

THE STAND

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE HEBREWS CHAPTER 9



Chapter 9 Commentary

As humans, many of us find comfort and get a sense of stability through established routines and rituals in our lives. We value our freedom, but we also enjoy some level of predictability. Even if change offers something better, many times we are hesitant to leave the predictable for something better. The new covenant through Jesus Christ offered something much better than what these former Jews were accustomed to, but it also brought change.

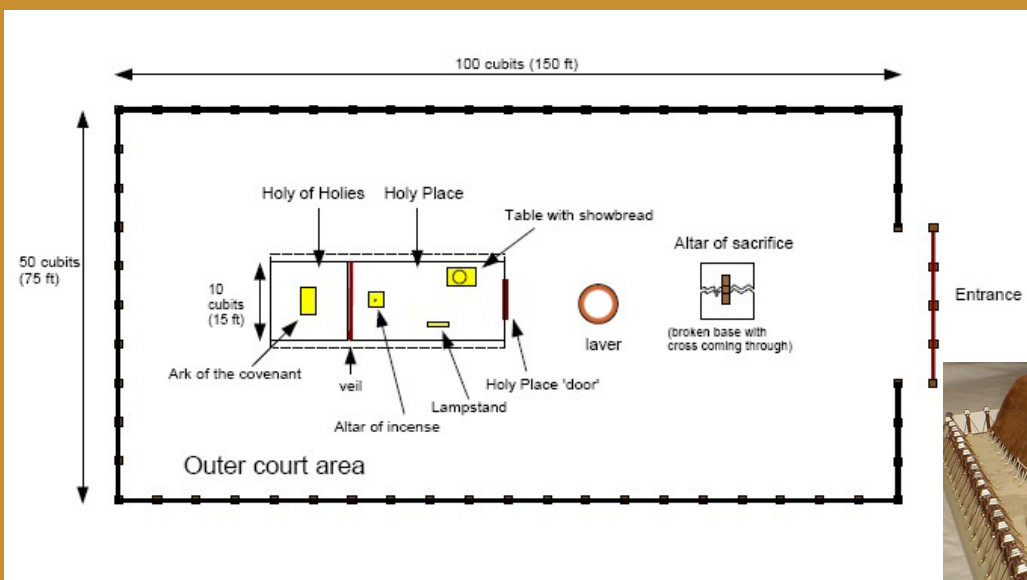
The original audience had spent their whole lives under the old covenant, and now the writer is claiming there is something better. We have already seen that some of these men and women were hesitant to leave their predictable systems to fully embrace Christ. The writer has made the case that Christ offers a better priesthood, and that He has fulfilled the Law. The writer now intends to explain that there is a new covenant and new promises available to God's people. He even intends to explain how the very elements of their former ways of worship were all leading up to Jesus Christ and this new covenant.

Unlike our worship today, worship of God in the Old Testament was a very rigid ritual that involved a number of rules and regulations. When Moses commissioned the Tabernacle, God gave him specific instructions on creating pieces of furniture and other elements that would be used in worship. Each of the items placed in the Tabernacle would serve a specific purpose in the Israelite worship ceremonies. In fact, the Tabernacle itself was designed to accommodate the different worship rituals that God would give the priests.

One of the most significant features of the Tabernacle (and later the Temple) were the regulations on the two rooms. These rooms were called the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The only people allowed in the Tabernacle or Temple itself were of the tribe of Levi. The Levites were the tribe of priests and the people chosen to care for the Tabernacle. Even then, not all the Levites could enter into the Tabernacle, only the priests. This meant that the people were never actually allowed to enter into the facility where God was primarily worshipped. They could enter into the courtyards to bring their sacrifices, but they were never allowed into the Holy Place or the Most Holy Place. They were separated from God.



The Earthly Tabernacle According to Exodus



Not only were the people separated from God, but only the High Priest was able to enter the Most Holy Place where the presence of God dwelt. Only one time per year did one man get to enter into this Most Holy Place and only with a blood sacrifice for himself and the people of Israel. As the writer of Hebrews reminds his audience of these familiar rituals, he begins to explain why God had chosen to create things in this manner.

A regular Jewish person could not have imagined having access to the Most Holy Place; this is precisely why God chose to make it so exclusive. The writer explains in verses 8-9 that even the correct sacrifices could not provide a commoner access into the Most Holy Place. This lack of access continually illustrated to the people that their sacrifices of bulls and goats were insufficient to gain direct access to God. The sacrifices and ceremonial rituals simply provided an outward covering for their sin. It was still insufficient.

Even though the old covenant was insufficient to bring salvation, it served the purpose God had intended. First, it continually reminded people that a covenant required a sacrifice, or blood. The word "covenant" is similar to our English term "legal will." Just like a will does not go into effect until the person's death, a covenant did not go into effect until something died and blood was shed. Each time the people and the priest brought sacrifices to God they were reminded that God's promises required a blood sacrifice. We now see that this clearly foreshadowed Christ giving His own life as a sacrifice for us.

Secondly, the old covenant illustrated to the people that nothing they did on their own could give them access to God. No doubt, God was pleased when the people followed the rituals and offered their sacrifices as He instructed, but these efforts never earned them the right to enter into the Most Holy Place where God dwelt. The Tabernacle was created to foreshadow Christ. According to the regulations of this Tabernacle, there was only one gate into the Tabernacle, and subsequently only one way into the Holy of Holies. This foreshadowed Christ as the only way into the very presence of God. The Tabernacle and old covenants served their purpose, they pointed out the need for something better. They pointed to Christ.

The writer says that the new covenant is now active and Christ is the mediator of this new covenant. Just like there was an earthly tabernacle, there is also a heavenly tabernacle, one not made by human hands but established by God. Just like the earthly tabernacle, a blood sacrifice must be offered to enter into the Most Holy Place. But instead of the slaughter of bulls and goats, Christ himself died and offered the blood sacrifice needed in the new covenant. He is now the mediator of this covenant and is able to set everyone free from the sins that, under the old covenant, had separated them from God.

We see that the earthly tabernacle and its furnishings are simply a copy of the True Tabernacle in Heaven. The True Tabernacle in Heaven is better than the earthly because we have access into the Most Holy Place through Jesus Christ. Unlike the earthly tabernacle, we are no longer separated from God. Christ's sacrifice and blood has removed the veil to the Most Holy Place for eternity. No longer do we need to bring a blood sacrifice, because Christ's blood is on the mercy seat and covers our sins forever.



Personal Study Questions

The purpose of these study questions is to help you get into God's Word. We hope that through a personal encounter with God's Word, He will reveal His Truth and allow you to understand His story first hand.

1. What things did the Tabernacle foreshadow?

2. Where was the presence of God in the Tabernacle?

3. If the new sanctuary is like the old, what did Christ do when He entered the new sanctuary for the first time?

4. What must happen for a covenant to become active? What made the old and new covenants active?

5. Why is the place Christ entered better than the earthly version?

6. How will Christ handle sin when He returns?

