

Sermon title: We continually serve our holy God

Sermon text: Lev 24:1 – 2

Introduction

A. Leviticus was the first book Jewish children studied in the synagogue.

B. When we read Lev 1 – 8, we get the impression that God’s holiness is tied to ancient rituals (or a set of “do’s and don’ts).

C. In this chapter, it is not the act which is holy. Instead, it is our overall attitude and faithful service before God that makes it holy.

Key Sermon points

1. God always dwells in us; therefore, we must live holy lives
2. God is our King; therefore, we must always wholeheartedly serve Him
3. God is pleased with our faithful service; even if our service is mundane

Background – 1

1. This section emphasizes the regular, on-going nature of this work:

a. “continually” – 24:2, 3, 4

b. “lasting ordinance for the generations to come” – 24:3

c. “lasting covenant” – 24:8

d. “regularly” – 24:8

2. This occurs just outside the Holy of Holies.

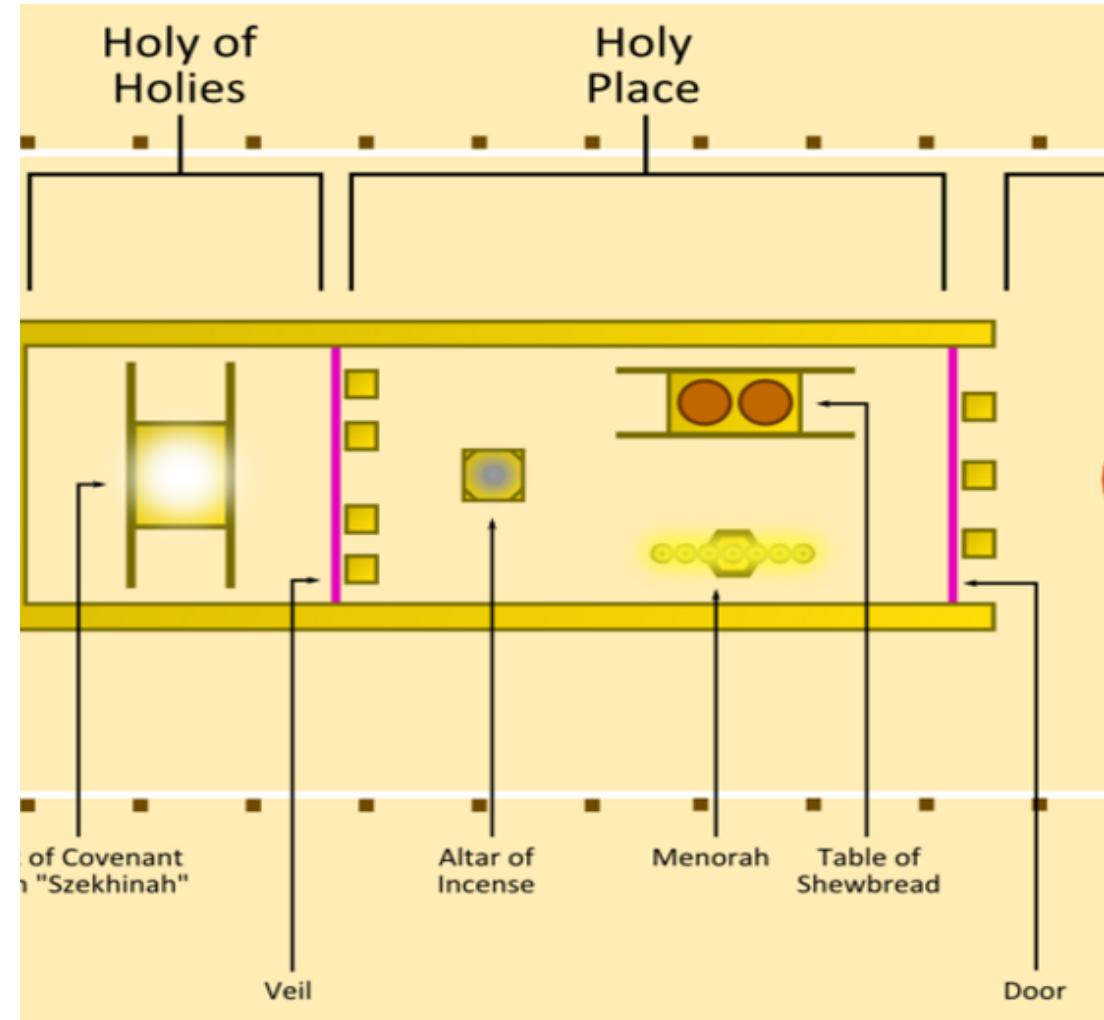
It is called the Holy Place.

3. Only the finest ingredients are used:

a. finest flour

b. pure olive oil

c. frankincense (an expensive incense)

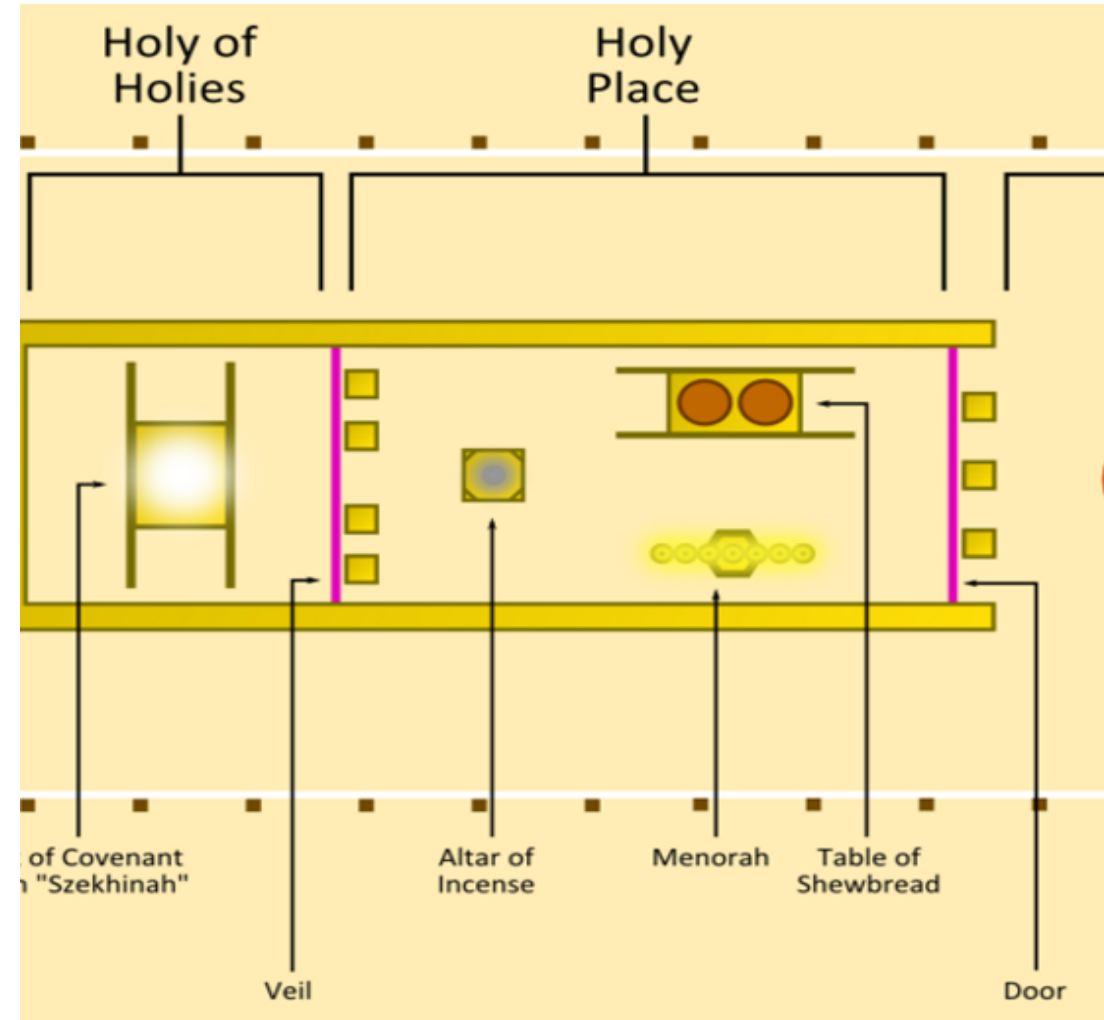


Background – 2

4. Furniture is made of pure gold:
 - a. candlestick (menorah) (Ex 25:39)
 - b. table for the bread (Ex 25:23 – 28)
 - c. altar of incense (Ex 30:1 – 6)

5. Garments for the priests (Ex 28:4 – 5):
 - a. breastpiece – skilful craftsmen and 12 precious stones (Ex 28:15 – 17)

Ex 28: 43 – Persons serving God must be holy.
I.e. only priests are qualified to serve before God.



24 The LORD said to Moses, ² “Command the Israelites to bring you clear (fine/pure) oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually.

Observation & Application

1. In the ancient Near East, whenever there is a lamp burning, incense burning, then someone is “home”. Therefore, by keeping the lamps burning continually, the Israelites acknowledged that YHWH was “home” – in the midst of His people and the Israelites were His servants.

Similarly today, we know that God is in our midst both (a) individually and (b) in this church.

2. “pressed olives” – describes the top quality oil that was produced by gently pounding the olives in a stone mortar (rather than the more economical crushing in oil presses) and then carefully pouring to remove all impurities.

This fine/pure oil is described as a gift from one king to another (1 Ki 5:11).

Therefore, this fine/pure oil is presented to our heavenly king.

3. “lamps may be kept burning continually” – this is repeated in 24:2,3,4 – emphasizing its importance.

³ Outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law in the tent of meeting, Aaron is to **tend** the lamps before the LORD from evening till morning, continually. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.

Observation & Application

1. “**tend**” – the word means “putting things in order”.
2. This included ensuring that the wicks were trimmed and the oil was sufficient for the lamps to burn.
3. Note: While the Israelites were responsible for providing the fine/pure oil, it was Aaron (i.e. the priesthood) who was responsible for keeping the lamps burning continually.

In the OT, there were two separate people – the people and the priesthood.
However, in the NT, this distinction is removed and all Christians are priests.

4. This service for God took place in a holy place where only the priests could enter. This is a picture that all service by Christians before God are considered holy.
5. This was to be a continually service before God. I.e. this was not a one-time act of service; rather, it was a long-term, lifelong service. This is a picture of our service before God. Our service is not a one-time act; rather we are to dedicate our lifetimes serving God.

⁴The lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD must be tended continually. ⁵“Take the finest flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf.

Observation & Application

1. Notice every item in the holy place is:

- a. Finest flour (for the bread)
- b. Purest olive oil (for the candles)
- c. Frankincense
- d. Gold lampstand

This is a picture that everything before God must be the best, the finest, the purest.

Therefore, our service before God must not be slack and our worship before God must not be indifferent.

Check our hearts.

⁶ Arrange them in two stacks, six in each stack, on the table of pure gold before the Lord.

Observation & Application

There is a total of 12 loaves of bread for the 12 tribes of Israel.

This is a picture that all Christians are represented before God.

⁷ By each stack put some pure **incense** as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be a food offering presented to the LORD.

Observation & Application

1. “**incense**” means frankincense. This was an expensive spice and to be presented in a pure form. This frankincense was not be mixed with other spices.

2. This is a picture of continual prayer before God.

3. “memorial portion” of the bread means it was a picture representing the offering and burned on the altar as an expression of the worshipper’s desire that God “remember” them with His favour and blessing.

⁸ This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant.

Observation & Application

According to Jewish tradition, the priests rotated each Sabbath and the bread loaves were changed each Sabbath. The old loaves were eaten, half by the incoming priests and half by the outgoing priests.

This is a picture of continuing fellowship/partnership between the incoming priests and the out-going priests.

There is a picture of the continuity between the different ministries in the church – refreshments, AV, cleaning etc

⁹ It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in the sanctuary area, because it is a most holy part of their perpetual share of the food offerings presented to the LORD.”

Observation & application

1. Notice that only the priests are allowed to eat this – i.e. their families, good friends, soccer teammates are not permitted to share in this meal. This is a picture of the privilege of the priests before God.
2. The food was considered “most holy” – i.e. the food was primarily a spiritual reminder – not for nutritional value.
3. The food was to be consumed in the “sanctuary” – i.e. the food was consumed in a holy place – not in “Four Seasons”, “Marche” etc.
4. The food offering was “presented to the LORD” – i.e. the dedication to the LORD was what made the food holy; not the food itself.

Summary

1. God always dwells amongst the Israelites; therefore the Jews must live holy lives.

This is a picture of God dwelling in Christians; therefore Christians must live holy lives.

2. God is our King; therefore, we must always serve Him wholeheartedly.

All gifts brought by the Jews must be fit for a king. As Christians, our gifts/service must be fit for a king.

3. God is pleased with our faithful service; even if our service is mundane.

4. It is not the act which is holy; but it is the attitude and care before God that makes it holy.

It is not the act of cleaning the wick, or preparing the bread which makes it holy. It is the care and attitude before God that makes it holy.

5. Routine spiritual activities such as worship service, prayer meeting, refreshment, greeting, gospel outreach, Bible studies etc.

What makes these routine matters spiritual is that these are done “before the LORD”.

6. Mundane tasks/chores like changing diapers, teaching children school work, leading sales or project teams.

Again, what makes these mundane chores holy is that these are done “before the LORD”

Summary

7. “frankincense” – when burnt gives off a pleasant aroma. This is a picture of a pleasing prayer before God.
8. “bread” – when eaten gives physical sustenance. This is a picture of studying the Bible for spiritual sustenance.
9. “continually”, “for generations to come” – day in & day out; year in and year out the priests were expected to perform this ritual.
This is a picture of continual faithful service to our God.