

“JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO...” SERIES

...NOT WITHOUT BLOOD

HEBREWS 9:1-10

1Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. 2For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. 3Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, 4having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. 5Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

6These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, 7but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. 8By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing 9(which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, 10but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. ESV

Introduction

When our daughter Michelle was born, I was not allowed into the delivery room with Linda. Now days, this is common practice, but 40 years ago it was unheard of. And after she was born, there was a big sign which said, "Keep Out!" Before anyone could enter, they went through a ritual; a gown, mask and hat are put on, and then there is the washing. Each person must wash their hands all the way to their elbows. Why? What was the necessity for all of this? It was because of something that I couldn't even see. Something called Germs.

In the Old and New Testament times, there was a place that was restricted - a place with a big "Keep Out" sign. It was a place that only the high priest could enter and then only once a year and that was necessitated only after an elaborate washing ritual. It was the Holy of Holies. It was the very presence

of God. The big "Keep Out" sign was in the form of a great veil that separated this most holy place from the rest of the world.

The ninth chapter centers on Christ being superior to the Sanctuary. The chapter opens with a description of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, its furniture, and its worship practices. Following the discussion on the Old Covenant verses the New Covenant, this argument of the tabernacle lays the groundwork for our discussion today.

Wiersbe writes:

The Christian is a citizen of two worlds, the earthly and the heavenly. He must render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's (Matt. 22:21). Because he is a citizen of two worlds, he must learn how to walk by faith in a world that is governed by sight. Like Moses, a believer must see the invisible if he is to overcome the pull of the world (Heb. 11:24–27). Practical man says, "Seeing is believing!" But the man of faith replies, "Believing is seeing!"

This principle of faith must apply to our relationship to the heavenly sanctuary. We have never seen this sanctuary. Yet we believe what the Bible tells us about it. We realize that God is not worshiped today in temples made with hands (Acts 7:46–50). There is no special place on earth where God dwells (see Isa. 57:15; 66:1–2; John 4:19–24). We may call a local church building a "house of God," but we know that God does not live there. The building is dedicated to God and His service, but it is not His dwelling place.

Hebrews 9 presents a detailed contrast between the Old Covenant sanctuary (the tabernacle) and the New Covenant heavenly sanctuary where Jesus Christ now ministers. This contrast makes it clear that the New Covenant sanctuary is superior.¹

Worship in the Earthly Tabernacle

1Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. 2For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. 3Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, 4having the golden altar of incense and the ark

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 308). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. 5 Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

In the Old Testament the elements of worship revolved around the Tabernacle. The word "tabernacle" simply means "tent." It was often known as the "tent of meeting." It was the place where God would come to meet man. The importance of the tabernacle to God can be seen in the number of times it is mentioned in the Bible: Tabernacle – 328 times. Tent 75 times.

The materials and construction of the Tabernacle is given in great detail in Exodus 35-39. These were not general instructions but point by point, very specific instructions.

Moses could have merely written, "God told us how to build the Tabernacle and we followed His instructions." That would have been one verse instead of the eight chapters which are devoted to this subject. Why such attention to detail?

Jesus, in speaking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus said,

Luke 24:25-27 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? 27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Following that reasoning, the entire Tabernacle and all of the ordinances are a picture of Jesus. Let's look at it.

The Tabernacle

...for there was a tabernacle made - The word "tabernacle" simply means "tent." The tabernacle was a portable meeting place - a place where God would meet with His people. It was a portable home of God on this earth. They wandered through the desert until that generation died off. When the tabernacle was finished, the presence of God entered the Holy of Holies.

Matthew 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. Jesus "tabernacled" with man.

The Lampstand

John 8:12 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.

In John's vision of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, there is not a single lampstand with seven branches, but seven separate lampstands. This symbolism is explained in verse 20.

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

The lampstands represent the church; that is every born again believer.

Of important notice is that the lampstand did not provide the light. It only held the oil that provided the light. And in the same way, the church does not in itself provide the light. It is only as the church is filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit that light is provided.

The table and the bread of the Presence

John 6:35 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.

The table held 12 loaves of bread, called the "bread of the Presence."

John 6:41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

His body was broken for us and is represented by broken bread which is eaten during the Lord's Supper. It is not by chance that He was born in Bethlehem, a town whose name means "the House of Bread."

The second Curtain

The first curtain was the "door way" into the first chamber of the tabernacle. The second curtain is the "door way" into the Holy of Holies.

Jesus said He was the "door"

John 10:7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

The writer of Hebrews confirms John's writing:

Hebrews 10:19-20 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

This is the veil that was torn in two, from the top to the bottom at the moment of Christ's death.

Mark 15:38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

The golden altar of incense

Incense was offered upon this altar every morning and every evening. This incense created a sweet-smelling aroma. It would sweeten the entire Temple. The smoke of this incense represented the sweet prayers of God's people ascending to heaven.

Romans 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The Holiest of all

This was a designation for the most holy place of all. It was the holiest of holies. Its dimensions in the Tabernacle were in the form of a perfect cube measuring 10 cubits by 10 cubits by 10 cubits.

Notice that these are essentially the same dimensions of the New Jerusalem as described in Revelation 21:16. Instead of 10 cubits on a side, it is 1,500 miles x 1,500 miles x 1,500 miles.

It is in this section of the "tent" that God dwelled.

The Ark of the Covenant

The Ark has many names, but the most common is the "ark of the covenant", because it held the covenantal tablets. It also held the rod of Aaron which had budded and a golden jar of manna, the food with which God had preserved His people in the wilderness.

The ark was made of shittim wood and was overlaid with gold. The lid was pure gold and perched on the top were two cherubim. It is upon this lid, known as the "mercy seat" that God dwelt.

Entry into the Holiest of all

It would be on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement that the High Priest would pass through the veil and into the holy of holies. He would approach the Ark of the Covenant. Upon the top of the Ark was a lid of solid gold. This was known as the Mercy Seat. The images of two cherubim face the center of the Ark. They were silent guardians of the presence of God.

The high priest would sprinkle the blood of sacrificed animals upon the Mercy Seat. By this he was providing an atonement for the sins of the entire nation.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SACRIFICE

8By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing 9(which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, 10but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. (Hebrews 9:8-10).

Now we come to the significance of the ritual which was practiced each year by the Jewish high priest. The fact that the blood of an animal served as a continuing sacrifice meant that the way into the presence of God had not yet been made open.

No mere animal's death could ever take away sins. No mere animal's blood could ever take away guilt. Such rituals were only temporary - looking forward to a time of reformation.

The word translated "symbol" in verse 9 is from the Greek . It is related to our word "parable." You know what a parable is. It is an earthly story thrown up along side a spiritual reality to further illustrate it.

Conclusion

The only way into the Holy of Holies, where God's presided is by blood. The same thing is true today. The only way any human could enter into the very presence of God is by blood...but not the blood of bulls and goats. No the New Covenant required the blood of God's own son, Jesus the Messiah.

Bob Crowder