

## Hebrews 9:1-10 "We Have Come To Worship Him"

HEB 9:1-5 "Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. 2 A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, 4 which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. 5 Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. (Traditionally the mercy seat) But we cannot discuss these things in detail now."

Our writer has been going over the importance of Jesus being our High Priest and how He is infinitely greater than the priesthods of Aaron of Israel and Melchizedek. For this reason He alone is to be sought as the only One who can satisfy the demands of the Father so that He is our Priest and sacrifice for the penalty of our sins.

But, in light of how Jesus is a better Priest, our writer also has shown how the covenant, which God promised in Jesus, was a better covenant, because it was the fulfillment of the promises made under the first covenant which used shadows and copies in a way to show how the true Messiah would personally come into this earth.

This is why we read in HEB 8:13 "By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear."

The Old covenant is out, Jesus Christ is in, because the New Covenant, in His blood, has eternal value, whereas the Old covenant and its practices were temporary in nature by God's design.

HEB 9:1 "Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary."

It's not as though the first covenant was useless. In fact it played a vital role in the lives of the people of Israel. When God called Israel out of Egypt He called them out for a specific reason. That reason was to leave behind the bondage of Egypt and to move forward to worship God without that bondage.

Moses wasn't taking the nation out for a vacation or simply to change their location.

EXO 5:1-3 "Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, *so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.*'" 2 Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go." 3 Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert *to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God*, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword."

Moses was not asking Pharaoh for a 40 year pass to leave Egypt. He asked Pharaoh for three days in the desert. But it was God who called them out for a specific reason. That reason was to worship Him. God calls His people out to be a worshipping people. And that never changed. Even in our text we see that when the commands were given to Israel, through Moses, God set the regulations to worship Him.

Even today, many Christians don't understand why they've been called out by God. Some think it's simply to be forgiven of our sins, others think it's to have their lives changed, while others think it's so that we might be given a new lease on life with new friends, who happen to be Christians.

As important as all of these things are, they are not the primary reason we have been called out by God. The primary reason we have been called out is to worship our God in both word and deed. God does everything with a purpose in mind.

When the wise men from the East traveled such a long distance to Jerusalem to find the King of the Jews, what was the reason they had? They asked in MAT 2:2 ...."Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When the Samaritan woman at the well was confronted by Jesus, she told the Lord that she looked forward to the day when the Messiah would come. Jesus told her that when the Messiah came people would then be able to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

JOH 4:23-24 "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they

are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. 24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Worship is the issue. It always has been the issue, and it always will be. But worship is not just what we do on a Sunday morning or Wednesday or Thursday evening. Worship is not necessarily an event. Worship is meant to encompass all of life. Worship is an attitude of the heart, which desires to please the object of our worship.

For the world worship is also very important. They may not always recognize that they are in the act of worship, but if worship has more to do with devotion to what is most important in life, then you will find that their worship is quite evident.

Their devotion may be passionate, but unless it is directed to the one true God who set the standard for how worship of Him is to take place, then they've set the standard and have erected their own altar upon which they bring sacrifices of their own making.

The world's devotion is directed to self, to material things, to other people and whatever else is deemed to be important in life which would cause them to place these things as the most important reason for living.

Paul touches on this in his letter to the Romans when explaining how sinful and rebellious men chose not to worship God. Instead, they replaced God with worldly things and gave their lives to these things so that they became the center of their lives.

ROM 1:25 "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised. Amen."

As believers in Christ, God calls you and me to be true worshippers in spirit and in truth. But to do this we must understand that that involves every aspect of our lives. When we understand what worship is we will then begin to place all of life in His hands as we trust Him and follow Him.

And that essentially is what worship of the One true God is. If worship is being passionately devoted to something or someone, with the express purpose of elevating that one or thing to the highest degree, then it stands to reason that we as believers should take every breath we have and give God glory as He is the focus of our lives, as we rely on Him and give thanks to Him and follow Him and depend on Him for everything.

That's not limited to a Sunday morning event, as important as this is. It encompasses every moment we live in this world. This is why Paul says in ROM 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship..."

HEB 12:28 "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,..."

It begs the question; are we worshipping God with our lives at work, when we're out and about shopping, when we're alone at home or with friends? Is God the passion of our lives when it comes to the material things He's provided for us? Are we delighting in our salvation as we look to Him by desiring to give it away; sharing the gospel and living in the light of that salvation to where people see that we are a worshipping people?

This is what God desires from His people. He doesn't want us to simply fit Him into our busy schedules. He wants our busy schedules to glorify Him as the world sees that we belong to Him by faith. It's not as though God is looking for us to give Him an hour or two on Sunday mornings, He wants us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week until He takes us home.

That doesn't mean He wants us to neglect life as He has placed us in this world to live and work and take care of responsibilities, but He doesn't want those things to be the focus of our devotion to where He takes a back seat, waiting for us to find the time for Him.

He wants to be in the center of our families, He wants to be the center of our work, He wants to be the center of our lives. And when we begin to understand and appreciate His love for us then our priorities will begin to come into line, and He will take the proper place He wants in our lives, and we then begin to see what it means "to offer [our] bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is [our] spiritual act of worship..."

And so, what our writer is pointing out here, in the first five verses of chapter nine, is that God established the pattern for Israel as to how He wanted to be worshipped, which was by faith demonstrated through obedience; not unlike how He has established the means for worshipping Him today which is only through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as we follow Him.

To worship Him according to our own devices is to place ourselves above Him. And God tells us that we must worship Him alone and that we should have no other gods before Him.

But our worship of God through Jesus Christ is so much more rich than under the Old Covenant. And this is our writer's point. He explains the means by which God wanted to be worshipped under the Old Covenant.

HEB 9:2-5 "A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, 4 which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. 5 Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover (mercy seat). But we cannot discuss these things in detail now."

Our writer is describing the place where God met with His people. And yet there were restrictions in this meeting. It was restricted to an earthly sanctuary. There was a holy place and there was a place called the holy of holies.

And there was a veil separating these two compartments. He mentions some of the articles which were inside of these compartments which we won't deal with in detail this morning, but suffice it to say God was the One who prescribed these things for a reason, all of which was to point to His heavenly sanctuary and the means for access which is through His Son.

In fact, even our writer doesn't want to go into detail at this time as he says in Heb.9:5 "Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. (Traditionally the mercy seat) But we cannot discuss these things in detail now."

He wasn't trying to go into an exposition of why God chose to use the different articles He did in the tabernacle, but rather, to establish that God wanted Himself to be the focal point in their lives.

There are some things we can learn from this however, without getting into all of the specifics of worship in the sanctuary God established. This sanctuary, which our writer speaks of, is obviously the tent of meeting used in the wilderness journey of Israel in the desert.

This was meant to show the temporal nature of this old covenant. F.F. Bruce points out: "the sanctuary of the old covenant, in its very furnishings and sacrificial arrangements, proclaimed its own temporary character;..."

It wasn't meant to be the eternal seat of God's throne. In fact, there is a great deal of irony in this arrangement which was always meant to show God's people the character of this first covenant.

Andrew Murray in his commentary on Hebrews, when discussing the tent of meeting and the two compartments, the holy place and the most holy place says, "In the Most Holy (Place) God dwelt, but man might not enter. In the Holy Place man might enter to serve God, but God dwelt not there. 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 entrance of the High Priest once a year for a few moments was a faint foreshadowing that the time would come when access to the Holiest would be given. In the fullness of time righteousness and love would be revealed in their perfect harmony in Him (Christ), in whom those types and shadows would find their fulfillment."

Our writer of Hebrews brings this out in the next few verses.

HEB 9:6-7 "When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. (The Holy Place) 7 But only the high priest entered the inner room (The Most Holy Place), and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance."

Up to this point our writer has been talking about the priesthood, about the old and the new covenants, about the temporal compared to the eternal. All of what precedes speaks of the ministry of Jesus Christ as it pertains to our salvation. But here in our text is the first time the blood is mentioned in a way to describe the atonement for sin.

It was always assumed, but now our writer wants to bring the importance of blood into the picture of our salvation. Verse 7 mentions how the priest was allowed by God to come into His presence. But he was not allowed to come into His presence without the shedding of the blood of an innocent victim.

The High Priest had to have blood shed for himself before he could bring the blood before God on behalf of the nation of Israel. This spoke of the inadequacy of the Levitical priesthood. You see they too, like the rest of Israel, were sinners in need of a Savior.

Their sins had to be covered just like everyone else's. By the way, when Scripture speaks of the shedding of blood it's assumed that a death takes place to get that blood. I was once told by a former seminary student who had evidently thought long and hard about this issue of the shedding of blood, who told me that theoretically, Christ needed only to prick His finger and that one drop of His blood was sufficient to atone for the sins of the world.

This sounds good in theory, but it is counter to everything God has taught in His word. Remember, back in the garden, God told Adam and Eve that if they rebelled they would surely die. That was the penalty for rebellion against God.

Paul tells us the wages of sin is death. That is the just penalty God established for sin. And so to suggest that the Son of God, who became a man specifically to take that penalty for men, only had to prick His finger to shed some blood for us misses the point of what atonement is all about. Only the death of a perfectly innocent man could satisfy God's judgment for all men. And only Jesus Christ is that perfect, sinless sacrifice which could redeem us. (Some seminary students think too hard.)

So, what is the point of our writer's telling us about this sacrificial system established by God for Israel? Well, he gives us the answer in the next few verses.

HEB 9:8-10 "The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. 9 This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. 10 They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings -external regulations applying until the time of the new order."

So, what do we gather from this? Notice first of all that it is the Holy Spirit who illumines the meaning of the Old Covenant sacrificial system. The Holy Spirit of God is the One who teaches us things we can learn from the Old covenant.

This is one reason we study the O.T. It was the Holy Spirit who inspired all of Scripture, both O.T. and N.T. And it only makes sense that it is the Holy Spirit who gives us insight into His word, both Old and New Testament.

There are those who profess to be Christians who actually deny the Old Testament as a present active and inspired word for the church today. It's true that we don't live according to the Old Testament as it relates to the means of our salvation. Christ has fulfilled that. But to suggest that we can't grow in our faith or that the O.T. is irrelevant today is to take away from the word of God.

The apostle John had some things to say about this in the book of Revelation. And though some would say the warning applied only to the Revelation he received from Christ, it must be pointed out that the same Holy Spirit who inspired that book also inspired all of the O.T.

And so we must conclude that we have no business taking anything away which the Spirit of God has given for our instruction and edification. I can't imagine the Psalms, for example, being something N.T. believers should exclude from their daily lives, or Proverbs, or any other O.T. book. God speaks to us in it all.

We are a N.T. church, but the Holy Spirit has spoken and continues to speak through everything He has given us in the entire word of God. As it has been pointed out by so many, the O.T. is the New Testament concealed, while the N.T. is the Old Testament revealed.

One other point about the Holy Spirit which is worth noting. The designation Holy carries with it the idea that God's character is Holy and nothing short of perfection can dwell with Him. This is another reason the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle was only allowed to be entered into once a year for a short time. It was not meant to be a permanent dwelling place where man tabernacled with God.

Andrew Murray points out: "The Holy Spirit specially bears the epithet Holy, because He is the bearer of divine holiness to impart

it to man -- He is the Spirit of holiness. It will appear no more than natural that there should be a close connection between the sanctuary as the revelation of God's holiness, and the Holy Spirit as the revealer. This is what we are taught here: the whole construction of the tabernacle and the appointment of the high priest's entrance once a year was so ordered by the Holy Spirit as to be a great object-lesson in which the truth was taught, so long as the veil hung there, the way into the Holiest was not yet open."

As long as the veil is separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies men would know that they do not have unimpeded access to the presence of the Lord. This is what is meant by HEB 9:8 "The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing."

Dr. Donald Guthrie puts it this way: "The words "as long as the first tabernacle was still standing" seem to mean 'as long as approach is dependent on Levitical-type ceremonies which barred all but the high priest from access to the presence of God, and even him for all but one day a year. It is not without significance that the words 'is still standing' could be more literally translated 'has standing', ie., a place or status. Under the New Covenant this status ceases."

HEB 9:9 "This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper."

The Jew in Israel who depended on access to God through the Levitical priesthood might find some solace in knowing that God was there for them. But with all of the restrictions and commandments which were placed upon them day in and day out, they felt the weight of the burden and concluded that their sin was still something which had to be dealt with. Each year this process was repeated on the Day of Atonement.

Their consciences were not cleared of their guilt. They knew they stood guilty because the law reminded them each day that they were not perfect. And yet they always had the hope, knowing that God made provision for their sin which they must accept by faith.

This is the beauty of the New Covenant. Christ is that hope and the fulfillment of what was shown in the sacrificial system. This is why our writer told us in HEB 7:26-27 "Such a high priest meets our need - one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners,

exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself."

This is why, in Christ, our consciences are clear because our sin has been dealt with once and for all. This doesn't mean our consciences aren't pricked when we grieve the Holy Spirit, when we sin against God, but it does mean that our sin is forgiven and we know that our God will never forsake us.

This is what John meant when he wrote in 1JO 2:1-2 "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

When it came to the Old Covenant people had to continually be reminded that a day would come when the veil would be torn down when Christ came to usher in the New Covenant of His blood.

HEB 9:10 "They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings -external regulations applying until the time of the new order."

The New order is here. On the day Christ died for the penalty of our sin that curtain, which separated us from God because of sin, which symbolically hung in the tabernacle, was torn in two from top to bottom. There is no more veil to keep us from entering into the presence of God and having unhindered fellowship with Him.

However, I would say that for those who do not place their faith in Christ a veil remains which they place between themselves and God. Sin does separate, but Christ has made the way to reestablish fellowship based on life eternal which came through the death and resurrection of our Great God and Savior.

In Christ we have been born from above, we are new creatures in Christ, because we have been partakers of a heavenly calling and given life in Him. We belong to a better covenant with an infinitely better High Priest. May our consciences bear witness to this new life as we live in it and understand that in this new life we have the ability to truly worship God in Spirit and in truth.

May we say with the wise men seeking the King of the Jews, "We have come to worship Him." May we do so in the power and the

love of the Spirit who enables us to be a worshipping people who demonstrate to the world that we belong to Him and we serve a God who has first loved us.

The message is Christ and Him crucified for our sins, risen from the dead, giving us the victory. Let's live in that victory and give Him the glory.