

Looking Unto Jesus

Vision Baptist College

Looking Unto Jesus

Studies in Hebrews

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Chapter Nine – A More Perfect Tabernacle

Memory Verse – Hebrews 9:27

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Introduction

We have been discussing through this study of the Book of Hebrews, that what we have in Christ is superior to anything that the nation of Israel ever had under the Old Testament, or Old Covenant. Here in chapter 9 we will continue to compare and contrast the earthly high priest to Our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ; and we will also examine the two sanctuaries: the one that was on the earth, and the one that is in Heaven. We will also discuss here the significance of the precious blood of Christ.

The Jewish believer who lived in or near Jerusalem before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD would be reminded often of the physical existence of an earthly place of worship where the priests were offering their sacrifices on a daily basis. He would be tempted to mistake this earthly pattern for the reality that is in Heaven. The New Testament believer today also lives in two worlds: the world that he can see and feel on earth, and the spiritual world that he knows by faith to be even more real. The worldly man believes what he sees, but the spiritual man can see what he believes. Faith truly is “substance” and “evidence” (Hebrews 11:1), but these Hebrew believers were under pressure to trust only what could be seen with their physical eyes and could be experienced with their natural senses.

I The Temporary Tabernacle on Earth (vs. 1 – 10)

A It Was Earthly

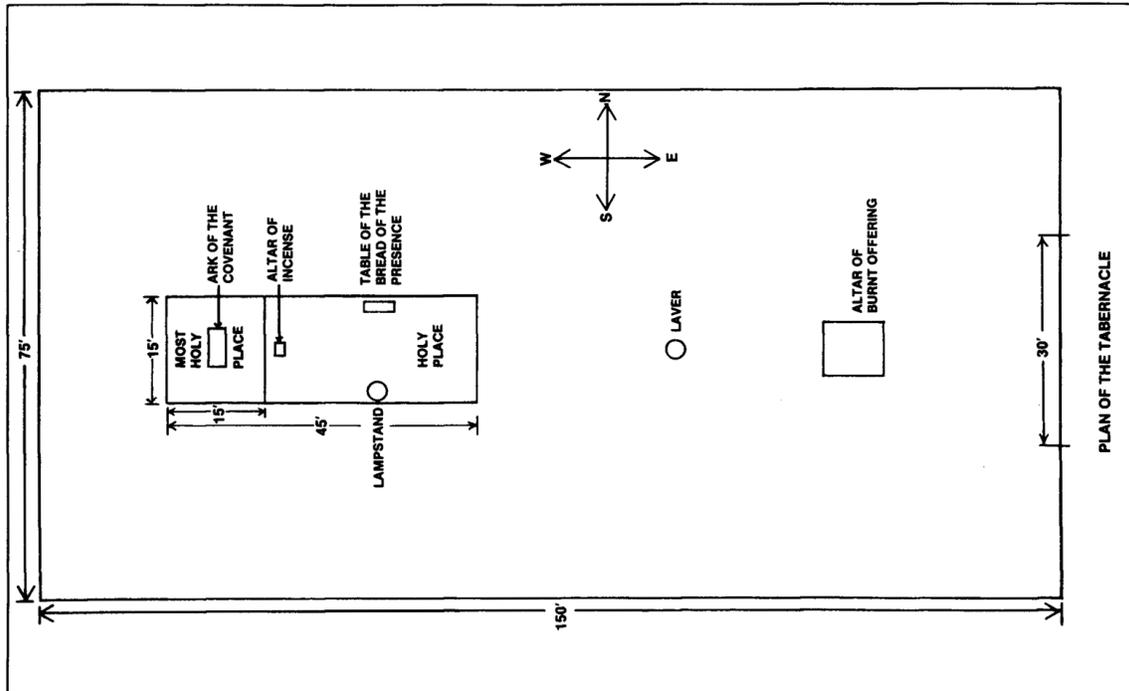
Notice the term, “worldly” (κοσμικός *kosmikos*), which we often use to refer to carnality, but here simply means that the sanctuary or tabernacle was made from the substance of this earth.

Notice the word, “ordinances” (δικαίωμα *dikaiōma*). An ordinance is something that has been established or ordained by law. Here it means that the divine service of the priests in the tabernacle, and later in the temple, was commanded and directed by God. In the New Testament church today we have two ordinances: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, both of which are also commanded and directed by God. You will note that Paul did not use the word, “sacrament”, which, by the way, is found nowhere else in the Bible, either. The word, “sacrament” has the idea of conveying grace. These Hebrew priests could not convey grace to the people that they

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ministered to, and neither can any priest today. Grace can only come through faith in Christ.

See Exodus 35:4 – 19; 39:32 – 43; 40:1 – 8 for more information regarding the Tabernacle.



1 The Holy Place (v. 2)

You will notice that God uses the term “tabernacle” even though at the time of the writing there was a Temple in Jerusalem. The “pattern” for the Tabernacle was given by God. The Temple was patterned after the Tabernacle and was modified by man.

a The Candlestick (Exodus 25:31 – 40; 27:20 – 21; 37:17 – 24; Leviticus 24:1 – 4; Numbers 8:1 – 4; 1 Kings 7:49)

The candlestick served to physically light the Tabernacle, but it also typified Israel as the light to the nations:

"I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;" (Isaiah 42:6)

"And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6)

The Candlestick also pointed to Christ who is the Light of the world:

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

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Jesus stated in John 9:5, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Today, His light can still shine through believers who are submitted to His will and yielded to the Holy Spirit.

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16)

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." (Philippians 2:14-16)

In the New Jerusalem, Christ will be the Light:

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Revelation 21:22-23)

b The Table of Shewbread (Exodus 25:23 – 30; 37:10 – 16; Leviticus 24:5 – 9; 1 Kings 7:48)

On this table were twelve loaves of shewbread, which were replaced every Sabbath Day. This bread was only to be eaten by the priests and was a reminder of God's presence and constant provision. It also pointed to Christ as the Bread of Life:

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. ... I am that bread of life." (John 6:35, 48)

c The Altar of Incense (Exodus 30:1 – 10; 34 – 35; Exodus 37:25 - 29)

Also located in the Holy Place was the Altar of Incense, which is not specifically mentioned here in Hebrews 9:2. The Altar of Incense was actually located just outside of the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Once per year on the Day of Atonement the High Priest would take coals from off of this altar along with incense, and put it in a censer and then bring it into the most Holy Place and into the presence of God. (Leviticus 16:11 – 14)

The Altar with the smoking incense represented the prayers of God's people ascending to God and it foreshadowed the intercessory work of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25)

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Romans 8:26)

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Revelation 8 gives us a glimpse of the true Altar of Incense in Heaven:

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake."
(Revelation 8:3-5)

2 The Holy of Holies (vs. 3 – 5)

a The Censer (v. 4)

You will notice that verse 4 mentions the golden censer, which was not a permanent piece of furniture in the most holy place. It was brought in by the High Priest when he entered into the Holy of Holies to offer for his own sins and for the sins of the people on the Day of Atonement. As was stated earlier, the smoky incense from the altar represented the prayers of God's people. The censer was the tool used by God to bring those prayers into His presence.

Some have stated that the word "censer" should really be "altar", referring to the Altar of Incense. However, the Altar of Incense, though near the entrance, was not inside the Holy of Holies. The word used for "altar" (θυσιαστήριον – *thysiaστήrion*) in Revelation 8:3 is different from the word used for "censer" here in Hebrews (θυμιατήριον – *thymiatērion*). The argument has been made that the reason that Hebrews places the "altar" inside of the Holy of Holies is that since the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was rent in two at the time of the crucifixion the writer to Hebrews has moved it inside, into the presence of God. However, this also cannot be true because Hebrews 9:1 – 10 is speaking of the Tabernacle in the past tense, referring to the ministry that took place when the Tabernacle was still in existence. The King James Bible is correct – the word should be "censer".

b. The Ark of the Covenant (v. 4; Exodus 25:10 – 16)

The Ark of the Covenant was actually a small, wooden box (3'9" x 2'3" x 2'3") that was overlaid with gold, which contained three items: The Golden Pot of Manna (Exodus 16:32 – 36), Aaron's Rod that Budded (Numbers 17:1 – 11), and the Tables of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 10:1 – 5), which were broken by Moses when he came down from the mount and saw the Golden Calf and the idolatry and lewdness of the people:

"And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount." (Exodus 32:19)

c. The Mercy Seat (vs. 4 – 5; Exodus 25:17 – 22)

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The Mercy Seat was the lid to the ark, which had two cherubim of solid gold upon it. This was an earthly representation of the throne of God, but was also the place where God would dwell and meet with His people.

Christ is our mercy seat. The word used for mercy seat (ἱλαστήριον - *hilastērion*) is the same word used for “propitiation” in Romans 3:25:

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;"
(Romans 3:24-25)

Notice the interesting phrase in v. 5 – “*of which, we cannot now speak particularly*”. Was Paul saying that he did not want to go into more detail about the Ark or the earthly Tabernacle because it didn’t fit his purpose, or was he saying that these immature believers couldn’t handle any more information because they were “dull of hearing”? You will recall that he stated in chapter 5 that they could not understand the depth of the discussion regarding Melchisedec because of their spiritual immaturity.

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing." (Hebrews 5:11)

B It Was Inaccessible to the People (vs. 6 – 8)

Only the priests could enter into the Holy Place, and only the High Priest could enter into the Holy of Holies; and that could only be done once per year on the Day of Atonement. (See Leviticus 16)

When Christ paid the price for our sins by shedding His blood on the Cross of Calvary, the veil that separated man from God was torn apart by God Himself:

"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;" (Matthew 27:50-51)

Today, we have been granted access to the throne of grace, provided we come to it through faith in Christ:

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

C It Was a Shadow (v. 9)

Hebrews 9:9 states that the earthly Tabernacle was a “figure” (παραβολή - *parabolē*), which is the same word translated parable throughout the New Testament. We often define parables as earthly stories that teach a spiritual truth. The Old Testament Tabernacle and Temple were earthly pictures or visible representations of the real Temple in Heaven.

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God showed Moses the true tabernacle in Heaven, and then Moses built the earthly tabernacle after what he was shewed in the Mount.

"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." (Exodus 25:8-9)

D It Was Temporary (v. 10)

Hebrews 9:10 indicates that the usefulness of the Tabernacle and Temple would remain until the "*time of reformation* (*διόρθωσις - diorthōsis*)", which literally means "making straight" or "making something right". John the Baptist quoted from Isaiah and said, "*Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*" (Mark 1:3) The sin problem wasn't made "straight" or "right" until Jesus offered His blood on the Mercy Seat in Heaven.

The very fact that these priests were constantly offering indicated that this system could not permanently deal with the sin question. The Tabernacle was retired before the building of the Temple. The Temple was built by Solomon, but was destroyed and rebuilt twice, and then finally destroyed by Titus in 70 AD. There is very little left of it today, and there is a mosque standing on the mount where the Temple once stood. The earthly Tabernacle and Temple were temporary, and so were the priests that served in them. The true Temple is eternal, and so is the Great High Priest who serves in it.

E It Was Ineffective to Permanently Change Hearts (v. 9)

Notice the phrase in v. 9, "*that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;*". The earthly Tabernacle couldn't make anyone perfect or complete; only Christ can do that. (Believers receive the righteousness of God through faith in Christ - Romans 3:22)

Only Christ can change your life. The Bible tells us that *...the love of Christ constraineth us...* (1 Corinthians 5:14). When we learn to understand His love for us our lives will begin to change. Going to a temple could never change your life, but allowing the Temple to come inside of you could change your life forever:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"
(1 Corinthians 3:16)

While still on this earth, the believer's body is the temple where God dwells via His indwelling Holy Spirit, but there is also another throne room of God in Heaven. Someday, in the New Jerusalem, there will be no temple because God will be the Temple:

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." (Revelation 21:22)

The Tabernacle on earth was a beautiful picture of the true Temple in Heaven. It was a place where people could temporarily worship their God while sojourning here on this earth until the time came when they could worship the Lord in the reality of His presence in Heaven.

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II The True Temple in Heaven (vs. 11 - 23)

A A Perfect Building (v. 11)

The Temple in Heaven is the pattern for the earthly tabernacle of old. The Book of Revelation 15:5 calls it "*the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in Heaven*". It is the very throne room of God. It is made of eternal materials, not of the corruptible elements from this earth. The phrase, "not of this building" refers to the earth. The word "building" (κτίσις - *ktisis*) is the same word translated "creation" often in the New Testament. The Temple in Heaven was also not made by corrupted men. It was built by God Himself. The Book of Revelation gives us glimpses into the Temple in Heaven (Revelation 1:12 - 20; 4:1 - 11; 5:6 - 14; 8:3 - 4; 9:13; 15:5 - 8; Revelation 21 describes the New Jerusalem)

B A Purifying Blood (vs. 12 - 23)

Verse 12 speaks of Christ offering his blood on the Mercy Seat in Heaven. This passage is very literal. Christ actually took the blood that He shed on the Cross of Calvary and offered it in Heaven as full atonement for our sin. The Day of Atonement prescribed by the Old Testament Law pictured this.

The blood of bulls and goats could, at best, only temporarily cover man's sin. It would take the pure and perfect, sinless blood of Christ to actually take away man's sin:

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

Notice the reference to "the ashes of an heifer" in verse 13. This is a reference to the red heifer from Numbers 19. The heifer was to be burned to ashes, and then the ashes were to be mixed with water and then sprinkled on an unclean Israelite so that he could be clean.

McGee has an interesting perspective on the red heifer:

We are told also that a *red* heifer was used. The red, I think, speaks of the fact that Christ became sin for us—not in some academic way, but He actually *became* sin for us. How do we know that red is the color of sin? Isaiah said, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as *scarlet*, they shall be as white as snow; though they be *red* like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18, italics mine). So it must be a *red* heifer, speaking of the fact that He became sin for us.

The animal must also be without blemish. It certainly could not represent Christ unless it was perfect. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

The red heifer must be an animal upon which a yoke had never been put. This symbolizes the fact that although Christ was made sin for us, He was never under the bondage of sin.

The heifer was to be led outside the camp and there slain before the high

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priest. In this we have pictured that the Lord Jesus is both the offering and the High Priest—He offered Himself.

The blood of the offering was to be sprinkled by the high priest before the tabernacle seven times. Many people think that seven is the number of perfection in Scripture. That is only indirectly true; the primary meaning is completeness. It speaks here of the fact that Christ's sacrifice is a *finished* transaction—one sacrifice takes care of the sin of the believer.

The carcass of the heifer was to be burned—again in the sight of the high priest. You see, God so loved the world that He *gave* His only begotten Son. Jesus freely gave Himself, but we probably have never thought of the sorrow that was in heaven the day He died.¹

Notice the phrase in verse 14, "*purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God*". We don't serve God in order to get saved. We serve God because we are saved. "Dead works" are works done in the flesh in an attempt to work your way to Heaven.

However, once we are saved by faith, God has got some work for us to do:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Notice also the phrase in verse 15, "*for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament*". The Law revealed the sinfulness of man, but could not redeem man. Christ, as the mediator of the New Testament redeemed man from the penalty of the sins revealed in the Old Testament. In order for the New Testament to be "of force", Christ, the "testator" had to die.

In verses 18 – 23, the contrast is made of the animal blood used to dedicate the Old Covenant with the perfect blood of Christ, which was used to dedicate the New Covenant. Verses 19 – 21 are a reference to the ratifying of the Old Covenant in Exodus 24:3 – 8:

"And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words." (Exodus 24:7-8)

- 1 The blood of bulls and goats was used to temporarily purify and dedicate the tabernacle on earth

¹ McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 567). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

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Animal blood was used by Moses to purify the tabernacle and the priests. (Leviticus 8). The tabernacle was also purified annually with blood because of the defilement of the sins of the people:

"And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness." (Leviticus 16:16)

- 2 The precious blood of Christ was used to eternally purge sin and to purify the things in Heaven.

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, (1Peter 1:18-20)

Notice the phrase in verse 22, *"without shedding of blood is no remission"*. Just as the blood had to be applied to the doorposts in Egypt in order for the death angel to pass over, the precious blood of Christ must be applied to your heart and placed on the Mercy Seat in Heaven in order for you to be saved from your sins.

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:13)

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Leviticus 17:11)

III The Perfect Priest (vs. 24 - 28)

A His Temple is in Heaven

Isn't interesting that Christ never entered into either the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem. He would not be allowed to as He was not a Levite. But, He did enter and now dwells in the Temple in Heaven.

B His Atonement Is Eternal

C His Return is Imminent

Christ is coming again. His second coming will be preceded by the rapture (meaning *being caught up*) of the church. (1 Thessalonians 4:13 - 18; 1 Corinthians 15:51 - 54; Revelation 4:1) He will then return to the earth in judgment, and will set up His millennial kingdom. (Revelation 19:11 - 16)

Notice the phrase, *"without sin"*. This does not mean that Christ was a sinner when He was on the earth. The writer is stating that Christ will not be coming the second time to atone for sins. Christ came to earth the first time to shed His blood and die on the Cross for our sins, but the second coming of Christ will be to end the rebellion of those that oppose Him, and then to set up His Kingdom on the earth.