



During this season of Lent, I know of only one person giving up chocolate. Praise the Lord.

Most people are cottoning on to the fact that Lent is not just a season for stopping bad habits, like a new years resolution for Christians ... no, most see Lent, as a season to refresh the spiritual disciplines: prayer, scripture, worship, fasting, silence, ... and one of the disciplines that we regularly promote of course is to do with prayer. I have asked for the small groups to study the Jim Cymbala DVD and workbook entitled "when God's people pray". Some of you are yet to start the study, others are doing it over a longer period than Lent.

But as I have been speaking to people about their prayer life, and reflecting on my own, it is apparent, that while we know a lot about prayer there are two areas which regularly cause us all difficulty.

- The first, is staying focused – not drifting off- and keep on task and not pulling out before the prayer-time is complete, and
- The second: getting the balance in our prayer life. If we are honest with ourselves, how often is it, that our prayers are simply a list of things that reflect our current needs & desires – we pray for our daughter leaving home, the dying aunt, even good weather for this weekend's BBQ. We often pray without balance ... forgetting praise & thanksgiving, forgetting repentance, forgetting that prayer is a dialogue not a monologue - forgetting to stop and listen.

Now many of you would have used a framework for prayer in the past ... the most common is ACTS

ADORATION - Hallowed be thy Name - Praise you for who you are

CONFESSION – I have sinned in this way

THANKSGIVING - thank you Lord for all that you have done

SUPPLICATION – Give us today our daily bread, healing for the sick aunt, calmness for my job interview etc.

Well this morning I want to teach a method of prayer THE TEMPLE MODEL OF PRAYER which I have found to be very helpful – I was speaking to Glenn, and he too uses a similar model. I first taught around this subject about a decade ago. And to the best of my recollection this teaching is based on a book **Drawing Near to God: The Temple Model of Prayer - Mark Stibbe**. But there have been others who have taught around the subject most notable Yongii Cho, so today's teaching is my amalgam of what I have learnt from various sources.

### How does this work?

The ancient orators of note like Cicero could stand and speak for great lengths of time with well constructed arguments, leading their audiences to the climax of their debate – winning hearts and minds along the way. And amazingly NOT ONE written NOTE or page! During their preparation of their argument they would overlay their whole speech with an image – Cicero's was most often a Roman House.

He would picture the Roman House in his mind and as he went through the door he would remember his opening statement. As he progressed through the house using his imagination different parts of the house would remind him of the next point of the argument.

So this model of prayer, uses the Temple a picture in our minds, and each part and function in the Temple prompts us to an aspect of prayer. It uses your imagination – your mind's eye -

It was St Teresa of Avila, a Carmelite nun, Mystic and theologian, in her work “Interior Castle” said ... **the imagination is constantly at work filling the fissures through which grace would pass....**” this points to a need to get hold of our thoughts, and focus our imagination whenever we come to pray. .... A need to capture our own imagination, lest we get distracted. This Temple model of prayer helps us in this regard.

We will see that once we get the picture of the temple in our mind and we walk through the temple we have a gradual and a balanced approach to God ... we will see how the functions and the images of the temple guide us. This approach to God is thus graduated and deliberate, as the Priests of old followed, we progress from the daily to the eternal, it's a prayer journey to intimacy with God.

### So let's look at the Temple and start to inform our imaginations

Historically, two temples stood on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and functioned as the centre of ancient Jewish worship. According to classical Jewish belief, the Temple acted as the figurative "footstool" of God's presence and a Third Temple will be built there in the future. Of course while the building is an important part of the Jewish faith we believe under Christ that we are the Temple in which our Lord chooses to dwell.

The first Temple, was built by Solomon modelled on the Tabernacle



which was a mobile worship space initiated by Moses, a place where God chose to dwell. First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE when they sacked the city. The Second Temple in 515 BC.

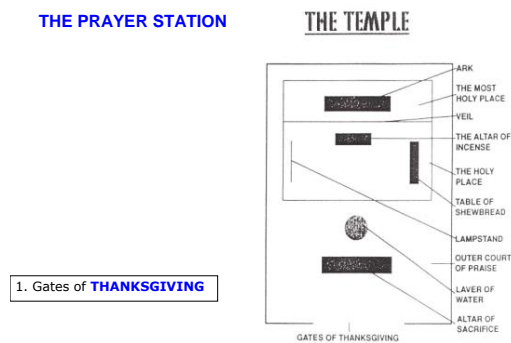
Centuries later in around 20 BCE, the building was renovated by Herod the Great, and became known as Herod's Temple. It was subsequently destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.



Interestingly, there is but one artifact that points that Solomon's temple ever existed - although a museum paid \$550,000 for this ivory pomegranate an adornment for a priest's staff, its authenticity has been questioned.



What this means is that whenever we look at the layout of the Temple, we can be sure it's what the artist thought it was by reading the Scriptures, and we know that at the time of Herod it was larger and quite different from what Solomon established. But for our purposes that does not detract from the utility of the model. Here is a schematic of the Temple Layout – lets look at each place and function



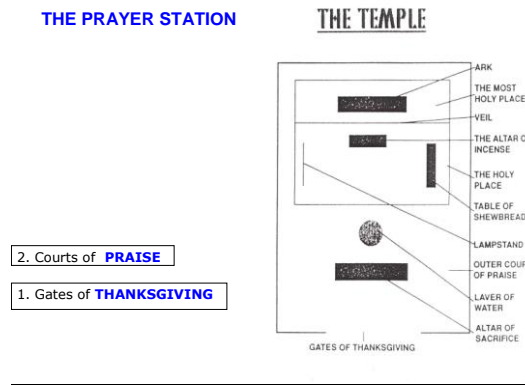
We will find seven places to pause for prayer:

### **Station 1: the Gates of Thanksgiving**

We commenced our prayer by thanking God as we approach the gates of God's presence with thanksgiving. In your imagination you might have the pictures of your sandaled feet leaving the dusty streets standing at the foot of the great stone structure, and going from the dusty streets into the paved perfection of the Temple. How good it is to enter the sanctuary of God, to know that you're coming into his presence, and pause as we approach recalling what God has done for us .. thanking him for.

- In our day-to-day lives,
- the gift of his love and grace toward us
- thank him for our families,
- our daily bread,
- our security, and
- for the gift of his Son, through whom we have salvation. The greatest gift of all

whenever we approach God - drawing near to him in prayer our first attitude is an attitude of Thanksgiving, and so we pause at the gates of Thanksgiving.



**Station 2: The Outer Courts of Praise**

it is natural that our prayers of thanksgiving, convert into praises of God. For once we have dwelt on what he has done, the only correct response is to praise him for who he is. And so we enter into the outer courts of praise lingering to worship God. Using our imagination we look around and see others there for that same purpose of praising God and we add to our worship theirs. Perhaps using a list of names for God that we have in our memory, our Lord and Savior. Holy one, gracious Lord, Emmanuel, Savior, Messiah, Prince of peace, Lord of Lords, hallelujah

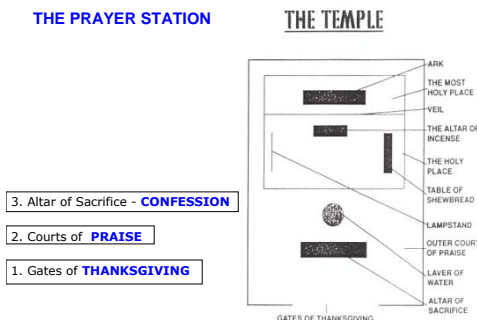
so as we are praising God for who he is in our imagination we see the gates of Thanksgiving behind us, and in front of us the altar of sacrifice - the next station of prayer.

Bronze Altar



**Station 3: Altar of Sacrifice**

this is on a large raised stone structure on the top is a altar 9 m long. This altar sacrifice was used to burn the offerings of bullocks, and lambs in Solomons day. But of course that all became redundant after the cross and so in our imagination we go from prayers of thanksgiving, to prayers of praise, to the altar of sacrifice which is the cross of Christ. This is where our sins were put to death. And this is the place of prayer for our repentance - for things that need to be made right with God.



Again note the natural progression as we come with thanksgiving, which issues forth in praise, and we become aware of and need for forgiveness when we think of the grace and favor

of God towards us. It is wrong to come before God, even a waste of time to come before God, when we have sin in our heart ... sin that needs to be acknowledged and dealt with before we go seeking any great intimacy with God.

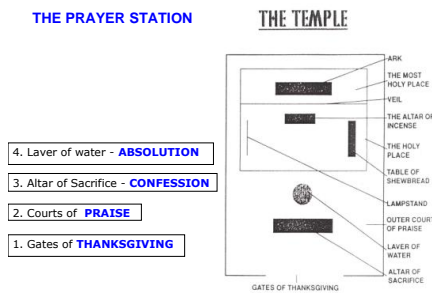
Having dealt with as sins, we pass to the next station for prayer – Laver of water

### Station 4: The Laver of Water

Laver Bowl



In Solomon's Temple this was the place where the priests would wash in before they ascended the steps of the holy place. In Solomons Day it was called the SEA – a huge bronze basin that stood 2.3 m high and 4.6 meters wide ... and it stood on the backs of 12 bronze oxen. In the days of the Tabernacle it was likely much smaller – mobile sacred bath



So if you're imagining at Temple Prayer journey .... we have just turned from confessing our sins at the altar of sacrifice - which is the cross .... and we go to the Laver of water which represents to us our cleansing – it is the Absolution for our sin. The mystical washing away of sin – like at our baptism.

Only now are I we ready to go into the Holy Place the fifth station for prayer

### Station 5: The Holy Place



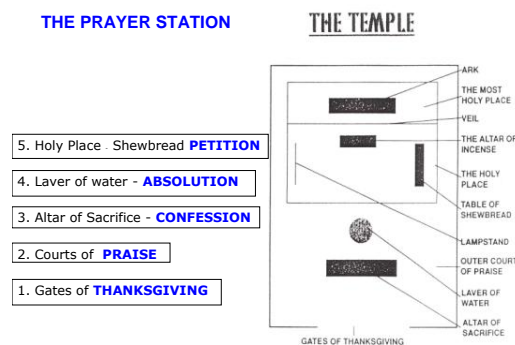
We pass between two huge hollow bronze pillars called BOAZ and JACHIN all bright and glistening .... it is clear that we are transitioning from the area from the ordinary to the special .... This is signified by the change in the décor .... And the instruments and utensils being used. Outside the holy place the dominant metal - is bronze but once we into the holy place, **gold** is the predominant metal used in furnishing and utensils.

There we see 2 sets of 5 gold candlesticks lining the walls, the menorah, symbolic of the Holy Spirit, the sevenfold Spirit of God: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of the Lord, holiness.

And the flickering candlelight dances across the gold clad walls to picking up in relief, the ornate carvings of date palms, grapes, and angels and as we pan the Holy Place we can also see the table of showbread.



Like a small table of acacia wood all gold plated with four legs, and two gold plated poles were inserted through golden rings attached to the legs for transporting. The purpose of the golden table was to hold 12 cakes of bread made of fine flour. They were placed there in two rows of six, each loaf representing one of the tribes of Israel. Provision for all.



The literal meaning of 'shewbread' is 'bread of the face', i.e. bread set out before the face or presence of God. There were 4 vessels of pure gold on the table with the bread: Dishes (breadplates) ; Pans or Spoons (to sprinkle frankincense) ; Pitchers (for liquid offerings) ; Bowls (vessels containing the frankincense)

at this prayer station, we gaze upon God's provision - his bread, remembering how he provides for our daily needs. At this prayer station we offer prayers of personal petition for both our physical and spiritual nourishment.

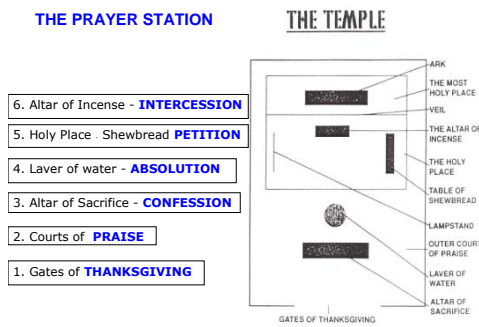
The next prayer station as we move toward the holy of holies is at the altar of incense.

### **Station 6: Altar of Incense**



The Golden Altar of Incense which was straight ahead, before the [veil](#), is the third piece of furniture in the Holy Place on which the holy incense was burned. Made from [acacia wood](#) overlaid with pure gold it stood higher than any other article of furniture in the holy place, 2 cubits (3 feet) tall. It was one [cubit](#) square and it had around the top a crown of gold. It had [four](#) golden horns just as the [bronze altar](#) in the courtyard. Lower down on each side there were golden rings to insert the [poles](#) for carrying. The golden altar was used for burning incense, which twice every day was offered by the priest after he had tended the wick and oil on the holy lamps. Its horns were also sprinkled with the blood of the sin offering.

This is the place for our intercessions



The golden altar of incense tells us of the ministry of Jesus as our intercessor whose prayers never stop ascending to God on our behalf. The four horns speak of Christ's ministry extending to the four corners of the earth. He will always pray for His own no matter where they are. He can intercede on our behalf because of the atoning work on the cross of Calvary. The incense was fueled by the fire from the altar. It is not just anyone praying for us but the King Himself as represented by the crown of gold. He knows our weaknesses and our failings and He is praying for us always.

So at this station we pray our prayers of intercession, thru CHRIST, on behalf of others/the world/the church ... we have moved beyond our needs and self-focus, as we draw nearer and nearer to God

These prayers of intercessions are the last stand before we enter into the HOLY of HOLIES. We have been gradually divesting ourselves ...

### **Station 7: The Most Holy Place**

In Jesus time, there was a veil – a heavy curtain to pass through into the Holy of Holies – that is the curtain that miraculously ripped in two from TOP to Bottom the moment Jesus died on the cross... – in Solomons time it was doors – golden doors.

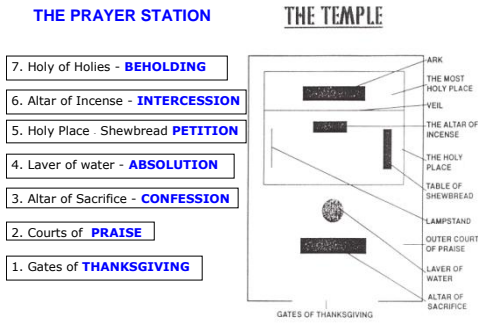


So, We now come to the Holy of Holies, a small room 10 cubits x 10 cubits (15' x 15') separated from the Holy Place by the veil. It housed one piece of redemptive furniture, the ark of the Covenant, with its mercy seat. Guarded by towering wings creatures/seraphs There was no created light like the sun and no artificial light but Gods own "Shekinah" glory that lit up the Holiest Place.

The Ark of the Covenant



here was no seat for man but here Jehovah sat alone on the throne of glory and righteousness. As the high priest entered once a year, he entered with bowed head, unsandalled feet, and bells. No human voice was heard, only the voice of God.



This is where we behold God .... Silent standing – praying – in His presence listening for that still small voice ...Before the Ark – in the Presence of God – in full surrender Seeing the Mercy Seat – which brings to our mind and our spirit complete victory – rest - peace

.... Let us now use this model as we pray .....

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