

The Old Covenant Tabernacle Was Inadequate

Hebrews 9:1-5

Context:

- 1) The Author's overall purpose here: to prove that the Old Covenant the Lord God made with Israel at Sinai, with all of its ordinances for worship and all its responsibilities and privileges had been **ABOLISHED FOREVER**, superseded by the New Covenant, established in Christ's blood
- 2) This New Covenant which God had established was infinitely superior to the Old Covenant
- 3) Lasting spiritual principle: God never asks anybody to give up anything without offering something far better in return; those who take Him up on His offer are forever blessed; those who through unbelief refuse Him are the spiritual losers

Matthew 4:18-20 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

Matthew 8:19-23 Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." ²⁰ Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." ²¹ Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." ²² But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." ²³ ¶ Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him.

Matthew 9:9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

Matthew 16:24-27 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is

going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

Matthew 19:21-22 *Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

In all these encounters, Jesus is offering an exchange—something of temporary earthly value for something of eternal heavenly value

So it is also with the Old Covenant exchanged for the New... it is a vast improvement

- 4) The chief obstacle for the Jews: their failure to perceive that the Old Covenant ceremonial law—the tabernacle, the priesthood, the animal sacrifices—were merely SYMBOLIC, types, shadows, analogies, living parables, waiting for the fulfillment of Christ; when Christ came, they were instantly OBSOLETE
- When a building is completed, you no longer need the scaffolding
 - When a boy grows up, he no longer plays with toys
 - When a couple is married and begins living together, they no longer look at photos of each other that carried them through when they lived a thousand miles apart

The author now addresses himself fully to the Tabernacle and to the actual ministry of the priests in the Old Covenant as established by the Law of Moses

The connecting link with Hebrews 8: the Old Covenant is OBSOLETE and will soon pass away:

Hebrews 8:13 *By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear*

Two-part outline in verse 1:

Hebrews 9:1 *Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary.*

ORDINANCES of divine worship... the way by which God will be worshiped... and a place at which He will be worshiped

Overview of Hebrews 9-10:

The Author has established Christ as a superior priest, and that He has established a superior covenant

He now turns to address the superior SACRIFICE the Son offers... he zeroes in on the actual activity of the Old Covenant priests – their work in the tabernacle offering animal blood for sins

In this chapter, the superiority of Christ's sacrifice is established on the following grounds:

- 1) The place of the offering was in heaven rather than earth
- 2) The blood of the sacrifice was his own rather than that of animals
- 3) His offering was ONCE FOR ALL rather than endlessly repeated

The author will begin (vss. 1-10) by reminding his hearers of the earthly sanctuary of the Levitical priests... he will just mention in a few verses some details that would have been very familiar to those Jews... he does not intend to go into a specific detailed discussion, but rather to set the general idea: the tabernacle was only established as a symbol of Christ

I. The Tabernacle: Established by God as Merely a Symbol

Hebrews 9:1-2 Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. ² A tabernacle was set up.

A. The Tabernacle: Established by God for His Glory

1. The author never disparages what God instituted
2. Again and again, Christ is show superior... but what is inferior is not disparaged
 - a. Christ is superior to Israel's prophets... but they were still glorious
 - b. Christ is superior to the angels... but they were still glorious
 - c. Christ is superior to Moses... but he was still worthy of honor
 - d. Christ is superior to Joshua... but he led Israel into the Promised Land
 - e. Christ is superior to Aaron... but Aaron's ministry was still worthy of honor
3. So also with the TABERNACLE: It was INFERIOR to Christ but it was still glorious

4. Six days of creation, forty days for the Tabernacle... 2000 years now for the Body of Christ!!!
 - a. The Lord created the entire universe in six days
 - b. BUT Moses was on Mount Sinai for forty days receiving instructions about the Tabernacle!!
 - c. That clearly denoted that the work of redemption, prefigured in the Tabernacle, was far more glorious than the work of creation
 - d. How much more the New Jerusalem, the final resting place of God and redeemed humanity:

John 14:2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

Revelation 21:2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

B. The Verb Tense

Hebrews 9:1-2 Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. ² A tabernacle was set up.

This is clearly true in light of the overall truth the author is setting up

C. An Earthly Sanctuary, Man-Made and Temporary

1. The author describes the tabernacle with two key phrases
2. A holy place... a "sanctuary"
 - a. A place set apart unto God as holy
 - b. A place for the Israelites to gather

Exodus 3:5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

3. Earthly
 - a. The word in the Greek is "kosmikon"
 - b. Usually translated "worldly" or "earthly"
 - c. NOT worldly in the sense of "evil" or corrupted"

- d. BUT worldly in the sense of “material” “physical” made of construction materials found on earth
- e. It is contrasted with the “true” sanctuary

Hebrews 8:2 the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.

Hebrews 9:11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

- f. Like all earthly things, the moment the tabernacle was completed, it began to fall apart; moth and rust destroy, sun dries out
- g. The tabernacle was made of linen thread... linen is a natural fiber that weakens and is destroyed by the elements over time
- h. There was a covering for the tabernacle made of ram’s skins dyed red, and over that another covering of the hides of sea cows... all formerly living things will wear out... get old, hardened in the sin, fading, eventually useless
- i. This was the EARTHLY sanctuary where the Old Covenant priests did their ministries

D. A Tabernacle: A Tent

Hebrews 9:2 A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place.

1. The word “tabernacle” literally means TENT...
2. The author to the Hebrews exclusively focuses on the Tabernacle, not the Temple
 - a. The word “tabernacle” appears ten times in Hebrews
 - b. BUT the word “temple” never appears!!
3. Why? Because the author is focusing on the originally established Covenant under Moses
 - a. By the time the temple was built, the Jews had ceased wandering in the wilderness and had entered their Promised land
 - b. For five hundred years, they had no permanent dwelling place for the ark of the covenant... the Law of Moses made no provisions for a Temple

- c. The author is focusing on the Tabernacle because he is showing the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old Covenant
- 4. The details of the construction are clearly laid out in Exodus 26
 - a. It was a tent 30 cubits (or 45 feet) in length; ten cubits (or fifteen feet) in width; and the same in height—ten cubits
 - b. So its overall shape was a rectangle
 - c. It was made mostly of linen curtains held up by acacia wood poles in a cross-bar structure that could be disassembled easily; the curtains were hung by gold hooks

E. A Divided Sanctuary: Holy and Most Holy Place

1. Its “first room” called the Holy Place
2. Behind the “second veil” was called the Most Holy Place
3. This division was a HUGE PART of God’s lesson to the human race
4. Notice that there is no mention made of the OUTER COURT where anyone could go... that outer court had no restrictions... it therefore is beside the point
 - a. The outer court represents Christ in His public ministry while He walked the earth when anyone could have access to Him and talk to Him and eat with Him
 - b. But there is not assumed any faith or right relationship with Christ

Luke 13:25-27 you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' ²⁶ "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷ "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'

5. The priests did most of their ministry out in the Holy Place
 - a. Only the priests could enter the Holy Place
 - b. This represents Christ in His heavenly ministry
6. But the Most Holy place represented the dwelling place of God Almighty and the sinful priests were forbidden for the most part from entering there
7. Only the High Priest could enter that Most Holy Place... once a year...

8. The symbolism is clear, and we will discuss it more in a moment

9. THUS FAR YOU MAY COME, AND NO FARTHER!!!

F. Three Symbols in the Holy Place

Hebrews 9:2 In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place.

1. The Lampstand

- a. There were no windows in the Holy Place
- b. The only light came from the golden lampstand
- c. It was made of beaten gold, all of one piece
- d. It was fired by pure olive oil which the priests had to replenish daily
- e. The Lampstand represents Christ as the light of God provided for His own people... not the "Light of the world" because it is in the Holy Place

John 9:5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

- f. The people on earth rejected Christ's truth...

John 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

- g. so the light is only for God's people in the Holy Place
- h. the oil of the lampstand represents the Holy Spirit who ministers to each of us the truth of Christ through His work of internal illumination

2. The Table

- a. Represents communion with God
- b. Fellowship... sitting at table with Him
- c. For example, David's kindness to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son

2 Samuel 9:7 you will always eat at my table."

2 Samuel 9:11 So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons.

- d. So the table in the Holy Place represents God and man sitting down in a fellowship meal

3. The Consecrated Bread

- a. The Law of Moses commanded that twelve loaves of freshly baked bread be laid out every Sabbath
- b. The KJV called it “Shewbread” but the Hebrew phrase is literally “bread of faces” representing the PRESENCE of God in fellowship; God identifying Himself with the needs of His people
- c. The bread represents sustenance and nourishment... life that comes only through Jesus Christ, as well as intimate fellowship

John 6:32 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.

G. Seven Symbols in the Most Holy Place

Hebrews 9:3-5 Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, ⁴ which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. ⁵ Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover.

Behind the “second curtain” was the room called the MOST HOLY PLACE

This “second curtain” shut off from view what was behind it... the Most Holy Place was a place of mystery and exclusion

It was a heavy curtain effectively sealing off the Most Holy Place

The Most Holy Place thus represented the actual presence of Almighty God

Seven items are singled out for mention

1. The Golden Altar of Incense

- a. Some translation difficulties... either the Altar which was already there or a portable golden censer which the priest carried in his hand as part of the Day of Atonement

- b. The command is given plainly:

Leviticus 16:12-13 He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. ¹³ He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die.

- c. So for every single day of the year but one, the altar of incense stood in the Holy Place
 - d. But on the annual “Day of Atonement” when the High Priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place, he used a golden censer which covered the Ark of the Covenant and protected the priest from dying
 - e. Incense rising before the Lord often represents intercessory prayer
 - f. So this cloud of incense on the Day of Atonement represents Christ’s effective intercessory prayer ministry based on his atoning work
2. The Ark of the Covenant, Covered with Gold
- a. This is the most glorious and mysterious article in the tabernacle
 - b. It was the first item whose instructions were given by God and also the first item constructed
 - c. It was a box made of acacia wood, and the LXX specifically calls it incorruptible wood; it is overlaid with gold, so also the gold cannot rust... it is a picture of the perfection of the incarnation... Christ perfect man and perfect God
 - d. The ark was the most significant symbol of God dwelling with man in the Old Covenant and that His covenant blessing rested on them
 - e. It was the permanent container of the Law of the Covenant by which God would rule His people

Exodus 25:22 There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

Numbers 7:89 ¶ When Moses entered the Tent of Meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony. And he spoke with him.

Psalm 80:1 Hear us... you who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth

- f. Everything the Ark of the Covenant symbolized was perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the God-Man
3. The Golden Jar of Manna
- a. During the days of wandering in the wilderness, God supplied the people with a daily ration of manna, bread from heaven

- b. At one point, Moses had them collect about two quarts of the miraculous food and put it in a golden jar to be kept for generations to come
- c. Hebrews 9 implies it was actually INSIDE the ark, though other passages may imply it was merely before the Ark
- d. At the time of the dedication of Solomon's Temple,

1 Kings 8:9 There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.

- e. So perhaps the Golden Jar of Manna was only inside the Ark in Moses' day
- f. The manna, like the showbread, represents Christ as God's heavenly food, provision for our souls through Christ

4. Aaron's Staff that Budded

- a. Key passage: Numbers 17
- b. In the preceding chapter, we read of a revolt among the Israelites against Moses and Aaron motivated by jealousy
- c. Korah led this rebellion, and God crushed it by swallowing the rebels alive
- d. Then the Lord commanded Moses to take twelve staffs, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel... on the staff for the tribe of Levi Aaron's name was written
- e. God said he would SHOW them whom He had chosen to minister before Him as High Priest
- f. The next day, Aaron's staff had budded... blossoming with blossoms" more than that, it had actually produced fruit: almonds that could be eaten
- g. Aaron's miraculous staff was kept before the Ark always as a token for the rebels
- h. The lifeless rod that suddenly came miraculously to life and bore fruit represents Christ's resurrection and His service as our great High Priest

5. The Stone Tablets of the Covenant

- a. These were the actual tablets of stone on which Moses had written the Ten Commandments

- b. God had carved out and engraved with His own finger the Ten Commandments, but Moses had thrown them to the ground and broken them when Israel had made the Golden Calf
- c. So God commanded Moses to carve out two more tablets like the first ones and God wrote on them the same words He had written before
- d. This clearly represents the Law of God that Christ came to fulfill
 - i) Entering the world to fulfill the Law

Psalm 40:7-8 Then I said, "Here I am, I have come-- it is written about me in the scroll. ⁸ I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

- ii) Born to fulfill the Law

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law

- iii) Perfectly fulfilling the Law

Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

- iv) Dying in obedience to the Law

Romans 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

6. The Cherubim of the Glory

- a. On top of the ark was the golden cover called the Atonement Cover
- b. On either side of this cover were cherubim... angels with wings outstretched over the atonement cover
- c. That there was a profound significance to these cherubim cannot be denied because of how prominently they are mentioned
- d. In Exodus 25:17-22, the cherubim are mentioned SEVEN TIMES
- e. In Genesis 3:24, a guardian cherub is placed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden with a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life
- f. In Revelation 4:6-8 (as well as Ezekiel 1) cherubim are strongly connected with the throne of Almighty God

- g. Here in Hebrews 9, they are called the cherubim of glory... because the dwelling glory—called the Shekinah glory of God remained between the cheruim above the atonement cover
- h. When Christ was raised from the dead, angels were dispatched to greet the disciples who came to investigate the evidence of His resurrection; in John 20, the graveclothes were left like a cocoon where His dead body had been:

John 20:11-12 Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

7. The Atonement Cover

- a. This is literally the place of propitiation, where the blood of the atoning sacrifice is poured out to propitiate for sins
- b. The actual atoning sacrifice was slain at the altar... but its blood was carried by the High Priest into the Most Holy Place and poured out on the mercy seat or atonement cover
- c. In this way the righteous demands of Almighty God are met fully; the wages of sin—death—are paid and the wrath of God is averted
- d. Christ is the propitiation for our sins... He is the perfect fulfillment of this symbol as well

Romans 3:23-25 all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

H. Detailed Discussion Unnecessary

Hebrews 9:5 But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

- 1. The author has merely mentioned a few details to set the scene of the Tabernacle
- 2. He will tell us that all of these things have symbolic significance

Hebrews 9:9 (which is symbolic for the present age)

The Greek word is “parabole” meaning a type or symbol or figure with spiritual significance

That is the whole point... each element of the Tabernacle worship had a symbolic spiritual significance and we could go on and on in detail about these items one after the other

3. BUT the point has been made: the Old Covenant Tabernacle and all its physical items AND the ongoing priestly ministry it sustained were TYPES, SYMBOLS, PATTERNS of the TRUE MINISTRY of Christ
4. If that is so, what is the point of continuing with them after the reality has come???

NEXT WEEK:

II. The Priestly Ministry: Established by God But Ineffective

Hebrews 9:6-10 *When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. ⁷ But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. ⁸ The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. ⁹ This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-- external regulations applying until the time of the new order.*

- A. The Priests Entered Regularly
- B. Outer Room and Inner Room: Restricted Access!
- C. The Day of Atonement
- D. The Holy Spirit's Lesson: The Way In Had Not Yet Been Revealed
- E. The Limitation of the Old Covenant Ministry

III. Unable to Clear the Conscience of the Worshiper

- A. The Accusations of a Guilty Conscience
- B. The Ineffectiveness of the Old Covenant
- C. Christ's Blood is Effective!

IV. Applications

- A. Marvel at the Teaching Ministry of the Holy Spirit

- B. Learn the Various Symbolic Lessons of the Tabernacle
- C. Celebrate the Powerful Fulfillment in Christ
- D. Trust in the Finished Work of Christ
- E. Allow Your Conscience to be Cleansed