

Hebrews

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish

October 4, 2023



Hebrews 9:1-14

Vss. 1-5

- As the preacher expands his argument of the superiority the new covenant over the old, he begins by giving us an apt description of the old Temple in Jerusalem. He finished the previous chapter by showing that only through Jesus can we understand and know true reality. So as he describes the beauty of worship in the Temple, if these are but shadows, how truly amazing is real worship in the heavenly Temple?

- As he speaks in vs. 2 of the "outer tabernacle" we must know what he and his congregation were remembering. William Barclay tells us: "The Court of the Tabernacle was 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. It was surrounded by a curtain-like fence of fine, twined linen 7 1/2 feet high. The white linen stood for the wall of holiness that surrounds the presence of God. The curtain was supported by twenty pillars on the north and south sides, and by ten on the east and west sides; and the pillars were set in sockets of brass and had tops of silver. There was only one gate. It was on the east side and it was 30 feet wide and 7 1/2 feet high. It was made of fine, twined linen wrought with blue and purple and scarlet. In the court there were two things. There was the Brazen Altar, 7 1/2 feet square and 4 1/2 feet high and made of acacia wood sheathed in brass. Its top was a brazen grating on which the sacrifice was laid; and it had four horns to which the offering was bound. There was The Laver. The laver was made from the brass mirrors of the women (glass mirrors did not exist at that time) but its dimensions are not given. The priests bathed themselves in the water in it before they carried out their sacred duties... The Tabernacle itself was constructed of forty-eight acacia beams, 15 feet high and 2 feet 3 inches wide. They were overlaid with pure gold and rested in sockets of silver. They were bound together by outside connecting rods and by a wooden tie-beam which ran through their center. The Tabernacle was divided into two parts. The first--two-thirds of the whole--was The Holy Place; the inner part--one-third of the whole--a cube 15 feet on each side, was The Holy of Holies. The curtain which hung in front of The Holy Place was supported on five brass pillars and made of fine linen wrought in blue, purple and scarlet... The Holy Place contained three things. (i) There was The Golden Lampstand. It stood on the south side; it was beaten out of a talent of solid gold; the lamps were fed with pure olive oil and were always lit. (ii) On the north side stood The Table of the Shewbread. It was made of acacia wood covered with gold; it was 3 feet long, 1 1/2 feet wide and 2 feet 3 inches high. On it there were laid every Sabbath twelve loaves made of the finest flour, in two rows of six. Only the priests could eat these loaves when they were removed. They were changed every Sabbath. (iii) There

was The Altar of Incense. It was of acacia wood sheathed in gold; it was 1 1/2 feet square and 3 feet high. On it incense, symbolizing the prayers of the people rising to God, was burned every morning and evening.

- Next inward was the Holy of Holies. Again Barclay describes: “In front of The Holy of Holies there was The Veil which was made of fine, twined linen, embroidered in scarlet and purple and blue, and with the cherubim upon it. Into The Holy of Holies no one but the High Priest might enter, and he only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, and only after the most elaborate preparations. Within The Holy of Holies stood The Ark of the Covenant. It contained three things--the golden pot of the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the law. It was made of acacia wood sheathed outside and lined inside with gold. It was 3 feet 9 inches long, 2 feet 3 inches wide, and 2 feet 3 inches high. Its lid was called The Mercy Seat. On The Mercy Seat there were two cherubim of solid gold with overarching wings. It was there that the very presence of God rested, for He had said: ‘There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony’ (Exodus 25:22)”.
- As the preacher and his people are remembering this, they cannot help but also recall one thing – the ordinary worshipper could only enter as far as the entrance gate to the Tabernacle Court. The priests and the Levites could go in, but they too were limited. The priests could go into the Holy Place, but only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies and then only once each year. There was magnificence and beauty in worship under the old covenant and it only grew as one came closer and closer to the mercy seat of God, but the common person was barred from even coming close. In Jesus Christ the barrier is removed and He opens the way for each of us to enter into the presence of God where we find a Father waiting...waiting for His children to crawl up into His lap and be loved by Him.

Vss. 6-10

- Going back to Leviticus 19 and the Day of Atonement, the preacher points to how the High Priest alone enters into the Holy of Holies and took blood so as to make atonement “for the sins of the people committed in ignorance”. This was a singular all encompassing sacrifice on behalf of the whole nation. And it was not a feast but a fast. Everyone would fast that day. The truly devout would fast for the 10 days prior. The High Priest would dress in exquisite robes that were worn only on that day. A young bull, seven lambs, two goats, and a ram were sacrificed (Numbers 29:7). In between the sacrifices the High Priest was ritually cleansed. Everything was scripted down to the last detail and even the smallest details had extraordinary importance.

- But yet it was all for nothing. The cleansing was purely external. The blood of animals cannot atone for human sin. For all its beauty and majesty, the day of Atonement ritual was just a shadow of, a ghostly copy of the true reality. The reality is that the only priest and the only sacrifice that can open the way to God for all humanity is Jesus Christ.

Vss. 11-14

- “But when Christ appeared...” How many life changing and world changing sentences begin with those words? When Christ appeared and took on the role of our new High Priest, He enters into a tabernacle that is perfect, that was not built with human hands, but with the hands of God. And the blood He comes with is not blood of animals, but it is His own blood that He bled for us.
- Again, the writer of Hebrews needs us to keep in mind that religion is the process of bringing people into the presence of God; that ours is a world of weak and pale and imperfect copies of what is real and true and that worship is there so we may touch the world of the real and true; and that there is no religion without sacrifice. He uses vss. 11-13 to speak of the blood of animals, but again, God’s truth has always been right there in His Word. In Isaiah and in the books of the prophets we find that God tells His people that the blood of animals alone will not save them.

➤ Micah 6:6-8

- The British pastor and theologian BF Westcott offers 4 ways Christ’s sacrifice was different in the new covenant. First, the sacrifice of Christ was voluntary. The animal’s life was taken. Our brother Jesus willingly laid down His life for us. Second, the sacrifice of Jesus was spontaneous, whereas under the old covenant sacrifice was ritual. Further, the ritual was compelled by Law. The coming of Christ was because God *SO LOVED* the world and the sacrifice of Christ was the ultimate expression of that love. Third, the sacrifice of Jesus was rational. The animal to be sacrificed has no idea what is happening to it, whereas Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. He did not die as an innocent and unsuspecting victim, but knew throughout His ministry that when He began His journey from Nazareth that the destination was the cross. Fourth, The sacrifice of Jesus was moral. The sacrifice of animals was mechanical slaughter, but Christ offered Himself “through the eternal Spirit”. Put all this together and we discover that God has made a way to cleanse our hearts from dead works so that we may eternally serve the living God.