



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 03rd March 2019

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Scripture: Hebrews 9:1-10

Subject: Part 22, - Understanding the Old in line with the New

God opened your eyes, your heart, your mind, your soul, and even your very being to the amazing and wonderful truth of Scripture. This miracle that takes place in every believers' life is the incredible work of the Holy Spirit. We still need His ministry, no matter what stage we're at to understand the Bible, to see the truth, and understand that God is for us not against us. Sin prevents unbelievers from this illumination of God's Word. Even the vast majority of Jews seemed to continually fail to realise from their own Torah, more so the religious than anyone else, that everything connected with the ceremonial law (covenant, sacrifices, priesthood, rituals) were in fact preparatory and transient.

We see this attitude in John chapter 8. The religious were continually contenting with the Lord regarding His Messiahship. They held tightly to their office, as the only way that only Jews could ever come to the true and living God. They used their genetic heritage and their traditions as anchors for their arguments. They claimed that Abraham was their father and claimed that they were never 'in bondage to anyone' and asked Jesus how could He make them free. Hard to believe this isn't it. They must have forgotten the small details of history, like when they were slaves in Egypt, or even Babylon or how about even the small detail that Rome was occupying their land at that time. Jesus pointed out their true position before God,

which didn't go down well. Like the numerous other times, such as in Matthew 23, when He scolded them for being show-offs and hypocrites. They leaned too much on their own traditions and on having the temple in their capital, they leaned too much on their commitment of keeping the rituals and ceremonies, even loving their positions of power. They did not lean on God.

So, we can see why in the book of Hebrews at this point, the writer further contrasts, further highlights, the differences between what they should leave behind altogether and press forward into the new covenant because it was ordained by God Himself as written in the Torah.

So let's get into these verses to comprehend the relevance of understanding the Old in line with the New.

When we look down, beginning at verse 1 of chapter 9, we see the

- ***Characteristics of the Old Covenant.***

Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. (9:1)

The first covenant was not worthless or pointless. God gave it and He does nothing that is worthless or pointless. God prescribed certain kinds of worship and a special place to worship. The sanctuary and its worship were divinely instituted. God gave it a beautiful, meaningful detailed picture of the eternal Messiah and of his work which was to be fulfilled in the years to come.

We must keep in mind that the Israelites were enslaved for 430 years in Egypt. We know that they took on many of the Egyptian spiritual practices for they were often tempted back into pagan worship when they felt panicked and fear crept in on them. The Tabernacle was there to teach the people about how to actually approach the Lord their God, the one who had chosen them to be set apart from other nations. They had to learn to give Him the highest respect, to fear Him and only Him as well as to understand their position before the True and Living God.

In verses 2 - 10 the writer points specifically to three things in relation to the old worship: its sanctuary, its services, and its significance.

The Old Sanctuary (9:2-5)

For a tabernacle was prepared: 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.

For the believers in Christ, the Tabernacle, has a breath-taking description, full of rich truth, and pointing accurately to Jesus. It's far from boring. It is a real blessing. Here in the text it comes before us, first there was the Tabernacle and then the Temple. The emphasis here, however, is on the tabernacle. It was the first sanctuary and also the most temporary.

As we read through the Book of Exodus, we find out all about the furnishings, the materials, even down to the measurements, nothing was left to man to decide it, was all of God. There are some fifty chapters focused on the Tabernacle in the old Testament. The Tabernacle is important and requires our attention because it is a giant portrait of Jesus Christ. Everywhere you look in the Tabernacle you can see Him. But as verse 5 says, '*Of these things we cannot now speak in detail*' but I will quickly look at it.

The courtyard of the Tabernacle was one hundred and fifty feet long and seventy-five feet wide. Its single gate, on the east side, was thirty feet wide and seven and a half feet high, allowing a large number of people to enter at the same time to the alter of sacrifice. It is a graphic picture of Jesus Christ, who said in John 14 verse 6, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life!*" Jesus answered. "*Without me, no one can go to the Father.*"

And in John 10 verse 9

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

There was also only one entrance into the actual Tabernacle and only the priests and High Priests could enter in. Just like there is only one way to God and only few that find it, and enter into personal relationship with God. Christianity is exclusive, not because Christians make it so but because God has made it that way. Throughout the centuries, of course, Christians have made the earthly church exclusive in many wrong ways such as dominations,

dress codes, racial and class discriminations but these are made by men, to make them comfortable, not to honour God. God intentionally made His spiritual, eternal church exclusive, how? To enter into relationship with God, is through Jesus Christ by faith alone.

Everything in the outer courtyard was connected with salvation and the cleansing of sins. Jesus accomplished His sacrificial work on earth, outside God's heavenly presence. The outer court was accessible to all the people, just as Christ is accessible to all who will come to Him. The Tabernacle itself, was made largely of skins and was designed to be portable. Even from the human point of view, it was the essence of impermanence. It gave every impression of being transitory, and it had to be as they were on the move a lot. This structure had two compartments. The first one which the Priests and High Priest could enter, was the Holy Place, then beyond that was the Holy of Holies which only the High Priest could enter into once a year.

Inside the Holy Place there were three pieces of furniture. The lampstand, the table of showbread and the alter of incense. There are many typologies given to this furniture, but when we consider the picture of Christ, in His heavenly sanctuary now, we see that

- The golden lampstand show us that Jesus lights our path. When Jesus left the world, He left His light in the life of the believers so that they could be the light houses, to light the way for those who are still in darkness as said in Matthew 5 verse 16 ***“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven”***
For the Believer, Jesus is the light that directs our path, the One who through the Spirit, illumines our minds to understand spiritual truth. He is the One who, by the indwelling Spirit, guides us through the world of darkness. He is our light and Jesus said it Himself in John 8 verse 12 - ***“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”***
- The table of showbread, which shows us that He provides for us. He is our substance and our Sustainer. He feeds us His word, ensuring that we grow for He is the bread of Life
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.” John 6:35

- and The Altar of Incense pictures Jesus interceding for us. Jesus prayed in John 17 verses 20 & 21 –

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

In the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant was central. This represents Jesus Christ, seated which we looked at last week. In verse 4 of Hebrews 8 describes the Ark, it tells us of three items that were there. The Gold pot that had the manna. This shows us His merciful provision as well as He care for His people. When He promises something, He is faithful to perform it. Aaron’s rod that budded, was a reminder to the people that God appointed Aaron as High Priest, so too does this remind us that God Himself appointed Jesus to be our High Priest. The tablets of the covenant represent the Law. Remember, Jesus said that he came to fulfil the law and not admonish it. Surely, we see that the great exchange that took place on the cross was a legal transaction which we will look at next week. The cherubim on the ark, represent the Cherubim in Heaven who are Superior in rank to other angels and Worship and Glorify God. Jesus himself was worship and Glorified by the angels. Hebrews 1:6

But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: “Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

When we look at both these parts of the Tabernacle, we can see that the Holy place was where man could communicate with God but the Holy of Holies is where God communicated with Man. So when it talks about Holy, or Holiness what exactly does it mean? Again, this is a study that you may find worth delving into yourself, but in brief, when we say God is Holy, it means that He is absent of sin, pure and divine. But when we look at it from a human perspective, it refers to the divine sanctifying work of Holy Spirit which separates us unto God. So, when we meet Jesus Christ our Saviour, we are ushered into the presence of God, into the true Holy of Holies, because of the imputed righteousness of Christ. God no longer communes with men between the wings of cherubim on a gold mercy seat. He communes with men in His Son, by whom the veil was torn in two. Jesus Christ is the mercy seat.

The Tabernacle, as well as the Temple, represented the old Covenant, but it was earthly, it was made with man's hand. It was temporary, for even the Jews witnessed the cross over from the Tabernacle to the Temple, and the Temple in 70 AD was destroyed, never rebuilt to date.

We come our next point – **THE SERVICE** in verses 6-7.

Now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle, performing the divine worship, but into the second only the high priest enters, once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. (9:6-7)

In its sanctuary the Old Covenant had divine services. Every day the priests had to trim the wicks and add oil in the lampstand as this was the only light in the area. So, it was important to keep that going so they could see what they were doing. Every Sabbath they had to change the twelve loaves of bread. The Twelve loaves represented the twelve tribes and when the week was over, the priest could share the bread so to make room for the new loaves and the priests were sustained, nothing went to waste. They also continually replenished the incense on the altar of incense, which was a place of prayer, continual prayer for the people as well as themselves to God. They were continually in and out of the Holy Place, ministering on behalf of the people. It was a never ceasing work.

In this, we can see Jesus Christ, who does not cease enlightening, feeding and interceding on our behalf. How wonderful that our Lord never stops His priestly work for us. He is an ever living and loving High Priest. Nothing, however, pictures Christ so perfectly as the work of the high priest in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), very briefly summarized in verse 7.

The Day of Atonement was intended for the High Priest to make sacrifice for His sins as well as the peoples sin that they committed in error *and* sins of ignorance *and* thoughtlessness. You see, when they sinned knowingly, they would bring a sacrifice to cover that sin, so this day of Yom Kippur, was the only day these sins of omission were covered. It was a great day for liberation of the conscience (see Lev. 16). The Israelites knew that whatever sins may have been missed in the daily sacrifices would now be taken care of. The slate would be completely clean, at least symbolically for a while. Yom Kippur was a time of

release and relief. The devout Jew, longed for the Day of Atonement. He could not himself go into God's presence, but the high priest would go in for him and he would be delivered.

Early in the morning, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest cleansed himself ritually and put on his elaborate robes, with the breastplate near the heart, signifying that he carried the people in his heart and the ephod on the shoulder, signifying that he had power on their behalf as well as representing the twelve tribes. Then he began the sacrifices required for Yom Kippur. Unlike Christ, he had to sacrifice for his own sin. It was an exceptionally busy and messy day.

After finishing all these sacrifices, he took off the robes of glory and beauty and went and bathed himself again completely. He then put on a white linen garment, with no decoration or ornament at all, and performed the sacrifice of atonement. In this ritual, the high priest symbolized Jesus Christ, who, in His true and perfect work of atonement, stripped off all His glory and beauty and became the humblest of the humble. He dressed Himself in human flesh, pure but plain and unadorned. But, in all of His humility He never lost His holiness. When the high priest was done with the sacrifice of atonement, he put the robes of glory and beauty back on, picturing still further the work of our Lord. In His high priestly prayer, anticipating what would happen after the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus said in John 17:5,

"And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was".

In the garment of white linen, the high priest took coals off the bronze altar, where sacrifice was going to be made. He put them in a gold censer with incense and carried it into the Holy of Holies. Here again is a beautiful picture of Christ, interceding for His own in God's presence. Then the high priest went out and took a bullock purchased with his own money, because it was to be offered for his own sin. After slaughtering the bullock and offering the sacrifice, he had another priest assist him in catching the blood as it drained off. He swirled some of it in a small bowl and carried it into the Holy of Holies, where he sprinkled it on the mercy seat.

The people could hear the bells on his robe as he moved about. He hurried out, and the people breathed a sigh of relief at seeing him. If he had entered the Holy of Holies ceremonially unclean, he would have been struck dead. After this the lot was drawn to

determine which of the two goats that were waiting for him by the bronze altar would be marked for sacrifice, and which one would be used as the scapegoat.

This had its limitations, for it could only happen once a year, but it had to happen every year... until the Messiah came as the perfect Lamb. One sacrifice, for all time, for all people.

This brings us to the third point with is ***ITS SIGNIFICANCE.***

The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing, which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation. (9:8-10).

Even with all the ceremonies and rituals, the people of Israel could not enter into the Holy of Holies. The way was barred for everyone except the High Priest, who even had limited access. As long as the tabernacle stood as an institution, the barrier remained. Only the cries of Jesus 'It is finished' could tear down the barrier.

Verse 9 underlines what has been said along, which is The Tabernacle was just a type, a picture. It was limited in so far that while gifts and sacrifices were offered, it was incapable of perfecting the conscience *or* of cleansing *and* renewing the inner man of the worshiper. The various ceremonies and rituals kept the law, the external rules and regulations which were only ever meant to tide over the worshipers of God, until the complete and new covenant was established. The word Reformation is from a particular Greek word used only here, which means "to make straight," that is, to correct, to straighten out, to make right, to reform. Only the New Covenant in Christ set things right, and the old symbols, the old forms, were meant to serve only until this time, the time of reformation.

The old sanctuary and services and significance were meaningful and purposeful, very purposeful. But they were limited, imperfect, and temporary, and therefore ultimately unsatisfactory. They pictured Christ, but they could not do the work of Christ. Part of their purpose, in fact, was to show Israel that they were only pictures of better things to come. They not only pictured Christ but also their own built-in inadequacies.

As we have looked at the earthly sanctuary with its earthly limitations, the next few verses start to expound on the **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW COVENANT**.

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (9:11-14)

Many characteristics of the New Covenant already have been mentioned or implied in the discussion of the Old. But the writer here focuses on several that are especially important in contrasting the two covenants. Following the pattern used in showing the inadequacies of the Old Covenant (vv. 1-10), these verses show us the characteristics of the New Covenant - the new sanctuary, the new services, and the new significance briefly. As always, the point is not to demean the old but to show its incompleteness. Let's follow the pattern -

The New Sanctuary (v11)

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation.

Christ, as heavenly High Priest, has an infinitely greater sanctuary in which to minister. The old Tabernacle was designed by God, but it was made by men, out of materials from the present physical creation. For that time and for that purpose, it was impressive. On the inside, where only the priests could go, it doubtlessly was also beautiful but it was only a tent. It is not mentioned here, but the Temple in Jerusalem, though immeasurably more magnificent than the Tabernacle, was also made by men with materials from the present creation, and was subject to the deterioration and destruction to which everything of this creation is subject.

The new sanctuary, however, is not made by men or of earthly materials or subject to the laws of nature. It is made by God, in heaven, and of heavenly materials. The new sanctuary, in fact, is heaven. Earth belongs to God, but heaven is His dwelling place, His

throne, and His sanctuary (Acts 7:48-50; 17:24). As the writer of Hebrews pointed out several times, Jesus Christ, like Melchizedek, is a priest-king. He rules and ministers from the Throne room. His sanctuary and His palace are the same. In this passage, of course, the emphasis is on His sanctuary. Heaven is the perfect tabernacle, not made with hands and with no barriers. Christ ministers for us in heaven, in the throne room of God at God's right hand.

The priests had to go into the Holy Place by themselves for the people, not with the people. The same was true of the high priest in regard to the Holy of Holies, where he could not even take other priests. The people were only ever represented by the High Priest by tribes, in the Holy of Holies, as they were inscribed on the costly jewels on the breast plate and on the shoulders. Not our Great Heavenly Priest! He takes His people with Him all the way into the sanctuary. He takes us into the sanctuary of sanctuaries, into heaven itself, not into the symbolic presence of God, but into the real presence of God. Not only has He gone before us, but He takes us with Him.

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ, . . . and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-6).

This bring us to **THE NEW SERVICES**.

And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. (9:12)

How does Christ minister in His heavenly sanctuary? What does He do as our eternal High Priest? His service presently is intercession, help, protection and guidance. He lights our paths, He feeds us and provides for us. The Lamb of God who became the perfect sacrifice, by His own blood, became that once and all sufficient sacrifice, providing us with a way into the presence of God the Father, so that we can go boldly before the Throne of God, where we find grace and mercy. Because of His sacrifice, His own blood, we can find complete and secured everlasting Redemption and everything that it brings.

Lastly, **THE NEW SIGNIFICANCE** - (9:13-14)

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the

blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The Old Covenant was sufficient for the purification of the body, it served its purpose. Keeping this in mind, how much better do you think Christ's New Covenant, which is powerful and perfect, serve its purpose? Surely – we have a better covenant in Christ who has done so much more. For He offered Himself as an unblemished sacrifice to God, purified our consciences from dead works *and* lifeless observances to serve the ever-living God. Therefore, God Himself cleansed our conscience from dead works to serve Him.

Remember, the purpose of the new sacrifice, was to cleanse internally, where sin really exists. It accomplished its superior purpose in a superior way.

“Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain,

Could give the guilty conscience peace or wash away the stain.

Christ the heavenly Lamb takes all our sins away,

A sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they.” Isaac Watts

Christ does more than cleanse the old man; He replaces him completely. He gives us a new nature. In Christ, we are not cleaned-up old creatures but redeemed new creatures as 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us-

Therefore, if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!

Next week we will be continuing this train of thought, but before I close, I would like you to consider – How does all this knowledge impact us? We have a choice for it to be simply a head knowledge thing which can service a purpose to some degree. Or we can allow it to reach into our hearts, souls, and minds and realise the abundant blessings we have received from God which is life changing. We are not looking at something, watching from the side lines, but we are part-takers and recipients of this New Covenant. Our Faith is sealed in Christ and with Christ. Surely, we do have reason to Thank the Lord and even more reason to be faithfully committed to Him. We serve a good and gracious God. **Amen**