



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

## THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

### Sermon Notes

### *Better Promises, Part 2*

Hebrews 9:1-10

September 6, 2009

<sup>1</sup>Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. <sup>2</sup>For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. <sup>3</sup>Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, <sup>4</sup>having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. <sup>5</sup>Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. <sup>6</sup>These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, <sup>7</sup>but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. <sup>8</sup>By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing <sup>9</sup>(which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, <sup>10</sup>but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

- ❖ Although it seems that everyone has heard of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, it is likely that very few people today can actually name all seven. Likely, the main reason for this is that only one still stands.
- ❖ One of the first known lists was made by Antipater of Sidon, who wrote in a poem, entitled *Anthologia Palatina*, in around 140, B.C.:

“I have gazed on the walls of impregnable Babylon along which chariots may race, and on the Zeus by the banks of the Alpheus, I have seen the hanging gardens, and the Colossus of the Helios, the great man made mountains of the lofty pyramids, and the gigantic tomb of Mausolus; but

when I saw the sacred house of Artemis, that towers to the clouds, the others were placed in the shade, for the sun himself, has never looked upon its equal, outside Olympus.”

❖ Antipater’s List Includes the following Ancient Wonders:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Walls of Babylon (and the Ishtar Gate)</li><li>2. The Statue of Zeus at Olympus</li><li>3. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon</li><li>4. The Colossus of Rhodes</li><li>5. The Great Pyramid of Giza</li><li>6. The Mausoleum of Halicarnassus</li><li>7. The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus</li></ol> |
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❖ It is clear, even from this short excerpt from Antipater’s poem, that the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World were magnificent, even awe-inspiring wonders of human invention.

❖ Furthermore, at least three of the Ancient Wonders were Temples to a deity. These temples were made of marble and gold – the finest materials available. The reason for this is that, like the Temples themselves, the gods were **CREATED BY MEN**. And as such, men enshrined their gods in Temples that reflected a human understanding of glory – purely physical and impressive in size and quality.

❖ **Yet, the most important structure in all of the ancient world is on NO list of Wonders.**

❖ **This structure is the Tabernacle of the Jews.**

❖ The tabernacle was a simple, unimpressive TENT. Yet, it was made just as God had commanded. And it was to perform precisely the function that God intended – to point to Christ, our perfect tabernacle, and the one through whom we have full access to the One True and Living God.

❖ Here, in Hebrews 9:1-10, the author draws a direct comparison between the elements of the Tabernacle and the provision of Christ in the New Covenant.

- I. **The Tabernacle and its Furniture Point to Christ**
- II. **The New Covenant is Superior to the Old**
  - a. **God is Accessible**
  - b. **All Sins are Forgiven**
  - c. **The Conscience is Cleared**
  - d. **It is Eternal**

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**I. The Tabernacle and its Furniture Point to Christ**

- The author’s point in this section is to, once again, demonstrate the superiority of Christ to anything – to include the Tabernacle – that the Old Covenant had to offer.
- In fact, the author begins, in Verse 1 stating that “the first covenant had regulations for worship and **an earthly place of holiness**. In other words, it was a physical, temporary place pointing to a spiritual, eternal one.

A.W. Pink writes, “The toys of the nursery become obsolete when manhood is reached. Everything is beautiful in its proper season. Heavy garments are needed when the cold of winter is upon us, but they would be troublesome in summer’s sunshine. Once we recognize that God Himself has acted on this principle in His...dealings with His people, much becomes plain which otherwise would be quite obscure.”

“Wonderful indeed were the pictorial fore-shadowings which the Lord gave in the days of Israel’s kindergarten. The importance of them was more than hinted at by God when, though He took but six days to make heaven and earth, He spent no less than forty days when instructing Moses concerning the making of the tabernacle.”

John MacArthur concurs, “Only two chapters in the Bible are devoted to the creation story; whereas, some fifty chapters focus on the Tabernacle (see especially Exodus 25-40). The Tabernacle is important and demands attention in our study, because it is a giant portrait of Jesus Christ. Everywhere you look in the Tabernacle you can see Him.”

- Yet, it would not be until Christ that we would see the fulfillment of the Old Covenant Tabernacle: “**It the Word became flesh and *tabernacled* among us...**” **John 1:14.**
- It is significant that the author here refers to the Tabernacle, not the Temple. In fact, the author mentions the Tabernacle ten times in the Epistle, yet never mentions the Temple.
  - The reason for this is at least two fold:
    - God commanded that the Tabernacle, **NOT** the Temple, be built.
    - The Tabernacle was the presence of God amidst His people in the time of the wilderness wanderings. And throughout the Book of Hebrews, the author describes His readers in terms of this sort of “wilderness wandering.” We, too, have left Egypt and are heading to the Promised Land.

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- The Old Covenant Tabernacle-tent consisted of three main areas: the outer courtyard, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies).
- The courtyard of the Tabernacle was one hundred fifty feet long and seventy-five feet wide. Its only gate, on the east side, was thirty feet wide and seven and a half feet high.

## THE HOLY PLACE

### □ The Lampstand

- The lampstand, or menorah, was a candelabra with seven total branches, three on each side of the main stem (Read **Exodus 25:31-36**).
- Richard Phillips writes, “The light represented God’s revelation of himself, his illuminating presence...”
- Not only this, it pointed directly to Jesus Christ, the “Light of the World”:

**John 1:4, 9** states, “<sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men...<sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.”

- Also, we see in the lampstand the light of the Gospel:

**2 Corinthians 4:4**: “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

- Furthermore, the light of the Lampstand burned continuously, just as the light of Christ never burns out.
- The priests were responsible for ensuring that the lamps had oil in them so that they would burn continuously.

A.W. Pink states, “The ‘oil’ was poured *into* its lamps and then shed forth light *from* them. Such was and is the economical relation of the Spirit unto the Mediator. First, Christ was ‘anointed’ with the Spirit “above His fellows” (Psalm 45:7 and John 3:34), and then He sent forth the Spirit (Acts 2:33). Objectively the Spirit conveys light to us through the Word; subjectively, by inward and supernatural illumination.”

- It is significant to note as well that the Tabernacle had no windows, for natural light...natural revelation, cannot illumine the spiritually dead. The light of Christ...the light of the Gospel is absolutely necessary.

## □ The Table and the bread of the Presence

- The next element is the Table and bread of presence. This certainly points to the fact that Jesus Christ is the “Bread of Life” (John 6:35).
- The priests enjoyed fellowship with Yahweh in the Holy Place, and this fellowship was symbolized by the bread of presence. The bread was actually twelve loaves, symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel, and the priest ate this at the Lord’s table.
- Yet, consider our union with Christ. We now stand in the presence of the Father through Jesus Christ. Therefore, we, as God’s covenant people (symbolized by **twelve** loaves of bread), stand in His presence, face-to-face in Christ.

A.W. Pink continues, “The ‘showbread’ or twelve loaves on the table, also spoke of Christ (John 6:32). The word ‘showbread’ is literally ‘bread of faces,’ faces being put by a figure for *presence* = pointing to the Divine presence in which the bread stood; ‘showbread *before Me always*” (Exodus 25:30). The twelve loaves, like the twelve precious stones in the high priest’s breastplate, pictured the twelve tribes of Israel being represented before God. Thus, in type, it was the Lord Jesus identifying Himself with His covenant people.”

- Recall as well, John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was *with* (Greek, *pros*) God, and the Word was God.”
  - The word here translated “with” is the Greek Word “pros” meaning “toward” or “face-to-face”, “in the direct presence of...”
  - Therefore, because of our union with Christ, we too now are “in the presence, face-to-face with God the Father.”

## THE HOLY OF HOLIES (THE MOST HOLY PLACE)

- ❖ The author then turns his attention to the Holy of Holies, the Most Holy Place.
- ❖ Andrew Murray writes, “The veil was the symbol of separation between a holy God and sinful man: they cannot dwell together. The tabernacle thus expressed the union of two apparently conflicting truths. God called man to come and worship and serve Him, and yet he might not come too near: the veil kept him at a distance... Love calls the sinner near; righteousness keeps him back. The Holy One bids Israel build Him a house in which He will dwell, but forbids them entering His presence there.”

#### □ **The Golden Altar of Incense**

- The Golden Altar of Incense was made of acacia wood and covered in gold. It was eighteen inches square and three feet high. The burning coals from the bronze altar (in the courtyard) were placed in here.
- It is interesting that the author places the Altar of Incense here, as it was NOT in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle.
- However, one author explains:

“A better solution [to the question of why the author places the altar here] is to understand ‘having’ to mean that this altar of incense was so closely tied in its function to the Most Holy Place, so that it ‘belonged to’ the Most Holy Place, for as its incense burned, the smoke drifted into the Most Holy Place.” ESV Study Bible

#### □ **The Ark of the Covenant**

- The ark of the covenant was made of acacia wood and covered with gold. It was approximately three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches wide and two feet high.
- Some have even suggested that the acacia wood – which reportedly never rotted – was a type of Christ, referring to Christ’s humanity; whereas, the gold with which it was overlaid, represented the divinity of Jesus Christ.
- On the top of the ark of the covenant was the mercy seat, upon which were the cherubim of glory. This was the place, upon the mercy seat, where God said He would meet His people.

Exodus 25:22: <sup>“22</sup> There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

#### • **Stone Tablets [The Ten Commandments]**

- These were the tablets where God wrote His Ten Commandments. They were placed inside the ark.
- Written on these tablets were the terms and stipulations of the (Old) Covenant.

#### • **Golden Urn with Manna**

- According to the Old Testament, the Manna and Staff were placed in front of, not inside the ark of the Covenant.

- It is possible that in Solomon's Temple, however, these items were placed inside the ark for some reason (even though the Scriptures did not command the Israelites to place them there).
- Yet, the author's point is to demonstrate Christ's fulfillment of the manna.
- This was Christ's point in John 6.
- Jesus is the fulfillment of *manna*, for He is God's perfect provision for us, His covenant people.

- **Aaron's budding Staff**

- Finally, the author references Aaron's budding staff.
- In **Numbers 17**, Aaron's budding staff demonstrated that he was the one God had chosen to be the High Priest:

<sup>8</sup>On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds.

- **Yet, the great significance of Aaron's budding staff is that in the New Covenant, we are miraculously brought from spiritual death to spiritual life through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. Aaron's staff was a dead branch, yet, it produced life.**
- Therefore, our regeneration is no less miraculous than a dead branch budding and bringing forth ripe almonds.

<b>II. The New Covenant is Superior to the Old</b>
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- In **Verses 6-10**, the author of Hebrews writes:

<sup>6</sup>These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, <sup>7</sup>but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. <sup>8</sup>By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing <sup>9</sup>(which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, <sup>10</sup>but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

- **It is at this point that the author of Hebrews, once again, draws a clear comparison between the Old and New Covenants, demonstrating the superiority of the New to the Old.**
- Here, he speaks of the priests' duties in the "first section" and the "second section." There were actually three sections of the Tabernacle; however, for the purpose of comparison, the author of Hebrews speaks of only two.
  - The reason for this is that the author is comparing life in the Old Covenant to the Holy of Holies – a place of highly restricted access. However, life in the New Covenant is likened to the Holy Place – a place that all priests could enter. Therefore, **since we, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are all priests, we all have full access to God.**
- Notice as well, in Verse 9 where the author writes that the tabernacle "is symbolic for the present age."
  - The word translated "symbolic" is the Greek word (*parabole*), where we get the word parable.
  - In other words, the Tabernacle was a parable of Christ, pointing us to Him.

<b>a. God is Accessible</b>
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<p><b>Yet, another point is clear as one reads this passage, especially from Verse 1 through Verse 5. It is as though the writer is giving us a walking tour of the tabernacle, going from the outer courtyard right into the Most Holy Place. This type of "tour"; however, would have been impossible under the Old Covenant. Yet, now, Christ as given us this full access, not just to the Tabernacle, but to God Himself.</b></p>
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- In the Old Covenant, God was "accessible" only through the priests; however, in the New, God is fully accessible through the Person of Jesus Christ.
- Immediately after Jesus died, the Temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom (Mark 15:38).
  - However, consider that after God tore the veil in the Temple, the priests would have had to reestablish the very barrier that God Himself had removed. That, is, they eventually put another, man-made curtain up, separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (which would have lasted until A.D. 70).
  - Yet, consider how we even today attempt to erect boundaries to God, insisting upon good works in order to earn His favor.

- **Verses 7-8** state, “By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age).
  - The reference to the Holy Spirit, here, is not speaking of His work in the inspiration of the Old Testament biblical text. Rather, it is something slightly different.
  - Richard Phillips writes, “For one thing, there is no citation from the Old Testament found here. For another, the verb is not past tense but present tense. We see, therefore, a deliberate contrast. On the one hand, the old tabernacle *was showing* that the way 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.”
  - Furthermore, the work of the Holy Spirit, as we saw last week, in the New Covenant is an **internal working** within the life of the believer. **The Old Covenant law was written by God on stone tablets; whereas, in the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit writes the law on the hearts of believers.**

#### b. All Sins are Forgiven

- In Verses 6-7 the author describes the work of the priest that was required to atone for the *unintentional sins* of the people.
- However, under the New Covenant, Christ has removed **all** our sins: past, present, and future; intentional and unintentional. They are gone, and therefore, there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.
- Yet, it was not so in the Old Covenant.

#### c. The Conscience is Cleared

- Next, the author explicitly states, in Verse 9 that the rites of the Old Covenant “cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper.”
- Yet, once again, **by the blood of Jesus Christ, our consciences are made clear.**
- F.F. Bruce states, “The really effective barrier to a man or woman’s free access to God is an inward and not a material one; it exists in the conscience. It is only when the conscience is purified that one is set free to approach God without reservation and offer him acceptable service and worship.”
- This further demonstrates how the Old Covenant was **external, material, and temporary; whereas the New Covenant is internal, spiritual, and eternal.**

**d. It is Eternal**

- Finally, one of the primary reasons why God commanded that a tabernacle be built was to demonstrate that **it was temporary**.
- Yet, it was man, not God, who requested a more permanent structure...the Temple in Jerusalem.
- However, the temporary tent of the tabernacle was intended to demonstrate that it was **not a permanent institution; however, it would be replaced by a tabernacle that would be permanent – Jesus Christ**.

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- The author concludes this section by stating, in Verses 9-10: “According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.”
- In other words, the Old Covenant rituals **were all external impositions** lasting only “until the time of reformation.”

“[‘imposed until the time of reformation.’] “The word for ‘imposed’ is properly ‘lying on them,’ that is, as a burden. There was a weight in all these legal rites and ceremonies, which is called a yoke, and too heavy for the people to bear (acts 15:10). And if the imposition of them be principally intended, as we render the word ‘impose,’ it respects the bondage they were brought into by them. Men may have a weight lying on them, and yet not be brought into bondage thereby. But these things were so ‘imposed’ on them, as that they might feel their weight and groan under the burden of it. Of this bondage the apostle treats at large in the epistle to the Galatians. And it was impossible that those things should perfect a church-state, which in themselves were such a burden, and effective of such a bondage.”

John Owen

- Yet, the problem with the Old Covenant statutes was not that they were “too heavy”; but, rather, that the people did not see them as such. In fact, many people likely, just “went through the motions” and did not **feel the burden of the law**. The reason for this was because their hearts were not right. For the Old Covenant worshipper who sought to obey the Law of God, most certainly felt a truly overwhelming burden that would drive them to their knees. Yet, groups like the Pharisees, in their arrogance and rebellion, felt no such burden.
  - However, even though the burden of the Old Covenant was unbearable, God provided someone to carry this yoke: **Jesus the Messiah**.

- This is why Christ Himself, states, “<sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” **Matthew 11:28-30**

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- Not only this, but the word translated “reformation” here is the Greek word *diorthosis*, which means “to make straight, correct or to make right...reform.”
- Therefore, the Old Covenant rituals were an imposition on the people of God, until the time when Christ came and made every straight and right.

**Isaiah 40:1-5, 28-31**

- <sup>1</sup> Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.
- <sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her  
that her hard service has been completed,  
that her sin has been paid for,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.
- <sup>3</sup> A voice of one calling:  
"In the desert prepare  
the way for the LORD ;  
make straight in the wilderness  
a highway for our God.
- <sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be raised up,  
every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level,  
the rugged places a plain.
- <sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
and all mankind together will see it.  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."
- <sup>28</sup> Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.
- <sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.
- <sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;

<sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.