

Study #9: The Temple Parable

In commenting on this passage, Tom Wright compares the Temple to the temporary road system Boston endured for years while preparing for the Big Dig. It was an important and carefully built-out system, but it wasn't meant to go on forever. It prepared for something better. Once the tunnels under Boston Harbor opened, there was no need for it any more.

Read Hebrews 9:1-10

1. This passage gives considerable detail about the tabernacle, claiming the tabernacle as a visual parable of intimacy with God. Who could go into the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place?
2. To understand what was so important about the Most Holy Place, read Exodus 25:17-22; Leviticus 16:2; and Numbers 7:89. Regarding the atonement cover read Leviticus 17:14. What does the Most Holy Place represent?
3. If only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place, what does this say about the inadequacies of the Old System?
4. *Read Hebrews 9:11-15*
5. Where does Christ the new High Priest go with his sacrificial offering? What is the sacrificial offering? What is its effect?
6. It's possible that we are so familiar with the message that we overlook the shocker: human sacrifice is necessary. And the High Priest is the sacrifice. What does this say to you?
7. What is "the promised eternal inheritance?" (9:15)
8. *Read Hebrews 9:16-28*
9. Verse 16 plays on the commonality of "covenant" and "will," which are the same word in Greek. Who are the beneficiaries of the will/covenant in the Old System, and how do they benefit? Who benefits in the New System, and how?
10. We've seen that the New Covenant means that God's law is written on our hearts. How does that follow from Jesus' going into the real Most Holy Place with a sacrifice for sins?
11. How does Jesus appear "for us?" (9:24) See 7:25; 1 John 2:1.
12. What is the impact of the fact that Jesus does his sacrifice just once? How does this impact the life of the Jewish Christians who first read this letter?
13. What does Hebrews mean by "the end of the ages?" (verse 26)
14. If Jesus has forgiven sins once and for all, what are we waiting for? (verse 28)

Hebrews 9:1-10 New International Version

Worship in the Earthly Tabernacle

1 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 and the table with its 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. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

6 When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. 7 But only the high priest entered the inner room, 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. 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 functioning. 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.

Hebrews 9:11-15 New International Version

The Blood of Christ

11 But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here,^[a] he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining^[b] eternal redemption. 13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death,^[c] so that we may serve the living God!

15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Footnotes

Hebrews 9:11 Some early manuscripts are to come

Hebrews 9:12 Or blood, having obtained

Hebrews 9:14 Or from useless rituals

Hebrews 9:16-28 New International Version

16 In the case of a will,^[a] it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, 17 because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. 18 This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. 19 When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. 20 He said, “This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.”^[b] 21 In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. 22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

23 It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence. 25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Footnotes

Hebrews 9:16 Same Greek word as covenant; also in verse 17

Hebrews 9:20 Exodus 24:8

Hebrews 7:25 New International Version

25 Therefore he is able to save completely^[a] those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

1 John 2:1 New International Version

2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.