Lesson 8: The Holy of Holies and the Veil

Read: Exodus 26:31-35

Within the Holy Place of the tabernacle, there was an inner room called the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place. During the Israelites' wanderings in the wilderness, God appeared as a pillar of cloud or fire in and above the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies was a perfect cube — its length, width and height were all equal to 15 feet.

A thick curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. This curtain, known as the "veil," was made of fine linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn. There were figures of cherubim (angels) embroidered onto it.

Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies one day out of every year, on the Day of Atonement. Before entering, he had to make some meticulous preparations, as recorded in Leviticus 16:2-19: He had to wash himself, put on special clothing, bring burning incense to let the smoke cover his eyes from a direct view of God, because "no man can see Me and live" (Exodus 33:20). He brought blood with him to make atonement for sins.

Discussion:

1. Why does the name Holy of Holies or Most Holy Place imply about that room?

2. The word "veil" in Hebrew means a screen, divider or separator that hides. What was the curtain hiding? Why was it necessary?

3. There were cherubim embroidered on the veil. What was their significance?

4. Read Hebrews 9:7 describing the one scheduled day in a year (the Day of Atonement) that the high priest could pass through the veil and enter the Holy of Holies. What did the high priest have to bring with him and why?

5. Read Mark 15:37-38. What happened to the curtain in the Jerusalem temple (a much larger replica of the tabernacle) when Jesus died? Who could have torn it?

6. What does the veil represent? What is the significance of the torn veil?

7. What is the implication of the broken body of Christ and the torn curtain for us as believers?

8. Read Hebrews 9:24. What was the Holy of Holies a representation of and how does it relate to us?