

Hebrews Chapter 9

Verses 9:1-10: In these verses, the author gives a brief description of the tabernacle, to which some 50 chapters in the Old Testament are devoted, including the tabernacle service (Exodus 25-40). The section is marked off by its beginning with a reference to “regulations” (verse 1), and closing with a reference to “regulation” (verse 10).

Hebrews 9:1 "Then verily the first [covenant] had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary."

The Tabernacle in the wilderness, and the Temple in Jerusalem, was the sanctuary spoken of here. As we said, in previous lessons, Moses was given specific instructions by God of how it was to be constructed. The book of Leviticus is devoted to the ordinances God gave them to keep.

For details on this read the lessons on Leviticus. I will give 2 Scriptures here to give you an idea of how God was displeased with their past doings.

Exodus 25:8 "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them."

Leviticus 18:3 "After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances."

This next Scripture tells what God expects of them, if they are to follow Him.

Leviticus 18:30 "Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that [ye] commit not [any one] of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I [am] the LORD your God."

Hebrews 9:2 "For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein [was] the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary."

“The first ... the sanctuary”: This is the Holy Place, the first room of the tabernacle (Exodus 26:33). For the items in the Holy Place (see Exodus 25:33-34).

In our lessons in Exodus, we go into great detail about this tabernacle in the wilderness and all of the spiritual significance the furniture has (verse 2 is speaking of the Holy place). The Tabernacle had three separate areas, this is the middle area. This candlestick holds the Light who is Jesus. This Light symbolizes Jesus who is the Light of the world.

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."

John 1:5 "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

This leaves no doubt what this Light is. This table and the Bread on it also symbolize Jesus who is the Bread. There are 4 beautiful Scriptures in the book of John that call Jesus the Bread.

John 6:33 "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

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."

John 6:48 "I am that bread of life."

John 6:51 "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

All of these Scriptures are in red in my Bible, which means that Jesus Himself spoke them.

Hebrews 9:3 "And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;"

"Holiest of all": This is the Most Holy Place where the ark of the covenant and mercy seat dwell, the place of atonement (Exodus 26:33-34).

This Holiest of all was not to be entered by anyone, except the high priest. This is where God dwelled. Everything in this Holiest place was either 24 kt. gold or 24 kt. gold over-lay. Even the high priest must not enter unworthily, or God would kill him.

This veil, separating the Holiest of all from the Holy place, was the one that was torn from the top to the bottom when Jesus died on the cross.

Matthew 27:51 "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;"

Jesus opened the way to the Father for us when He was crucified.

Hebrews 9:4 "Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein [was] the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;"

"Golden censer": Though it was outside the Holy Place (Exodus 30:6), the writer of Hebrews pictures the golden altar inside the Most Holy Place because uppermost in his mind is its role in the liturgy of the Day of Atonement. On that day, the High-Priest brought incense from that altar into the Most Holy Place (Lev. 16:12-13).

The altar of golden incense marked the boundary of the Holy of Holies as well as the curtain. The High-Priest went beyond the altar of incense only once a year.

“Ark of the covenant”: The testimony is the designation for the two tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments which were placed inside the ark (Tables of the covenant), explains why it was also called “the ark of the testimony” (Exodus 25:22), and shows why it was appropriate to call the whole structure “the tabernacle” or “the tent of the testimony.” “The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth” (Joshua 3:11), and “the holy ark” (2 Chron. 35:3), were alternative designations.

“Golden pot that had manna”: Provision was made for memorializing the giving of the manna. When the tabernacle was finally constructed, the pot of manna was placed inside the ark. Succeeding generations would be reminded, when they came for worship, of the faithfulness of the Lord in caring for His people (Exodus 16:32-36).

“Aaron’s rod”: God had stated that the stick of the man He had chosen would blossom (Num. 17:5). The stick of Aaron had not only blossomed, but had yielded ripe almonds. Thus, God had exceeded the demands of the test, so there would be no uncertainty of the fact that Aaron had been chosen as High-Priest (Num. 17:8).

(Verses 1-5), describe the contents of the two chambers of the Mosaic tabernacle. A problem occurs (in verse 4), in that the “golden censer” (altar of incense), was physically located in the outer first chamber, whereas the “Holiest of all,” or Holy of Holies (verse 3), contained only the “ark of the covenant”.

The author’s careful choice of the word “had” (note, by contrast, his earlier word wherein in verse 2), provides the latitude needed to express the altar’s liturgical function with the Holy of Holies despite its location in the outer Holy Place.

This altar was physically located in the Holy Place so that incense could be placed upon fresh coals morning and evening, yet it was located immediately in front of the Holy of Holies so that its fragrant cloud might enter the holy of Holies and cover the Ark of the Covenant (see Exodus 30:6; 40:5; Leviticus 16:12-13:1).

The smoke that went up from this golden censer was symbolic of the prayers of the saints. It was refueled twice a day, which means to me that we should pray a minimum of twice a day.

Revelation 8:3 "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."

The Ark of the Covenant was a shittim wood box covered with 24 kt. gold. This box was called by this name, because it held the stone tablets which had the Ten Commandments written on them.

The covering for this box was the mercy seat, which was 24 karat solid gold. This golden pot inside the ark, and the Manna that it held, also symbolized Jesus as the Manna that fell from heaven to feed the people.

John 6:32 "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."

Aaron's rod that bloomed that was in the ark, symbolized the priesthood. The rod bloomed to recognize Aaron as God's first earthly high priest.

Numbers 17:5 "And it shall come to pass, [that] the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you."

If God approved him, what was it to man?

Hebrews 9:5 "And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly."

“Cherubims”: Forged as one with the golden cover of the ark were two angelic beings rising up on each end and facing one another, their wings stretching up and over forming an arch. Cherubim, associated with the majestic glory and presence of God (Ezek. 10:1-22), were appropriately woven into the tabernacle curtains and the veil for the Holy of Holies (Exodus 26:1, 31), for this place was where God was present with His people.

Cherubims are mentioned 64 times in the Scriptures. No one knows for sure just what they are. It seems as if they might be a type of guard. They were placed with a flaming sword at the entrance of the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were driven out.

They look at the Ark in the Holiest place. They are in God's presence, so they are highly honored. This is one of the mysteries of God that will be revealed later.

“Mercy seat”: The lid or cover of the ark was the “mercy seat” or the place at which atonement took place. Between the Shekinah glory cloud above the ark and the tablets of law inside the ark was the blood-sprinkled cover. Blood from the sacrifices stood between God and the broken law of God!

Verses 6-7: The priests entered the Holy Place daily to perform their interminable tasks. Morning and evening the lamps were trimmed, and the coals with incense were placed upon the golden altar. The showbread was replaced weekly. But the Holy of Holies was a closed chamber into which the high priest alone ventured one day a year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:5-34).

Hebrews 9:6 "Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service [of God]."

The priests, who were usually the sons of the high priest, were allowed to go into the holy place, but not into the Holiest place.

Exodus 27:21 "In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which [is] before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD: [it shall be] a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel."

This Scripture just makes it clear that the priests, as well as the high priest, could come into the holy place.

Hebrews 9:7 "But into the second [went] the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and [for] the errors of the people:"

This is speaking of the Day of Atonement, when the high priest carried blood into the Holiest place for the sins of the people and himself.

“Not without blood”: This is the first of many references to the blood of sacrifice. The term is especially central to (9:1 – 10:18), where it identifies the deaths of Old Testament sacrifices and of Christ (verses 12-14).

Note however, that the shedding of blood in and of itself is an insufficient sacrifice. Christ had not only to shed His blood, but to die. (Hebrews 10:10), indicates that He gave His body as the sacrificial offering. Without His death, His blood had no saving value.

Verses 8-10: “The Holy Ghost signifying”: Through this topological picture of the tabernacle, the Holy Spirit was showing that man did not possess direct and complete access to God (and would not), while the tabernacle with its Mosaic Law still stood. The tabernacle further served as a “figure”, a physical picture or symbol, for all to see.

Just as access was not open to the Holy of Holies, so access to God was not complete. Man’s “conscience” was always left unsatisfied. Since he must return repeatedly, and since he never knew what happened within the closed chambers, he could never feel he had been completely and permanently cleansed.

This would continue only “until the time of reformation” when Christ would establish a new order, the new covenant.

Hebrews 9:8 "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:"

The Levitical system did not provide any direct access into God’s presence for His people. Rather, it kept them away. Nearness had to be provided by another way (verse 12). This is the primary lesson which the Holy Spirit taught concerning the tabernacle. It teaches how inaccessible God is apart from the death of Jesus Christ.

“Holy Ghost”: By the Spirit inspired instruction given for the Holiest of All, He was indicating that there was no way to God in the ceremonial system. Only Christ could open the way (John 14:6).

We discussed how at Jesus' crucifixion the way was opened to all believers into the Holiest.

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

Hebrews Chapter 9 Questions

1. The first covenant had ordinances of what?
2. What 2 places does the sanctuary speak of?
3. Which book in the Old Testament tells in detail about these ordinances?
4. These Israelites were warned not to pick up the customs of whom?
5. What things were located in the holy place?
6. What things in the holy place were symbolic of Jesus?
7. What is Jesus called in John 8:12?
8. In what book of the Bible does Jesus call Himself the Bread?
9. What is the area in the tabernacle called, that is behind the second veil?
10. Who was the only one allowed to go into the Holiest place?
11. What metal was all the furniture in the Holiest place?
12. How was the veil to the most Holy place torn when Jesus died on the cross?
13. What was in the Holiest place?
14. What was the smoke that went up from the golden censor symbolic of?
15. What was the ark made of?
16. Why was it called the ark of the covenant?
17. What did the Manna symbolize?
18. What did Aaron's rod that bloomed symbolize?

19. Why had the rod bloomed?
20. What did the cherubims do in the Holiest place?
21. The author believes the cherubims to be what?
22. What did the cherubims have with them to keep the entrance to the Garden of Eden?
23. Who were the priests, ordinarily?
24. Who was allowed into the holy place?
25. Once a year the high priest went into the Holiest place with blood for what purpose?
26. When was the way into the Holiest place opened?