

Hebrews 9:1-10 (2)

The tabernacle that God commanded the Israelites to build in the time of Moses. did not seem like much from the outside but inside were holy things and the manifested presence of the holy God Himself. The Old Testament tabernacle showed what must be done for sinners to approach God, and typified the blessings of the believer's relationship with God. Hebrews 9 deals with two subjects: the arrangement of the tabernacle and the priestly service that took place within it.

Summary

In Hebrews 9:1-10, the author turns to Israel's tabernacle to teach further about the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the life of faith for the believer.

1. Holy Place & Most Holy Place Revisited vv. 1; 3-8

The author calls the tabernacle an earthly sanctuary for the old covenant (**Heb 9:1**), in contrast with the heavenly sanctuary of the new covenant. **Heb 9:8** tells us that as long as this sanctuary stood (and its counterpart the Jewish temple), it symbolized that access to God was barred. This greatly contrasts with the open way provided by the sacrifice and offering of Jesus Christ.

The earthly tabernacle consisted of two sections or rooms and an outer court. Each of these items in these rooms point to Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that we have fellowship with God, just as the priests of Israel had fellowship with God in and by means of the tabernacle. The priests served in God's presence in a limited way through the symbolic items in the holy place, but God manifested himself in a different way in the Most Holy Place, which was separated by a thick curtain or veil. On the day Jesus died, the curtain that barred the way was torn in two.

2. Communion with God vs. 8

The old tabernacle showed that the way into the presence of God was barred, because the curtain kept the priests from the holy of holies. Now the Holy Spirit is showing the opposite, that the way to God is finally open (**Heb 9:8**). The tabernacle Jesus entered with his own blood was not on earth but in heaven (**Heb 9:11**). Jesus went into heaven as our high priest, offered his blood once for all, and sent his Holy Spirit into the world (**Gal 3:13-14**). In the old covenant, God wrote his law on tablets of stone; in the new covenant, he is writing it by his Holy Spirit upon hearts. The Holy Spirit's work proves we have access to God in the new covenant (**Heb 9:8**). Jesus Christ has torn away the veil and won us access to God by his blood. Now he sends his Spirit to enlighten our eyes and renew our hearts so that we might have fellowship with God (**1 John 1:3**).

This means that Christians have unrestricted access to God the Father through faith in Christ (**Rom 8:14-16**).

It is at this point that a significant error is made by some Christians, who see in the tabernacle two stages of the Christian life.

To live outside the sphere of the Spirit of God, to bear no evidence of the Spirit's sanctifying presence and work, to display no reliance on or pleasure in your relationship with God through Jesus Christ is not to be a weak saved person but an unsaved person altogether. On the other hand, anyone who has come into God's presence through faith in Christ, and has known the Spirit's work within, but yet finds himself slow and weak and dull in his struggle with sin, is not a lower-level Christian but a normal Christian. (**1 John 1:8; Phil. 3:12**).

3. Clean Conscience vv. 9-10

Verses 9-10 complete the survey of the earthly sanctuary and the whole system of Old Testament worship associated with it which could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper (**Heb 9:9**). As sinners we have an inner consciousness of guilt that keeps us from drawing near to God (**cf. Gen 3:8**). This was a great problem in the old covenant. Until the time of the new order, the time foreseen by Jeremiah in his declaration of the new covenant (**Heb. 8**), this was an outward show of an inward reality that had not yet come.

Jesus has done what the sacrifices of the old covenant could not do. He did not merely cover sins, but took them upon Himself, removing them by his death on the cross (**Col 2:13-14; 16**). This has the profound effect of removing our own inner barrier against the idea of drawing near to God. This is God's way of bringing us through the veil that was torn and into communion with himself in Christ. Relying on his love for us, inwardly cleansed by the saving work of Christ, we draw near to worship God and to have fellowship with Him as His people.

4. One True Way

Jesus came to do what the Old Testament high priest only dimly prefigured one day a year, and was making a way for his disciples. "How can we know the way?" Thomas asked. Jesus replied, "I am the way" (**John 14:6**).

God called the people to Himself at the tabernacle, but sin barred the way. Jesus opened the way by removing the barrier of the guilt of sinners and God's holy wrath on sin, dying on the cross in the sinners place, removing the barrier within their hearts to enable them to come to God.