

relationship close and vibrant?

Christ's sacrificial death is utterly unique. Christ's heavenly ministry is incomparable. Only Christ brings God close beside us. Only Christ makes it possible for the divine Spirit to actually dwell in our hearts. Let's accept Him fully as the Saviour and Master of our lives.

Dear Heavenly Father: I thank You today that I have discovered Your loving interest in me personally. I'm so thankful that through Christ's ministry in the heavenly temple, You are constantly guiding my life and the lives of your people everywhere. Help me to respond fully and completely to Your gracious activity to save me and give me a better life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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DISCOVER

AN EVER-PRESENT SAVIOUR

W

hen a Scottish lad named Peter Marshall got lost in a moor near Bamburgh on an inky black night, God called him by name: "Peter!" When the heavenly voice called out again, Peter stopped in his tracks, looked down, and discovered he was a step away from plunging into an abandoned limestone quarry.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could each hear God calling us by name? Wouldn't it be great if He were that close a companion—if we could actually sit down in our living room and have a long chat about our struggles and dreams?

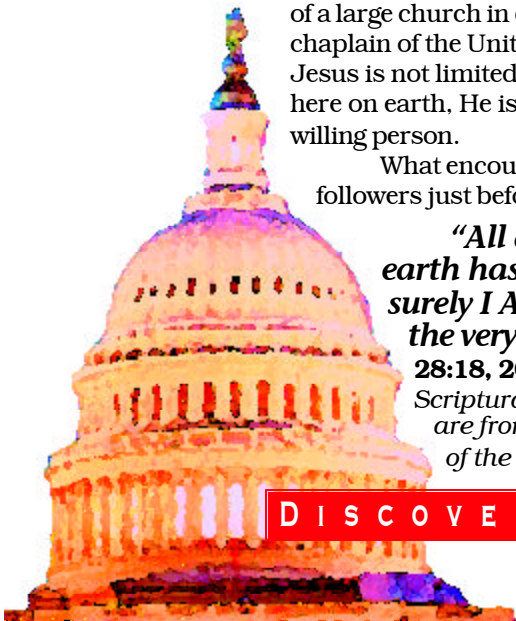
1. UNLIMITED ACCESS TO JESUS

Believe it or not, through His Holy Spirit, Jesus is more accessible to us now than if He actually lived here as a visible person (John 14:16-20). Having Christ in the flesh in our town would be wonderful of course, but think of the enormous crowds pressing for a closer look, think of the demands on His time. One individual would do well to get a few minutes of direct conversation in a lifetime. Christ, however, wishes to cultivate personal relationships with every one of us; that's one reason He left this earth for a special ministry in heaven.

Jesus was near to Peter Marshall on the edge of that stone quarry. He guided him to become pastor of a large church in downtown Washington, D.C. and chaplain of the United States Senate. And, because Jesus is not limited to one place like He was when here on earth, He is now near to guide the life of every willing person.

What encouraging promise did Jesus give His followers just before He ascended?

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. . . . And surely I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, to the very end of the age.”—Matthew 28:18, 20. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)



completely [margin: forever] those who come to God through him, because HE ALWAYS LIVES TO INTERCEDE for them.”—Hebrews 7:25.

Jesus now “lives” to present His blood, His sacrifice, on our behalf. He is now working diligently to save every human being from the tragedy of sin. Some mistakenly assume that, as our Intercessor, Jesus is in heaven begging a reluctant God to forgive us. In fact, it is God who joyfully accepts His Son's sacrifice on our behalf. The Father and the Son worked together to create this means of reconciliation.

As our High Priest in heaven, Christ also pleads with humanity. He works to help the indifferent take a second look at grace, to help despairing sinners grasp hope in the gospel, and to help believers find more riches in the Word of God and more power in prayer. Jesus is molding our lives in harmony with God's commandments and helping us develop characters that will stand the test of time.

Jesus laid down His life for every person who has ever lived in this world. And now, as our Intercessor or Mediator, “He always lives” to lead people to accept His death for their sins. But human beings are free to reject the pardon Jesus offers. Although He reconciled the whole fallen world to Himself on the cross, He still can't save us unless we accept His grace. People will not be lost because they are sinners, but because they refuse to accept the pardon Jesus offers.

Sin destroyed the intimate relationship Adam and Eve once enjoyed with God. But Jesus, as the Lamb of God, died to free Adam and Eve and all humanity from sin and restore this lost friendship. Have you discovered Him as your High Priest, the One who ever lives to keep that



much pain sin has brought to God. He is not a blood-thirsty deity demanding a sacrifice—He Himself was the sacrifice. When the Father and Son were torn apart at Calvary, the Father must have turned away in anguish as the Son died of a broken heart.

Christ's blood represents the whole drama of the atonement, that amazing act which enabled God "to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:20).

6. A REVELATION OF JESUS LIVING TO SAVE US

Those Old Testament temple sacrifices represented Christ's death for our sins. The work of the priests depicted Christ's ministry as High Priest.

How does the work of the priest in the Hebrew sanctuary compare to what Jesus is now doing as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary?

"For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, NOW TO APPEAR FOR US IN GOD'S PRESENCE. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages TO DO AWAY WITH SIN BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIMSELF."—Hebrews 9:24, 26.

It's almost too much to comprehend: Jesus offered "Himself" as "the sacrifice" on Calvary's cross. He offered Himself because nothing less would do.

What is Jesus' day-by-day work in the heavenly temple?

"Therefore he is able to save

What is Christ doing in heaven that makes it possible for Him to be "with you always"?

"Therefore, since WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST who has gone through the heavens, JESUS THE SON OF GOD, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."—Hebrews 4:14-16.

Note the assurances of having Jesus as our personal representative in heaven: "Tempted in every way, just as we are." "Sympathize with our weaknesses." "Help us in our time of need." Jesus as our High Priest can usher us into the very presence of God. No wonder we're urged to "approach the throne of grace with confidence."

What place does Jesus occupy in heaven?

"But when this priest [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD."—Hebrews 10:12.

The living Christ—someone who understands—is our personal representative on the throne "at the right hand of God."

How did the life of Jesus prepare Him to be our priest?

"For this reason he had to be made

like his BROTHERS in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, HE IS ABLE TO HELP those who are being tempted.—Hebrews 2:17, 18.

Our “brother” who shares our humanity and was “tempted” like we are, is now our High Priest at the Father’s right hand. “Made like” us, He knows what we’re going through. He’s been hungry, thirsty, and exhausted. He’s felt the need for sympathy and understanding. He’s experienced the anguish of intense temptation. But above all, Jesus is qualified to be our priest because, as the Lamb of God, He died for our sins.

“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”—John 1:29.

As the sacrificial “Lamb of God,” Jesus experienced excruciating pain; He has plunged to the depths of physical and emotional suffering.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”—Isaiah 53:5.

Jesus assumed responsibility for our sins and died in our place. Each of us can accept by faith His payment of our debt of sin. This is the gospel, the good news for all human beings everywhere and for all time.

One of our Bible School pastors shared this personal experience with us: When our youngest

important as His death. If it weren’t for His sinless life, the cross would serve no purpose. And had He not lived after He died, His death couldn’t save us. As Paul said,

“If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.”—1 Corinthians 15:14.

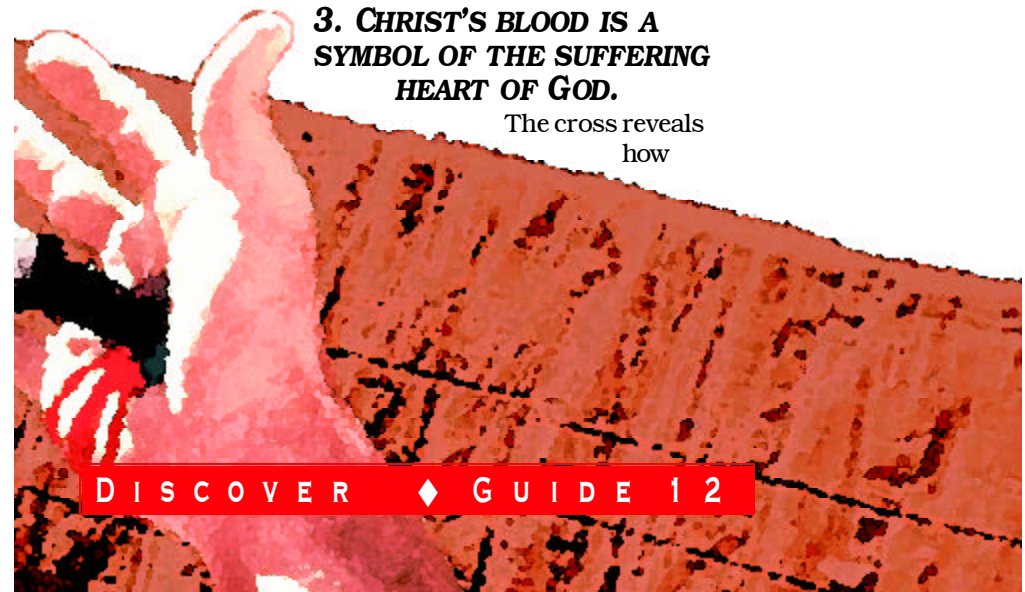
When Jesus spilled His blood from the cross, He was pouring out His life for humanity; He was offering up His perfectly obedient life as a substitute for our failures.

2. CHRIST’S BLOOD IS A SYMBOL OF HIS DEATH.

When He shed His blood on the cross, He was paying “the wages of sin”—death, eternal death. He experienced the agony of complete separation from God the Father. God the Son stepped into history to take on Himself the full results of sin and to demonstrate how tragic wrongdoing really is. He could then forgive sinners without trivializing sin.

3. CHRIST’S BLOOD IS A SYMBOL OF THE SUFFERING HEART OF GOD.

The cross reveals how



“holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners” (Hebrews 7:26).

Second, the guilt of the sinner must be transferred to the guiltless animal by confession of sin and the laying on of hands. This symbolized Christ taking on our guilt at Calvary; the sinless One became “sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Third, the sacrificial animal had to be killed and its blood shed because it pointed forward to the supreme penalty that Christ suffered on the cross.

What happened over and over in the Old Testament sanctuary pointed forward to Christ’s one great saving act. Having died for our sins, He entered the holy places “once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” for us (Hebrews 9:12).

5. WHY THE BLOOD?

Some people have complained: “Christianity has too much blood in it.” Why is it that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22)? Why is blood such an important symbol in the Bible?

It may not seem a very pleasant image at first, but the blood of Christ can speak eloquently to us.

1. CHRIST’S BLOOD IS A SYMBOL OF LIFE.

“For the life of a creature is in the blood. . . . It is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.”—Leviticus 17:11.

Christ’s life was as



daughter was three, she caught her finger in a folding chair, splintering the bone. As we rushed her to a doctor, her loud cries of pain really tore at our hearts. But they touched our five-year-old in a special way. I’ll never forget her words when the doctor cared for her sister’s injury. She sobbed, “Oh, Daddy, I wish it could have been my finger!”

When all humanity were crushed by sin and condemned to die eternally, Jesus must have felt, “Oh, Father, I wish it could have been me.” And the Father gave Jesus His wish at the cross. Our Saviour has experienced every agony and torment any of us have suffered—and more!

2. THE GOSPEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

When the people of Israel camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, God instructed Moses to build a portable tabernacle as a sanctuary of worship “according to the pattern shown you on the mountain” (Exodus 25:40). Nearly 500 years later, King Solomon’s great stone temple replaced the portable one. But it was built on



the same plan as the portable sanctuary.

God gave detailed instructions on the earthly sanctuary's design and carefully explained how its services were to be carried out. Those Old Testament ceremonies taught the Hebrews through object lessons what the New Testament proclaims as realities through Christ's life and death and through Christ's ministry as our High Priest.

When God gave Moses the directions for building the sanctuary, what specific purpose did He have in mind?

"Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I WILL DWELL AMONG THEM."—Exodus 25:8.

Sin caused a tragic separation between human beings and their Creator. The sanctuary was God's way of showing how He can again live among us. It illustrates His plan of salvation.

The sanctuary, and later the temple, became the center of religious life and worship in Old Testament times. Its ceremonies reveal how God communicates with us and how we can communicate with Him. Each morning and evening the people could gather around the sanctuary and establish contact with God in prayer (Luke 1:10), claiming the promise: "I will meet with you" (Exodus 30:6).

It may surprise you that the Old Testament teaches the same gospel of salvation as does the New Testament. The Old Testament symbolism of Israel's sanctuary actually depicts the activity of Jesus as Priest ministering on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. Rightly understood, the sanctuary and its services reveal what Jesus is doing now in the temple in heaven, and what He is doing now on earth to enrich and guide each of us in our daily lives.

Guide 13 deals with the yearly services.

In the daily services, the priests offered sacrifices both for the individual and for the entire congregation. When an individual sinned, he would bring an unblemished animal as a sin offering, "lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering" (Leviticus 4:29).

When the entire congregation was involved in some transgression, the priest performed almost the same ceremony for them. After killing the sacrificial animal, the priest took the blood of the offering into the sanctuary and placed some of it on the horns of the altar of incense. These blood sacrifices conveyed

the truth that sin results in death, and the sinner can escape ultimate death only by having another person die in his or her place.

Christ's sacrifice stands at the very heart of the sanctuary system. **First**, the animal to be sacrificed must be "without blemish," because it

represented the One who is



As Jesus said, "I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you" (John 16:26, 27).

After our Saviour returned to heaven from His ministry on earth, the apostle John saw a vision of "the temple in heaven" (Revelation 14:17; 15:5; 16:17), the original heavenly sanctuary of which Moses' tent was only a copy. In the Most Holy Place John noticed "the ark of his covenant" that contains the eternal, moral law of God in Ten Commandments (Revelation 11:19; Hebrews 9:4). He also observed "in heaven . . . before the throne, seven lamps" (Revelation 4:1, 5) and "the golden altar" of incense (Revelation 8:3). And most important, He saw Jesus walking among the seven candlesticks (Revelation 1:12, 13).

4. A REVELATION OF CHRIST DYING TO SAVE US

Just as the earthly sanctuary served as a miniature reproduction of the heavenly temple where Jesus now ministers for us, the services carried on in the earthly sanctuary were also an "example and shadow of what is in heaven" (Hebrews 8:5, KJV). But there is a striking difference: "The ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises" (Hebrews 8:6). The priests who served in the earthly temple could not themselves forgive sin, but at the cross Jesus "appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

The Old Testament book of Leviticus describes in detail the services carried on in the sanctuary. The ceremonial rituals were divided into two parts: the daily services, and the yearly services.

3. JESUS' MINISTRY FOR US REVEALED IN THE SANCTUARY

Since the earthly sanctuary was patterned after the temple in heaven, it reflects the heavenly sanctuary where Christ now ministers. Exodus 25-40 describes the services and ceremonies of the wilderness sanctuary in great detail. A brief summary of the sanctuary furnishings appears in Exodus.

***"Place the ark of the Testimony in it [tabernacle] and shield the ark with the curtain. Bring in the table and set out what belongs on it. Then bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. Place the gold altar of incense in front of the ark of the Testimony and put the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle. Place the altar of burnt offering in front of the entrance to the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting; place the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar and put water in it. Set up the courtyard around it and put the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard."*—Exodus 40: 3-8.**

The sanctuary had two rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. A courtyard surrounded the sanctuary. In the court in front of the sanctuary stood the brass altar on which the priests offered sacrifices, and the laver in which they washed.

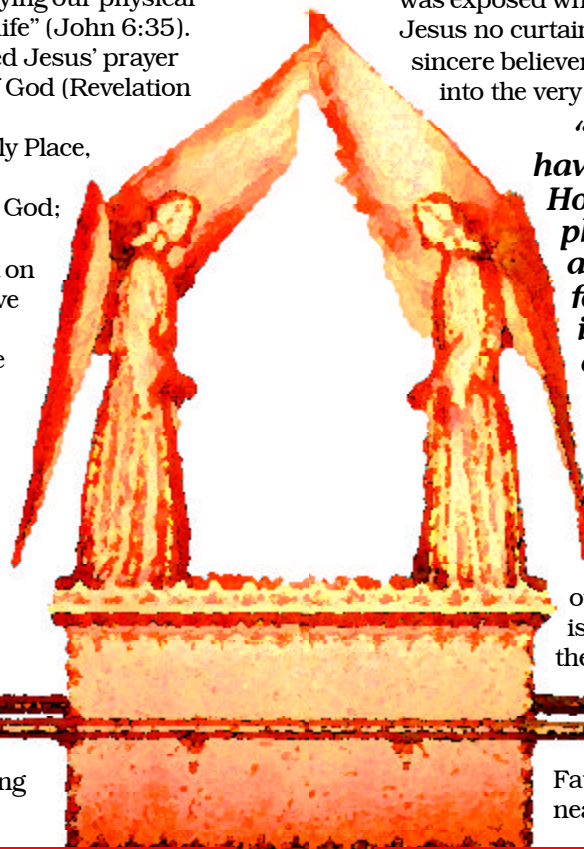
The sacrifices offered on the brass altar symbolized Jesus, who through His death on the cross became "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of

the world!” (John 1:29). When the repentant sinner came to the altar with his sacrifice and confessed his sins, he received forgiveness and cleansing. In a similar way, the sinner today obtains cleansing through the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God (1 John 1:9).

In the first room, or Holy Place, the seven-branched lampstand burned continually, representing Jesus as the never-failing “light of the world” (John 8:12). The table of consecrated bread, the bread of God’s presence, symbolized His satisfying our physical and spiritual hunger as “the bread of life” (John 6:35). The golden altar of incense represented Jesus’ prayer ministry for us in the very presence of God (Revelation 8:3, 4).

The second room, or Most Holy Place, contained the gold-covered ark of the covenant. It symbolized the throne of God; its atonement cover, or mercy seat, represented the intercession of Christ on behalf of sinful human beings who have broken God’s moral law. The two tablets of stone on which God gave the Ten Commandments were kept below the mercy seat. Golden cherubim of glory hovered over the mercy seat on each end of the ark. A glorious light shone between these two cherubim, a symbol of the presence of God Himself.

A curtain hid the Holy Place from the view of the people as the priests ministered to them in the courtyard. A second curtain stood in front of the Most Holy Place, blocking this inner room from the view of the



priests who entered the first room of the sanctuary.

When Jesus died on the cross, what happened to the curtain?

“At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”—Matthew 27:51.

The Most Holy Place, which once contained the ark of the covenant, the symbol of God’s throne, was exposed when Jesus died. After the death of Jesus no curtain can come between a holy God and a sincere believer; Jesus, our High Priest, ushers us into the very presence of God.

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place [Greek: the holy places] by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, LET US DRAW NEAR TO GOD with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.”—Hebrews 10:19-22.

We have access to the throne room of heaven because Jesus is our High Priest at God’s right hand. He is not present there to shield us from the Father, but to enable us to come into God’s presence—into the Father’s heart of love. So “let us draw near.” Why? Because God welcomes us.