord please answer my Prayer.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

Resource : ' A Kingdom of Priests'- Deeper into God in Prayer' by Mark Stibbe

This is an excellent book and highly recommended