

Heb. 9:1-11

Several times in our study of Hebrews you have heard me say this book is a bridge between the old and new covenant. But of equal importance **is it is a bridge to heaven and eternity**. We will be seeing more of this today as we look into **the reality of the tabernacle** which is on earth and how that is pointing to a reality far beyond this natural realm.

- And all of this is built upon the truth we finished with last week in **Heb. 8:13** which to these Jewish believers receiving this message was that **Jesus made the first covenant *obsolete*** at the cross, through the resurrection, and finally in His ascension. But there, even though all of that had already happened, he said the old covenant was ***ready to vanish away*** (something at that time which was still to come) **because the temple was still standing**. Yet in a few short years from then it would be completely demolished.

And with the understanding of the focus here being on the tabernacle, it seems to me it would be helpful to list the progressive stages of the tabernacle. So we're going to run through these very briefly.

- **1)** Before the earth existed there was something in heaven that the tabernacle on earth would be designed to express (8:5), **2)** then, during the wilderness wandering God instructed them to make an earthly tabernacle which could be moved as they went (it was a symbolic replica of the true tabernacle. Meaning we can learn a lot about what existed first and what is still to come from this structure). Then **3)** with Jesus' ascension there was no longer a need for the tabernacle or temple upon the earth because it's now in heaven where Jesus is the High Priest (8:1-2). **4)** That same tabernacle in heaven is where the judgement will be poured out upon a Christ rejecting and sinful world during the tribulation (Rev. 15:5-8 [also Rev. 11:19]).
- **5)** During the tribulation God sets up a temple He will inhabit upon the earth for His 1,000 year reign (see also Ezek. 43:1-9 & 48:35). This is a literal temple. **6)** But then we come to the eternal state (after the great white throne judgement [Rev. 20:11-15] and the creation of new heavens and a new earth [Isa. 65:17, 2 Pet. 3:13, Rev. 21:1]) and it's a drastic change. For in Rev. 21:22 it tells us there is no temple there, ***for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple***.

I know that can be a lot to take in if this is your first time looking into this, but it is actually quite simple if you give a little time to place it in your memory. And when you do, the realities contained in the bible just come alive. Folks, it's worth the digging and growing in the word of God. So let's take what we have covered and now dig into these verses to pick out even more.

¹Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.

Some of your translations might say *worldly* instead of *earthly*. And that can lead to a misunderstanding of the point being made. *Earthy* here just means it is made of natural substance God created and which were therefore located upon the earth.

- And with that we should note it would be a mistake to degrade or misunderstand the first covenant and the tabernacle (and the temples that would come after). **God worked through them and resided among His people in the Holy of Holies. That's pretty incredible if you think about it.**
- In just a few minutes we will come to **the Ark of the Covenant, where God would dwell among them**. That is until He departed due to their rebellion and idolatry (Ezek. Ch. 8-11). The point is that you cannot depart from where you are not at. **God was tabernacling (dwelling) with them there, in there.**
- Now the practices, pictures, and sacrifices were incomplete, **because they could only be fulfilled in Jesus**. Yet they were as close as any group of people could get in that day. And that past reality had its hooks in them when they were considering going back to that way of relating with God to avoid present pressures and persecution, **even though it was nothing like what they had now in Jesus!**

And we have something else of interest being shown to us here; **1)** the divine, **2)** the earthly, **3)** and then **the divine and earthly mingling**. This is powerful because so many have gotten this so wrong. **1)** We have those who love the world, and God tells us in **1 John 2:15** you cannot love Him and the world. This is why we made the distinction earlier between *earthly* and *worldly*. But there the word means the combined desires and imaginations of the unredeemed. **2)** Then we have those who say everything of the material is evil (the Gnostics and others Paul wrote to warn of deception. Because, after all there is going to be a bodily resurrection where sin will no longer exist).

- So what God does here is tell us the material pieces of this fallen world are now neutral. Meaning it's up to us to decide if we will utilize them for His glory, service, and worship. Or if we'll use them in ways that dishonor, deny, or create distance between ourselves and Him.
- All of this one day will be made perfect again. But in the meantime, we should notice that in the Old Covenant God did instruct them how to use the things of the earth He created to make a place for them to worship **and reside** with Him. And in His instruction, He also gave them cues as to the reality behind each piece as they pertained to the true tabernacle.

I think we can take this right to the actions of our very lives. When you take what God has given you and wield it for His *service* and worship (which BTW mean the same thing, for **service is worship**), you can reflect a portion of His divine reality upon this earth. If it's the way you build, paint, account, cook, serve, raise your family, care for others...**you can use the material world to display the divine reality of God in heaven, so that others might come to worship Him.** Or not. But you get to choose.

² *For a tabernacle was prepared* (speaking of the one built during the wilderness wandering): *the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary;* ³ *and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All,* ⁴ *which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant;* ⁵ *and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.*

Here we have just two sections of the tabernacle listed, **1) the sanctuary** (also called the holy place), and **2) the Holiest of All** (or the Holy of Holies). But there is more than is noted here (see attached diagram). You would have to come into the open-air court before entering the tabernacle (used in the wilderness) or temple (first built by Solomon [1 Kings 6] and later, the second temple, built by those returning from the exile [Ezra]).

- The tabernacle itself was 45' long, 15' wide, and 15' tall (this is going to get interesting, so you might want to hold onto that piece). In the first part (*sanctuary* or holy place), this was a place only the priests could enter and went into daily (verse 6). Not even other Levites could go in. This portion was 30' long, by 15' wide, by 15' tall.
- The three pieces listed here in this portion were **1) the lampstand** (the menorah) which for Israel signified God's continuous presence (Ex. 25:31-40), His perpetual covenant (Lev. 24:1-4) and His divine power on behalf of his people (Zech. 4:1-6). And David Jeremiah notes it "represents the Son of God, who left heavens glory to become the light of the world (John 1:4, 8:12, 9:5)". **2)** Next is the *show bread* (also, and more understandably for us, is called "the bread of the presence") which were twelve loaves replaced each sabbath (one for each tribe), **3)** and *the table* the bread sat upon. Now these last two go together and represent God's provision and **desire for fellowship with his people**. Because God does care for and provide for the needs of His people.
- But, as with all of the things associated with the tabernacle, this was pointing to something to be fulfilled in Jesus. And John 6:35 says, *And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.* Talk about the ultimate in care, provision, and perpetual sustenance! And, again, for each and every item described to Moses, to be built and placed in the tabernacle (including the priestly garments), there is a fulfillment in Jesus and the true tabernacle.

Now for those of you who are concerned I'm going to go into a deep dive into each of these, just like the author mentions in verse 5, saying, "*Of these things we cannot now speak in detail*", neither can we 😊.

- But I will say **1)** if you want a deeper understanding of how Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant, **2)** and what each piece was pointing to (because it does tell the greatest love story ever), **3)** or you want to know more about the things to come for those in Jesus, **this would be a great study for you to do.**

But before we move on, what you might find interesting is that the Alter of Incense is missing from this list. But as we move to the next part, we find the *golden censor* listed inside the Holy of Holies, making some believe it represents the removal of the veil at Jesus death so that the incense is now inside of the Holy of Holies. **And since the incense is symbolic of the prayers of the people, that's a pretty great picture.**

- Others see this as having occurred when Aaron filled the golden censor and took it into the Holy of Holies so he wouldn't die (Lev. 16:12-13), but that doesn't make a lot of sense to me. I have a feeling that

once we enter into heaven and see the reality this is pointing to, it will all make perfect sense then. But we cannot be dogmatic about this now. It's a bit of a mystery.

- With that, let's jump into *the Holiest of All* (or the Holy of Holies). And let's start with its dimensions because I told you earlier that it would be important. It's 15 feet tall, long, and wide. OK, you're not impressed yet 😊. But if you have studied the book of *Revelation* you likely recount that in the Eternal State (or eternal heaven) the New Jerusalem is 1,500 miles in all directions- even upward (it's a perfect cube, just as what was given in instruction to Moses in the design of the Holy of Holies [Rev. 21:15-17]). And in that description in *Rev. 21* we are told that *God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple* in *verse 22* (this is just a glimpse into how each of these earthly pieces are pointing us to the heavenly reality). And if we continue on to *verse 23* we see that the glory of God will illuminate it. Which is interesting in itself because you notice there is no source of light found here in the Holy of Holies (keep that in mind for when we get to *verse 7*).
- Inside we have *the ark of the covenant* (the old covenant). And inside it we have **1)** the *covenant* the people broke, **2)** the *golden pot* of some *manna* (which was the provision God gave them every evening in the wilderness, which then rotted and became infested with worms if they tried to keep it for the next day[see *Ex. 16:20 & 32-34*]), **3)** and *Aaron staff* (which God caused to bud to show it was Aarons lineage alone the priesthood would come from [Num. 17:1-11]). And, as already mentioned, **4)** we have the *golden censor* where it once did not belong.

Now, in light of what we have already covered about these things just being *copies and shadows of the good things to come* (8:5) (and which came when Jesus established the new covenant) I find it interesting that people today are still looking for the Ark (the next place it will be seen again is in heaven [Rev. 11:19]). And if they are doing so to provide testimony to others of its existence, I can get that (although no one will likely come to Jesus because of it). Or if they would like to find this treasure simply to lay their eyes on the place where God once dwelled with Israel, that would be amazing. But do get this. Today it is just an artifact. Its lost treasure, but *God does not reside there*. **1)** Touching it might not smoke you today as it did in that day (2 Sam. 6:6-7), but it's not going to heal you either. **2)** Praying or laying gifts before it isn't going to get you any preferential treatment from God. Folks, today God dwells (tabernacles) with His people, in His people (1 Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19, 2 Cor. 6:16, Rom. 8:9-11) The ark is just an incredibly ornate remnant and reminder of Gods faithfulness. *Your heart is His home*. Jesus made that possible. The box of the ark never could. All of this is being shared to make that very point.

⁶ Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always (or perpetually) went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services (because the work was never done). ⁷ But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; ⁸ the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. ⁹ It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience (we will jump into that next time) -¹⁰ concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

It was on the Day of Atonement (a very somber day) that the High Priest could finally go into *the Holiest of All* to make atonement for the sin of the nation (*Lev. 16*). And we are told he would have to offer a bull for his own sins first and then a goat for the sins of the nation. And you should know he would have been terrified to go in, because if his offering was rejected and there was any sin of his not covered, he was a dead man. Jewish history tells us the people would tie a rope around him and place a bell on his ankle so if they heard it stop ringing they would know he was dead and could pull him out, since no one else could enter for a year.

- Now I don't know about you, but *I would not draw a lot of comfort from that*, knowing the guy representing me *was no better off than I was* (and he was under a stricter judgment, having to offer a bull). But *verse 8* provides for us *a nice transition* in saying "*that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest*", indicating that *God both planned for and desired this to change*. God had always had on the docket a *reformation*, not to be confused with the protestant reformation (which He also had in mind to bring about), but a *reformation* of the covenant, the priesthood, the sacrifice, the tabernacle, and everything else that would give us greater peace and a future with Him.
- And just like we discussed last week, the tabernacles and temples had to come down. They were simply in the way of what God was doing and has done. *These symbolic things had to give way to the better realities*.

Now catch these realities. **1)** The bread could only last a week and had to be replenished, but Jesus is the bread of eternal life. **2)** The light had to be cleaned, refilled, and relit. It had to be kept going, but Jesus is the light of the world. And His glory will illuminate eternity. **3)** The covenant on the tablets of stone were broken by and because of the people, but Christ fulfilled the Law on our behalf. **4)** The manna was good for an evening. Gods provision for us is never ending. **5)** The High priest had to offer a bull for his own sin and entered into the holiest of all trembling. Jesus offered Himself on our behalf and has made it possible for us to boldly enter into the throne room of grace as children of the Living God. **6)** Even now our prayers are not somehow just outside the presence of God, but are made right in His presence.

- Folks, if this stuff doesn't speak to the needs and desires of your heart, addressing the love and provision of God for you, something missing in your understanding. But it doesn't have to be. Dig into the word and sit quietly with him in prayer. He wants to reveal it to you. **That's why He wrote it all down!**
- And there is so much more in each of these pieces we discussed today that we did not cover.

And we will conclude with reading [verse 11](#) and then pick back up there next time.

¹¹ But Christ (I love those two words together) came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

Any time we get to talk about **1)** Jesus, **2)** His ministry to us, **3)** and the things to come, for some reason I don't feel like rushing 😊.

- I hope you set some time aside this week to look into these things more.
- After all, they are eternal realities for those who have put their faith in Jesus. **And what great realities they are!**