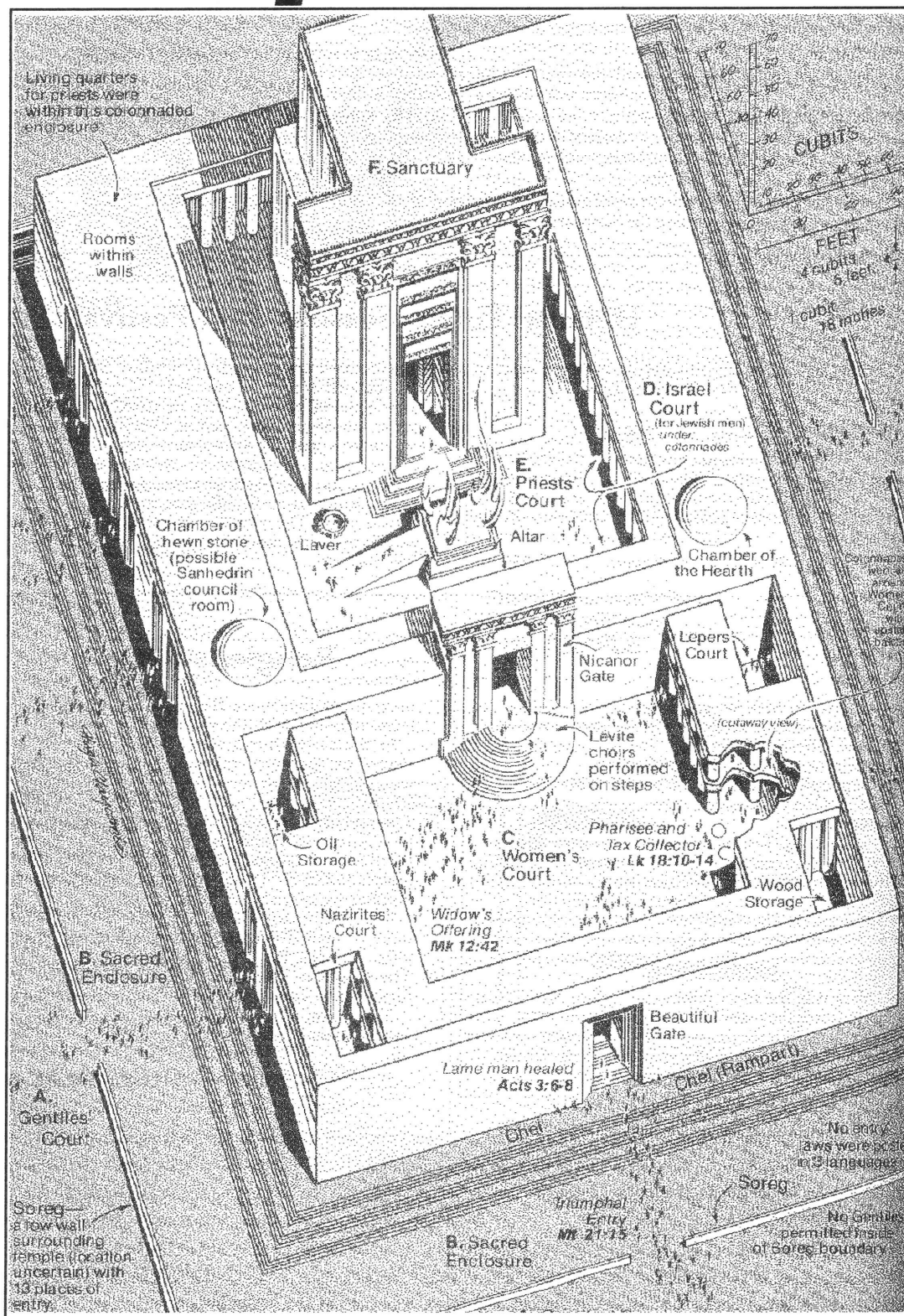


# A Temple Meditation



**2 Corinthians 4:6-7** For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

**1 Corinthians 3:16** Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

**Romans 9:23** What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles.

**YOU ARE TEMPLE of the  
LIVING GOD, the CONTAINER  
and CONDUIT of HIS GLORY.**

**Journal entry: July 4, 1994**

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Lord, you have told us that we are your temple--I and my brothers and sisters are both your temple<sup>1</sup> and your holy city, the New Jerusalem<sup>2</sup>. This seems important to me. But what does it mean? Open my eyes that I might see, Oh Lord, great and wondrous things that You have made.

I know the disciples were impressed with the physical temple. On the Mount of Olives they peered across the Kedron Valley and said, "Look at those massive stones and magnificent buildings. Isn't it grand!"<sup>3</sup> You were not impressed, however, for you knew you were going to build a better temple, not built with human hands but by the Spirit of God. And that is *us*, Lord. Are we really that grand?

For we are God's *workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.<sup>4</sup>

I am taken back in my mind through time, to the time...of Jesus.

I am approaching the Temple today as a Gentile. It is a rather intimidating encounter. The building is massive and awesome. Jews are everywhere. I have known a few of those peculiar people--the devout and holy ones--and there is something uncanny and attractive about their wisdom and the way they talk about their God. It is as if they both love and fear Him. As one on the outside of their faith, I can see why. Their temple is so strong and imposing. Yet there is something strangely attractive about it--as if there is really Someone to know inside. Their new sect, the Christians, says the temple is a picture of the soul and that inside of *me* are all the structures found symbolically within the temple. That is wild! They say the kingdom of God is within a man as well as physically brought to earth in this generation through their leader, Jesus. Now that is almost *too* wild! But let me imagine that I am walking into my unseen soul as I enter into the temple grounds. That may help me to see if what they claim rings true. My intuition usually alerts me when a thought like that is true. It is like a bell rings or something has an amazing and satisfying *fit*---like "this particular idea is not only possibly *true*, but it is in fact TRUTH"---almost as if TRUTH were a *person* that I could recognize. Uh oh! Here comes the entrance to the Court of the Gentiles. I had better be quiet.

### **The Court of the Gentiles**

Boy! There is quite a din in here. I sure did not expect this! I was really expecting a quiet place to meditate and ponder the possibility of the God of the Jews. Instead, this is an animal warehouse and marketplace. It is noisy and it stinks! I can't pray in here!

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<sup>1</sup>Paul the Apostle's Second Letter to the Corinthians 6:16

<sup>2</sup>The Revelation of Jesus Christ to John chapter 21

<sup>3</sup>The Gospel According to Matthew 24

<sup>4</sup>Paul the Apostle's Letter to the Ephesians 2:10

Hey! Who is that guy with the whip? What is he doing? Why, he is going through the place and hitting the merchants and turning over their tables! What gives? This place couldn't symbolize anything as sacred as a soul, could it?

Wait, though. On the other hand, isn't this a lot like the noise of my everyday life? My mind is often not a peaceful place. It is often taken up with worries about earning a living, turning a profit, and keeping the stench and filth of the world and my own body from

overrunning things. Clutter, clutter everywhere! Noise in my mind! God, is there no peace *anywhere*? Is there any way I can keep this barnyard full of ideas, feelings, gut reactions, and body sensations from looking like the Gentiles' Court?

Maybe if I go deeper into this mystery, I will be able to understand it a little more. Here comes the gate to the Inner Court they call the Sacred Enclosure. Maybe it will quiet down inside.

### The Sacred Enclosure

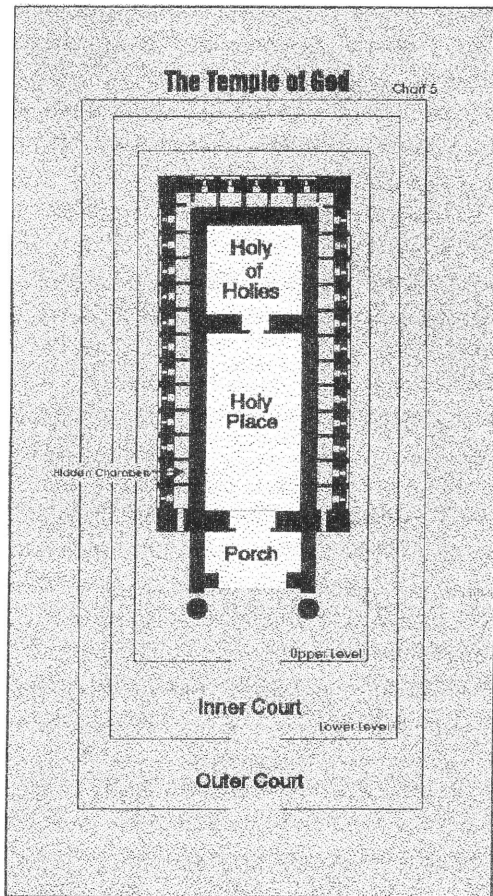
Wait! What is this? Here are signs in three languages. "No Gentiles Allowed," and it says it is on penalty of death. I am within sight of the Beautiful Gate, and they will not even let me enter? What a disappointment! Here, maybe if I can get up on my toes I can get enough of an angle to at least *see* inside. Ah, no! I can't do it.

The excitement here is palpable. People are beginning to hush their tones as they walk toward the great stone stairs leading up to the Chief Rampart surrounding the temple enclosure. The overwhelming sense is one of 'upwardness'. The eyes lift, the feet climb, and the heart shifts from mundane to lofty thoughts as the Beautiful Gate is approached.

I guess this separation of Jew and Gentile has its place within our souls as well. There are places and feelings inside me that I do not let just anybody see. If someone came in uninvited, I would feel either very hurt or offended. I might even want to fight. Things like my private thoughts, my sexual and loving feelings, my deeper sense of sacredness---these are things I do not expose to the world. Like Jesus said, "Do not cast your pearls before swine."<sup>5</sup>

Speaking of Jesus, here he comes now! He is in a disguise so people won't recognize him. I wonder what he is doing. He is motioning me to come with him. Okay, Jesus, here I come.

We go to an area outside the wall of the sacred enclosure, and there he has a Jewish garment for me to wear--a white robe and turban. It looks like someone spilled ketchup on it; or is that blood? Jesus has a staff that looks like it is made with two different kinds of wood, the one on top grafted into the one on the bottom. He gives it to me, and I now appear com-



<sup>5</sup>The Gospel According to Matthew 7:6



pletely Jewish. It actually *feels* different to be wearing this--like I am a different person somehow. I feel like I can not only *play* the part of a Jew but as if I am *becoming* Jewish. I feel identified with the chosen race, the people of God.<sup>6</sup> It is exciting. Jesus beckons me now toward the stairs, so once again I follow.

He is reminding me that it was right in this area that the people welcomed him as king a few days ago. It caused quite a stir. Maybe then this area is like the parts of my soul I experience when faith is new--those parts that are sacred and welcoming to God, but still undeveloped and fickle like the Palm Sunday crowd. It is a place of spiritual awakening.

Jesus takes my hand as we climb the stairs. The closer we get to the Beautiful Gate, the more awesome and majestic it becomes. These stairs require effort to be sure, rather like the discipline of seeking God. But this place also inspires a worship that makes the effort seem small. Jesus is smiling at me with knowing eyes, as if I am supposed to understand something. Oh! I get it! The Beautiful Gate and its majesty are like the feeling of God's awe and wonder we enter during the beauty of corporate worship. It is like the joy of a new Christian. "I am the gate," Jesus said. Could this gate represent our entry through him?

Beauty, it is said, derives from the synthesis of the "true" and the "desired".<sup>7</sup> He is certainly True and has been called 'the end of all desire'<sup>8</sup>. It is when we experience beauty that our feelings of being child-like and playful awaken and make approaching God a thing of delight. Christ's burden is light we are told<sup>9</sup>, and we must come to him like a child<sup>10</sup>. So as we take in the beauty of the Beautiful Gate, my heart feels lifted in praise. I do not think of the awful price that was paid for our entry, nor the struggle of my own journey ahead. Worship lightens my heart, making my approach to this potentially frightening God of Truth and Justice, more lighthearted and free. Without this inner music of joy, approaching God would be burdensome and ponderous. But from here I am catching the first strains of the Levite choir that sings from the steps of the next court. Such lifting up of eyes, heart, and song befits your house, oh God. Glory to Your name!

## The Court of Women

As I pass through the Beautiful Gate, I see now another reason for its name. I am entering an area filled with *women*, the Women's Court. Now, one wonders why God would want to segregate these beautiful creatures from the holiest of places deeper within the temple. Is he merely patriarchal and demeaning to women? The impact of the atmosphere here suggests another explanation. This whole courtyard resonates with openness.

Only by knowing and appreciating the feminine of our species have I come to know the reality of true, deep openness. Men can get together and have a relatedness of ideas, task, and purpose, but there is something about the way a woman approaches relating that is entirely different and beautiful. Now women physically can be beautiful, it is true. However,

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<sup>6</sup>The First Letter of Peter 2:9

<sup>7</sup>Schiller, Friedrich, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*; trsl. E.M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, Oxford, 1967, pp. 331-332, note.

<sup>8</sup>Williams, Charles, *Many Dimensions*; Wm. B. Eerdmans:1950.

<sup>9</sup>The Gospel According to Matthew 11:9

<sup>10</sup>The Gospel According to Mark 10:14



there is another and deeper kind of beauty that comes from the openness of their soul. Women seem to naturally give *presence*.

*Presence*, as I speak of it here, is more than a physical location. Presence is a state of consciousness in which the focus of attention is completely attuned with another person's being. Presence is an affirmation of the essence of another's nature, over and above what the person *does*---the primacy of *being* over *doing*. The glory of God radiates from our hearts when this very feminine openness happens within our souls. Feminine presence, when we experience it in prayer, is like a deep stillness, a silent pool. God is there. The warm radiance of his being is all we need. There, in the motherly shelter of His wings, we are one with His peace, a peace that invites us still deeper and envelops us in love. At these moments, we experience our acceptance in the Beloved. *We* are a feminine "beloved" ourselves. No manly bravado can enter here. It is perfect peace and perfect humility. This place within me has been called the "*anima*". It is a place where I can feel feminine before God, receptive and open. Then perhaps, at other times, I feel the femininity *of* God as my soul is nurtured. "Be still, and know that I am God."<sup>11</sup> Our masculine, striving, achievement oriented instincts rarely know this stillness. Here we simply wait upon God and simply *know* who we *are* in Him. Here is true relatedness. No need to strive; no need to achieve. In fact, some translations of *Psalms* 46 command us to, "*Cease striving*, and know that I am God." A holy receptivity is this feminine for the soul.

This giving and receiving of *presence* is an emphasis of utmost importance in mature spirituality. One writer states,

This presence is like a passport to greater life. Presence is our connection to that greater Being to which we belong, but which is often buried beneath mundane concerns, bodily desires, emotional disturbances, and mental distractions... Presence is the point of intersection between the world of senses and the world of the Spirit. May we never cease to discover its beauty and its power.<sup>12</sup>

Certain feminine presences seemed to inspire even the Master's openness. Martha's discussion with Jesus after Lazarus died led only to theological speculation. When Mary came, however, "Jesus wept."<sup>13</sup> You see, Mary had the uncanny gift of attunement and presence. This whole temple court lets me know that cultivating an attunement to God's presence in life and prayer is central if I am to go to deeper depths on the journey with Him.

Thank you, Jesus, for the beautiful feminine soul. Thank you for the caring women I have known. Grow that attunement further in me. I am sorry you couldn't marry during this trip to the earth. I hope that I and my fellow disciples will prepare ourselves well for your coming and become for you the best bride you could possibly desire---open, humble, and attuned to you---that we might bring you joy.

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<sup>11</sup> *Psalms* 46:10

<sup>12</sup> Helminski, Kabir *Living Presence*. Putnam, New York City, 1992, p. xi.

<sup>13</sup> The Gospel According to John 11:35.

## The Nicanor Gate

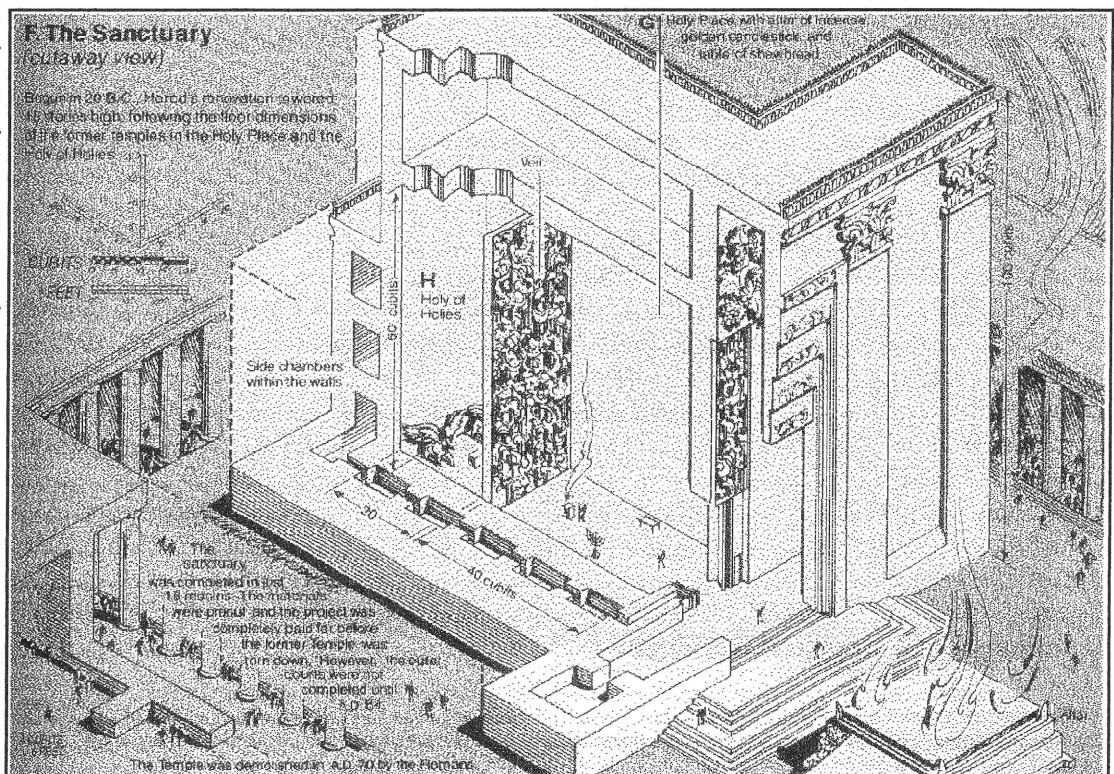
Jesus is now pointing the way between the choirs on the steps of the Women's Court. The music is so beautiful, and the atmosphere so glorious, that I really do not want to leave. Maybe this is how the disciples felt upon the mount of transfiguration. It is so great here, why bother with the journey toward more? But Jesus had a cross to bear and a valley to cross after Transfiguration Mount.

As we pass between the Levite choirs on the steps to the Nicanor Gate, I remember that the name of this gate means "victory". It certainly feels victorious. As we ascend the steps, the music swells on both sides of us. This must be the stereo of the first century. Sound now surrounds us. We are enveloped in song. Though as we walk on, the choirs fall behind, the music fades, and we enter the shadow of the gate. I guess "victory" implies an overcoming of darkness. You cannot have victory unless you enter the fight. Perhaps this is why the men come here. It is our masculine instincts that lead us to war. My being was affirmed and bonding to God reinforced through my experience in the Womens' Court. Now my masculine strength is being readied for war. Wholeness is that to which God calls me. So both sides of my soul are spoken to here---feminine first, like a child with its mother, then, at the gate, a rite of passage to manhood. Victory is required, so I must enter the fray. I cannot stay with the nurturing mother aspect of God forever. I must now learn My Master's strength.

## The Priests' Court

As I enter the Priests' Court, the first thing I sense is that violence is here. An altar with fire and blood is before me. The smell of burning sacrifice is in the air. The men of Israel are gathered under the pillared coverings that encircle the court. From there they

observe the slaying of their sacrifices, the giving up of their hard earned prizes for the kingdom of God. We cannot control that which we have won. Even though we are required to work with the sweat of our brow, lest we think we *deserve* what we have, God says, "Give it back to Me."



He knows our masculine souls, how entitled and deserving we feel to the fruit of our labor and to have territory and possessions that we consider our own. We forget that all we have is ultimately a *gift*. Along with territory and possessions, we can seek to own parts of our heart. Our egocentric will is inclined to grasp. This is the nature of the masculine in both women and men. My grasping hand must let go. To hold on is to let idolatry be found in my heart.

### **The Storage Chambers**

Jesus is now calling me around to the right, toward the covered area closest to the Sanctuary. Here he has another set of clothes hidden for me. Outside the view of others, we put on our priestly robes, and he tells me we are to take a detour into a hidden place of the Sanctuary. As priests, we unobtrusively walk up the stairs and into the giant entryway of the Holy Place. Before passing within, however, Jesus pulls me to one side where I see a smaller door. We enter it, and we find ourselves in a darkened hall. On either side of the hall are numerous other closed doors.

Jesus takes me to one and opens it. He picks up a torch off a rack to illuminate what is inside. Within, I view a room full of grain, apparently a storage place for offerings given for the Levites' sustenance. This seems in order to me, but now he directs me to another room and asks me to try this door. I push it, and it seems to be barricaded. The rooms do not appear lockable, so something doesn't feel right about this. Someone has apparently blocked the door from the inside. Jesus then takes me to the room adjacent and points to enter. The flickering torch light reveals a second room like the first one, filled with grain. Nothing appears amiss.

Ah! But now Jesus is digging in the grain near the corner. As the grain falls away from the area, a small door is revealed. After clearing enough grain away so it can open, he tells me to crawl through. On my hands and knees, I enter the darkness of the obstructed room. It smells musty in here---a little moldy and dead. Jesus passes me the torch, and I hold it as he joins me. There are a variety of containers in here, some ornate and beautiful, some quite simple. I open one, and inside I see a statue. It is jade and beautifully sculpted, but it is of some kind of unearthly being. I speculate that it is intended as a god. "What is this statue of a foreign god doing in the Temple?" I ask. "Why would they keep it here when God offers them *His* glory and blessings forevermore?"

Jesus says this is not the only room filled with idols. He says the priests responsible for the hidden rooms feel they want to hedge their bets in case they disagree with some of Yahweh's plans. The too earthly priest keeps the idols to sell if he finds himself short. The spiritually compromised one actually worships and hopes that some other god besides Yahweh will look favorably on him. Jesus then asks me, "Is this like you in any way, son?"

Oh, Jesus, did you have to ask that question? Why couldn't I just point my finger at an awful priest, or discuss the symbolic meaning in abstract terms? Do you have to make it so personal?

After watching my dreams for a few years, though, I understand what he is getting at. My dreams show up my hidden sides, the little rooms that need torches for their illumination. It is difficult, at times, to look into those places, yet God is usually very kind in the way that



He shows me. So I answer, “Yes, Lord. This is ‘flesh’, my *sarx*<sup>14</sup>, the regions of my soul that contain my unfinished emotional business, sin, and inherited defects of personality and character. Lord, have mercy on me.”

“It is well that you know this. Even *your own* ‘gut’ reactions, my son, are sometimes amiss. Consciously you tend toward my following, but when fear arises, your instincts can take control. Take heed if you think you stand. You too can fall. You only stand through trust in Me. The priests and scribes study the Torah, but only those who hear my voice will truly be my sheep.<sup>15</sup> You must abide in *Me* and have my words abide in you. Then your desire to follow me can truly be accomplished.<sup>16</sup> ‘He who has ears let him hear.’<sup>17</sup>”

I am humbled as he prompts me to remove the items barring the door. They are heavy, so he helps me. He carries a hefty statue out with perfect ease. Then, as we approach the place of sacrifice, he gives it to me to carry up the altar ramp. I struggle with it to the top, and by then, I am more than happy to let it go, shoving it into the fire. What a burden! I am glad to have it gone. Hallelujah!

Jesus tells me on my return, “It is for this that the fire and sacrifice are made. You can go no further unless you are clean.” With that, he holds out his left palm. From the palm, I see that blood is oozing. With his right thumb, he takes his blood making the sign of the cross upon my brow. “You are clean,” he says. “We can proceed.”

## The Sanctuary

Since entering the inner court, my preoccupation with Jesus has been so intense that I have scarcely noticed the immensity of the Sanctuary building. I am right next to it, and for the first time now, I look up and am dumbfounded. This place is incredible! I am utterly dwarfed. As I stare transfixed, Jesus quietly laughs to himself, so I turn and say, “Lord, you are probably used to seeing holy things of incredible magnitude up close, but I have never before seen a work of architecture quite so wondrous. The opening to this building seems like it must be the gate of heaven itself!”

“It is intended to create that effect,” Jesus says, “but it is actually less like heaven’s gates and more like something inside *you*. Do you know what?”

“Oh, that is a tough one, Lord. Let me think. I have always thought of the Holy Place of the Sanctuary to be like what spiritual tradition calls our ‘still point’ or ‘holy space’. It is that place of innocent vulnerability and openness that is free of striving and very peaceful where we meet you in prayer. It is where we taste your sweetness in contemplation and at times hear your still, small voice.<sup>18</sup> It is a deep, meditative quiet. But what could be the entry portal to this?”

Since I have not perceived the answer yet, Jesus walks with me slowly up the center of the Sanctuary stairs. The angle of my upward gaze grows steeper with each step forward until finally I cannot look up anymore and am engulfed by the antechamber to holiness. I feel so

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<sup>14</sup>See *Paul the Apostle’s Letter to the Romans* 7

<sup>15</sup>*The Gospel According to John* 10

<sup>16</sup>*The Gospel According to John* 15

<sup>17</sup>*The Gospel According to Matthew* 13:43 and others

<sup>18</sup>*I Kings* 19:12

small and insignificant. Approaching this holiness causes me to bow my eyes and look away. I do not feel rejected or unwanted, just....AMAZED. That's it! I feel amazed....amazed and humble---incredibly humble, in fact. My heart starts to spontaneously repeat, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner...." It seems I can think of nothing else but this simplest of phrases. I just want his mercy. I am so small.

"I am so sorry, Jesus. I didn't realize what an awesome, righteous king you are. You have seemed like such a friend. I hope I didn't offend you with any over-familiarity. Please, have mercy on me and forgive."

I start to go on with my apology, but Jesus puts his finger to his lips to signal quiet, then suddenly my soul fills with a burst of the most glorious holy light... and fire... and love. I am *stunned* into silence. I feel like curling up into a little ball on the floor. I am utterly transcended.....

.....Time has apparently passed, for I see that I am no longer in the place of my last remembrance. The Lord has taken me to the side, just inside the first portal of the sanctuary but before the Holy Place. "Lord, I didn't know holiness could be so overpowering. No wonder you require of your people such long preparation."

As he helps me up, I feel my legs still trembling and weak. Knowing my plight, he blows his breath on me with his mouth. Suddenly, my legs strengthen, and my heart renews. I think of Isaiah who says, "They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength," and I picture myself as an eagle riding upon the wind of God's love and Spirit<sup>19</sup>. I am now able to walk. "The Purgative Way is long and arduous. The desert is its home. You are now moving beyond purgation into the realm of my illumination."

After a few deep breaths, I reorient to where I stand. Jesus then points to the two pillars just outside the door where we entered. "In Solomon's temple," he explains, "these pillars were quite prominent, and they each had a name. Son of man, do you know these names?"



88. Chertan Shervan Theodotides of Solomon's Temple

"No, Lord. Please tell me."

"The first was named 'Boaz' and the second 'Jachin'.<sup>20</sup> These constituted Solomon's Porch but did not hold up a roof. They were great fire altars. On the one hand the name of Boaz proclaimed in fire and smoke lifted up to heaven, 'Yahweh will establish thy throne forever'. Beside it Jachin proclaimed, 'In Yahweh is the king's strength.' What does this tell you about your soul, oh

man?"

"Well, Lord, it seems to me the message of my swoon before I entered your glory and the message of these pillars is that I dare not approach this place if I am trusting in *my* strength alone to take me. Boaz says, 'The One who sits on David's throne<sup>21</sup> must be the *eternal* king of my heart if I am to consider entrance here.' Jachin tells me, 'Only you, Eternal

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<sup>19</sup>Isaiah 40

<sup>20</sup>1 Kings 7:21

<sup>21</sup>Isaiah 9:6-7

King Jesus, are sufficient to give me strength.' My whole entrance to glory and power must base itself on these two things: You are Lord of the universe and Lord of my soul. Only through *your* strength, do *I* have strength. Glory be to God Most High and to you, Lord Jesus Christ. Please have mercy on me."

"So humility, dependence, and my lordship are the entryways to holiness and glory within you, my son. It is good that you see this. Let us enter now the Holy Place where the priests minister the bread, and light, and incense."

## The Holy Place

The daylight dims and cacophony from outside softens as we walk past the threshold into the misty light of this three story chamber. Things begin to feel more other-worldly, more foreign to my usual sensory experience. The priests minister here with great reverence and solemnity. It is nearly the end of the day, and only two priests remain. One is lighting lamps, and one is putting the final touches on one of ten tables of showbread. As we go near to one of the tables, I see the Bread of the Presence which is left before God and refreshed daily.

"Why, oh man, has Yahweh required this bread to be placed before him? Surely he does not hunger like a man. For what, then, is this bread provided?"

The symbols are getting stranger and more subtle the deeper I enter within here. I am struggling with this one. I think of bread in the scriptures and remember the manna that fed the Jews. I recall the Lord's Table and the bread representing our savior's body. God's tangible 'enfleshment' seems to be a theme in both of these two instances. The showbread is called the Bread of Presence, so I think of God's tangible presence in my heart when I pray and how our times together have become for me my food. A day without the experience of His Presence always brings with it an emptiness, futility, and 'striving after wind.'<sup>22</sup> I race through my tasks, but when the day is complete, I cry, "Where was my Jesus?" I then sorrow and think, "what a waste it was to miss walking in his Presence. If I had worked my schedule to connect to his Stillness, I probably would have walked in his glory all day. Instead, all I have to show for my day is desert sand."

"Lord, I guess this bread is you," I finally reply.

"And not just me," he replies, "but the *me* as I am experienced in *you*; for 'you have the mind of Christ'<sup>23</sup> These morsels are likened to the very structures of my thought, the indwelling Word itself incarnated into your thoughts, encoded into the symbol system and images of your neural circuits, giving structures through which life itself can flow. A good system, wouldn't you say? Putting myself in you where I will never leave."

Then one of those neural circuits fires in my head and my inner voice states, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See *Ecclesiastes*

<sup>23</sup> *Paul the Apostle's First Letter to the Corinthians* 2:15-16--- The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind (*nous*) of Christ.

<sup>24</sup> *The Gospel According to John* 1:14



"Did you hear that?" Jesus asked me.

"Hear what, Jesus?"

"Did you hear the Word alive within you? What did it say?"

"You mean the scripture that just came to my mind, the one about the Word becoming flesh?"

"Yes, that's the one. I just gave you a bite to eat."

With that, Jesus turned on his heel and walked over to the seven branched candle stand from which came more and more our only light. The sun was nearly down, and we were now alone.

"What, oh man, are these?"

"That is a Menorah, the candlestick of the Jews. Seven is the symbolic number of completion for heaven and earth. So as heaven's completeness, the number three, and earthly completion, the number four, combine, the light that comes forth from this is a holy and most pure light, Lord. That light is you as well."

"You are right, oh man, for I have united the two. Complete am I in my humanness and complete am I as your God. I bring forth this completeness in you as I enlighten your soul with my mind. Now tell me of the oil that feeds these flames, dear disciple; what do you know of this oil?"

"I have read that it derives from the best essence of the olive. Obtaining it comes through the beating of the fruit rather than its crushing so that only the finest, most loosely bound oil of the olive burns in the flame. The olive tree, some say, is the Jews. You cursed the olive tree that gave no fruit.<sup>25</sup> The ultimate fruit of the Jewish nation was *you*, Lord. Is the olive oil, then, like you as well?"

"It is indeed, oh man. For I will be beaten, but I will not be crushed. And through my stripes you will receive light and healing. Oil has been a symbol for healing as well as a source of light, and those who pray for such things anoint with it still."

"...And the Holy Spirit too, Lord. The oil is the Holy Spirit. The foolish virgins lacked this oil when the Bridegroom came.<sup>26</sup> We all need the oil of your Spirit, Lord, if we are to be ready for your coming."

Turning again he asked, "Then what is this censer, this altar of incense? What can you tell me of this?"

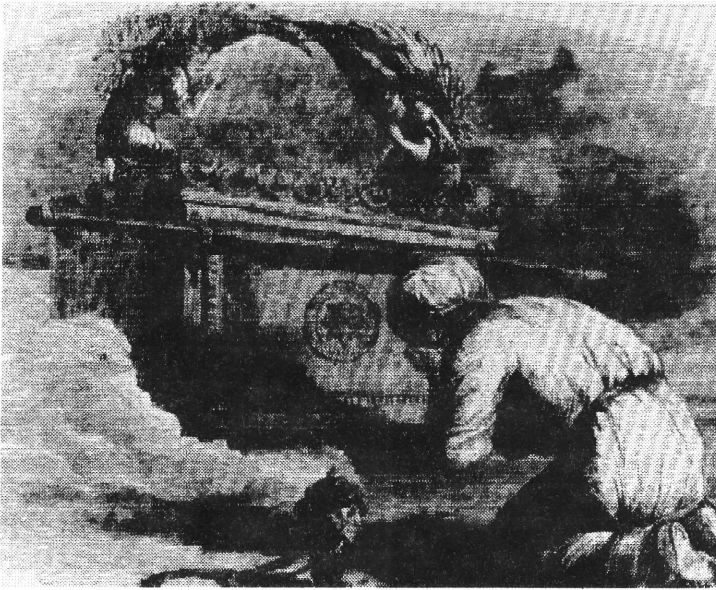
"They have placed this altar next to the curtain of the Holy of Holies, Lord, so I suspect that it represents a movement closer to that most holy relationship with you. Incense lifts a fragrance like the prayers of the saints. It is borne on the wind of the Spirit to God. So I guess this altar is like the experience of prayer in the Holy Spirit. Is that right?"

"Yes, my son. Now enter into this prayer by entering into the incense fragrance and into its smoke."

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<sup>25</sup> *The Gospel According to Matthew 21:20*

<sup>26</sup> *The Gospel According to Matthew 25*



## The Most Holy Place

The fragrance and smoke now overshadow me. In the body or in the spirit, I cannot tell which, I find myself carried beyond the curtain of the Holy of Holies. At first I experience a blood red cascade. The next moment, the atmosphere is awash with light.... Yet, it is *more* than light. *This* light is *alive*! It is as if its *name* and very *nature* are Light. It is hard to catch my breath, and I am about to faint again, but Jesus touches my arm, and immediately my consciousness is buoyed. I mumble to myself, "Boy! Now I know what Peter felt

when he was about to sink under the water."<sup>27</sup>

My thoughts clear, and I see I am before a throne. Only *more* than a throne, it is the Ark of the Covenant with the mercy seat and cherubim.<sup>28</sup> There is a sense of awesome fear when I realize where I am. Then I remember the Ark was lost by the time of Christ. "Jesus, are you sure it is all right for me to be here? I am not the high priest, and I don't think it is the Day of Atonement;...and where did you find the Ark?"

"Son, in a matter of days, the Father will rip the curtain behind you from top to bottom letting His Light pour out on all the world, for 'I Am the Resurrection and the Life'<sup>29</sup>. I *Am* the Atonement. I Am the only begotten Son of the Father. I Am and I are One. Forever after and forever before, I have truly been the Ark. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is, and who was, and who is to come.'<sup>30</sup>"

These statements blasted through me like when Jesus spoke to the soldiers in Gethsemane, "I am he."<sup>31</sup> Were Jesus not holding me, I would have fallen to the ground by its power. I knew intellectually the doctrine of which Jesus spoke, but now I was confronted with the actuality of its *Presence*. Unbelievable! Or I guess, more precisely, the Truth of his statements could not, *NOT* be believed. 'Being' is much more convincing an experience than 'concept', and I was now in the presence of pure Being... no, *Being*... no *BEING*. This reality could not find words to express it. Every word fell short. Being! Reality! Ultimate substance! Ground of all that is! "I AM THAT I AM," came words from the throne.

The atoms and molecules of my body caught fire! Yet, I was not consumed. "I am the burning bush of Moses; I am a lamp stand of the seven churches; I am the light of the Christmas star; I am one with the glory of God." In this manner spoke the radiance inside me. "For the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shown in our hearts to give

<sup>27</sup> *The Gospel According to Matthew* 14

<sup>28</sup> *Exodus* 25

<sup>29</sup> *The Gospel According to John* 11:25

<sup>30</sup> *The Revelation of Jesus Christ to John* 1:8

<sup>31</sup> *The Gospel According to John* 18:6

the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”<sup>32</sup> Christ was one with the glory of the Father, and I now saw and felt it. It was awesome indeed. How can one describe the indescribable? It put language to shame. All words fell with faces in the dust, before the radiance of this majesty and might. Yet though the power was all-encompassing, the love was greater still. Power and Love like lovers in a dance; Wisdom the song adjoining their passionate breasts. Alive and on fire the dancers now flew, interpenetrating then separating, whirling and twirling, a wheel within a wheel, precision and fluidity all in one and one in the same. All was One in the Dance.

The music seemed to go on forever, now leading here, now leading there until the music was no more. I never noticed when it stopped; in fact I was never quite sure if it *did* stop. All I know was that I woke up beside a stream. The music of the water was the first sound I heard. My next thought was, “Is all that dynamic and glory really in *me*, Lord?” A meadowlark’s song was my reply.

Slowly I roused myself from the bank on which I lay. My muscles were sore, and the earth felt hard. The sun was verging upon the uncomfortably warm. How long had I lain amidst these discomforts? I guess it was these which finally awoke me from my sleep. The meadowlark sang her song again to no one in particular, and I rested.... Thereafter, I took up the journey again.

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<sup>32</sup> *The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 4:6*