

Lord, Where Am I?

6-5-11

Faith is the evidence of things not seen (*Heb. 11:1*), which means it can be very difficult sometimes to figure out where we are in our faith walk. Are we growing? How can we know for sure?

One consequence of this challenge is that more Christians than should be are living under a cloud of guilt that they're not doing the right things, or not doing enough, to please God. It can be very frustrating. How many have ever cried out: "Lord, just tell me what to do, and I'll do it!"?

Did God provide us with any kind of map that can tell us where we are spiritually speaking? The answer is yes. It's found in the layout of the Tabernacle of Moses. Consider these Scriptures:

- **Moses built the Tabernacle following God's specific heavenly plan.** God said: "You must build this Tabernacle and its furnishings exactly according to the pattern I will show you ." *Exodus 25:8-9*
- **Solomon, and later, Herod, elaborated the same basic floor plan** when they built their famous temples in Jerusalem.
- **Jesus redefined the temple as His own body.** He said: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up... He was speaking of the temple of His body ." *John 2:19-21*.
- **Paul explained that we, too, are temples for God's Spirit:** "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ...the temple of God is holy, which temple you are ." *1 Cor 3:16-17*

In short, we, ourselves, are patterned in some way after God's temple. What can the layout of Moses' Tabernacle tell us about God's plan for our spiritual lives? (Before reading on, you may want to look here to see images of the Temples and the Tabernacle floor plan.)

Moses' Tabernacle was divided into three spaces: (1) **Outer Court**, (2) **Holy Place** and (3) **Holy of Holies** where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. The lid of the Ark was called the "Mercy Seat" (*Exodus 25:17*), where the Shekinah Glory of God hovered between two golden cherubs (*Exodus 25:8*). Shekinah means "the dwelling" in Hebrew and refers to the fact that God told Moses to build the Tabernacles so that God could dwell with His people. It's the same with us. God wants to dwell inside the temples of our bodies, i.e., ourselves. When we grow spiritually and learn to abide in Jesus, then God comes and takes up residence with the Father inside of us. (Re-read *John 14*, especially verse 20.)

According to Jewish tradition, the Hebrew names for the curtains that separated the three spaces in the Tabernacle were the "Way", the "Truth", and the "Life." (*Source: Dr. Gerrit Nel, Hebrew Peoples' Institute, Jerusalem*). Jesus echoed these names in *John 14:6*, when He said "I am the way, the truth and the life", portending that when we receive Jesus into our hearts, He opens our inner curtains so we can experience the holiness of God dwelling within us.

So then, we find three spiritual "places" in the Tabernacle, separated by curtains that need to be parted. Various Biblical symbols associated with each of these three places perfectly mirror the spiritual state in which we find ourselves.

The Altar of Sacrifice was found in the Outer Court, just inside the curtain called the Way. When we acknowledge and accept the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as a sacrifice for us, we are enabled to enter upon the Way of Faith as His follower. Our lives, which were formerly based upon the desires of the flesh and the pride of life, now embark upon the Christian path of spiritual growth. Many Believers tend to remain in the Outer Court of Faith for most of their Christian lives. Here, the focus is mostly on our own spiritual needs and personal concerns about whether or not we are obeying God's rules. God seems to be at a shouting distance

from us much of the time rather than close to our hearts. When we pray, we may spend a lot of time asking for help, healing and provision for ourselves and our families. Long prayer lists are a prime characteristic of Outer Court Christians. Lengthy struggles with bad habits and sin are also characteristic of Outer Court Christians, because they lack the overcoming power of the Holy Spirit moving through them.

Parting the curtain of God's Truth allows us to enter into the Holy Place within us where the Holy Spirit dwells. Three implements were found in Moses' Tabernacle, each of which is symbolic of the Holy Spirit: the "showbread", representing the bread of God's Word which feeds the spirit within each of us; the *menorah*, representing the seven-fold Spirit of God (see *Isaiah 11:1-2*); and the altar of incense, representing our prayers rising to the throne room of heaven (*Rev. 5:8*). In the Holy Place, we receive the enduement of power from God's Holy Spirit (*Acts 1:8*). This word "power" also means "capability." The baptism of the Holy Spirit (*Matt. 3:11*) gives us the capability to live our lives as Jesus instructed. Without the Holy Spirit, our spiritual lives remain an ongoing struggle between flesh and Spirit. With the Holy Spirit, we experience more and more of the victory of God's overcoming Spirit working in and through us. Here we begin to consider others more than ourselves. We become an integral part of the living communion of saints (*2 Cor 13:14*). We pray to hear God and for Him to work through us to minister to others. We're no longer shouting at God from arm's length, but whispering to Him close by. We are able to share our faith effectively with others as led by the Spirit. We begin to behave the same everywhere instead of behaving one way at church and another way elsewhere in our lives. Tithing and giving first fruit offerings become second nature when we are living spiritually in the Holy Place.

Finally, there is the Holy of Holies located deep within us. Here the presence of God dwells. When we are truly deeply touched by God, we are completely identified with *Galatians 2:20* – "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." This is where God heals without laying on of hands. Christ in us becomes the hope of God's glory in our lives (*Col. 1:27*). In this realm of spiritual experience, we never feel separated from God (*Romans 8:38-39*) and always desire to do whatever He asks of us, whatever the price. ("Not my will, but Yours be done." *Luke 22:42*) Here we not only know we have eternal life, but we live like it. Prayer happens virtually continually, anytime, anyplace, because God is speaking to us all the time. We don't worry about tithes and offerings because we understand everything belongs to God. We walk totally in the peace that passes all understanding.

A lot more can be said about the design and implements of the Tabernacle of Moses, but this short description should be enough to help set your internal spiritual GPS to figure out where you are in the Lord. Remember, the Spirit of God is always at work transforming us from glory to glory. (*2 Cor 3:18*) It's called a faith WALK!

Which of these three places best describes your spiritual walk today?