

- *The narrative is moving outwards*

The altar of burnt offering – the first condition of fellowship with God is atonement

- *Atonement is compensation for sin*
- *God cannot be approached until sin is dealt with*
- *The Christian is called to be a 'priest' with access to God*
- *First Jesus makes a sacrifice for us, then we can follow Him*

- *By trusting Jesus' sacrifice we can enter the holy place of fellowship with God*

The bronze laver for washing – the second condition is a cleansed lifestyle

- *Copper contributions by some of the ladies of Israel*

The narrative is moving from the inward rooms to the outermost courtyard. Now the account reaches the description of the altar of burnt offering, the bronze laver for washing^{□1}, and then the courtyard in which they are to be found.

The altar of burnt offering^{□1} (see also 27:1–8) was the first item in the open courtyard. **The first condition of fellowship with God is atonement.** The description repeats what we had in 27:1–8. We have seen that the altar said to every Israelite that God could not be approached except via sacrifice. The altar was just inside the court. It said in symbolism that no priest was ready to step within the tabernacle in which God's presence could be experienced, unless he came via a sacrifice for sins.

Atonement is compensation for sin. Somehow God has to be compensated for sins that have been committed. The sinner cannot approach God lightly or easily. God hates sin, and is unwilling for the sinner to stand in His presence. Certainly no one in Israel could come anywhere near the presence of God unless in some way sin had been dealt with. What God required before the priest could approach Him was that sin be somehow covered and stripped of its power to condemn.

It symbolises the position of the Christian. We are to be 'priests' who have access to God but there is sin and wickedness in even the best things we do. How can people like us approach a holy God? God's appointed way is that the sinner can only approach God via sacrifice for sin. In the sacrificial system the priests offered sacrifices for themselves and for the people. Then they were ready to enter into the holy place, where there was to be found the symbols of fellowship. The modern Christian is like the priest standing at the gate of the tabernacle. Jesus is the priest who makes a sacrifice for us and enters into the presence of God. Symbolically, in these days of the New Covenant, we can follow Him. We can go into the holy place of fellowship, like the priest of the days of Moses.

When you stand in the courtyard you are not in the place of fellowship, but the altar is in sight. The Christian may not at this moment be in fellowship with God. But 'the altar is in sight', that is – the cross of Jesus is there for us. We may trust in Jesus our sacrifice, and then enter the holy place of fellowship with God.

The bronze laver for washing^{□1} was the second item in the open courtyard. **The second condition of fellowship with God is a cleansed lifestyle.** Having trusted in a sacrifice, the priest next had to wash himself. Our verse here tells us something not mentioned in 30:17–21. The copper that was used to make the laver was 'made from the mirrors of the ministering women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting'. There was already a 'tent of meeting' before the main tabernacle was built – the one built outside the camp for

Moses and those who would pray with him. Evidently this was looked after by some of the ladies of Israel. These ladies made their own contribution of copper (taken from their hand-mirrors which were made of copper) and their particular offering was used to make the laver. Perhaps it was in addition to the offering of Exodus 35; perhaps it was one notable part of that offering. But these ladies who had

□1 38:8

□1 38:1-7

□1 38:8

cared for the previous sanctuary outside the camp wanted to make their own contribution to the tabernacle that was about to be built.

• *The Christian cleanses his life of everything that condemns and accuses his conscience*

For the Christian, the main point is that he or she does what the priests did, only in a spiritual manner. He trusts in the cross of Christ. He cleanses his life of everything that condemns and accuses his conscience. Then he is ready for fellowship with God. Jesus went ahead. He offered Himself as the sacrifice for others. He was clean and pure and ready to go into the place of fellowship with God. When we have fellowship with God, we are only following a route that Jesus has made available to us.

The courtyard represented the conditions of fellowship

The courtyard represented the conditions of fellowship. Our text describes the courtyard to the south^{□1}, to the north^{□2}, to the west^{□3}, to the east^{□4}; and then verses 14–20 describe the linen ‘walls’ around the tabernacle, and the columns and pedestals that held them.

□1 38:9-10
 □2 38:11
 □3 38:12
 □4 38:13

• *First the courtyard – then the holy place – then the holy of holies*

Just as fellowship with God is necessary for entering into rest, so atonement and cleansing are necessary for the first stages of fellowship with God. The holy place must be entered before the holy of holies can be reached. Similarly the courtyard must be entered before the holy place can be reached.

• *If we want fellowship with God we have to actually follow this route of faith in Jesus’ atonement and self-cleansing*

If we want fellowship with God we have to **actually** follow this route of faith in Jesus’ atonement and self-cleansing. It is not the teaching or the doctrine that brings us into fellowship with God. It is not knowing the route as a theory. No amount of tabernacle- teaching or study of Exodus in itself brings us to the knowledge of God. We must actually walk the route that is described. We must actually come to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge our wickedness and tell Him we are trusting His sacrifice and are wanting to enter the presence of God. But there is more! We must actually get those sins cleansed away. We must walk in the light as God is in the light. At the moment we are (so to speak) standing in the courtyard. But we have to come to the altar and the laver, the place of atonement and the place of self-cleansing. When there is self-cleansing up to the measure of the light we have from God, then we are ready to be a spiritual ‘priest’ in the presence of God.

• *It is not sufficient to know the route – we must walk it*



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