



“Approaching God On His Terms” (Hebrews 9)

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vv.1-2 The lampstand is also called the menorah. The lamps of the menorah were lit daily from fresh, consecrated olive oil and burned from evening until morning, according to Exodus 27:21. In other words, the light was never to go out. The lampstand was the only source of light for the Holy Place. The lampstand had seven branches (See Isaiah 11:1-2). The consecrated bread was called the “bread of the Presence.” There were twelve loaves, and they were arranged on the table in rows of six each, one loaf for each tribe of Israel. Fresh loaves replaced the old ones every Sabbath.

- Man needs supernatural light in order to know how to approach God (see John 1:3-5; 8:12; 12:35; II Cor.4:6; Col.1:12; I Peter 2:9).
- Man needs fresh daily bread for spiritual sustenance and direction (Deut. 8:4; Psalm 119:105).

vv.3-4 Five posts made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold held up this curtain, with bronze bases that stabilized each one (Ex.26:36-37). The curtain was made of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and finely twisted linen. Cherubim were embroidered on the curtain. Many believe the veils represent different parts of heaven. In II Cor.12:2, Paul the apostle said he was caught up to the “third heaven.”

The phrase “which had the golden altar of incense” is not used to describe the physical location of the altar, but rather the close connection between the two. There was a strong ritual association between the altar and the priestly duties inside the Most Holy Place. Each year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would take some of the incense from this altar into the Most Holy Place.

The golden altar of incense was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. Aaron was to burn incense on this altar every morning and every evening at twilight (Ex.30:1-10). See Rev.5:8; 8:3-4.

The Ark of the Covenant was the most important item in the tabernacle because it represented the presence of God. The ark was overlaid with gold both inside and out. The cover for the ark was made of pure gold and had a gold cherub on each end, the two facing each other, with their wings spread upward (Ex.25:10-22). This cover is also called “the Mercy Seat.” The golden jar of manna was kept as a memorial for future generations, reminding them of God’s supernatural provision from heaven as they wandered through the wilderness. Jesus said that He is the true

bread that came down from heaven (John 6:32-35), so there's no question what the manna speaks of. Aaron's staff that budded was God confirming his choice of the priesthood (See Numbers 17:1-11, noting context of Numbers 16). That priesthood is confirmed by the sign of life from death. The stone tablets of the covenant are, of course, the Ten Commandments (See Ex.20:3-17).

v.5 The cherubim of the glory were above the ark. These represent the angelic creatures seen by Ezekiel (see Ezekiel chapter one). John also saw these creatures in the vision of the book of Revelation (See Rev.4). See also Psalm 80:1; 99:1.

Fascinating stuff, but the writer says "we cannot discuss these things in detail now. What? I want to know the details, and what the details mean! With that said, I read tons of stuff the last couple of days that in my opinion went far beyond the typology God intended for these things. Here, the writer ignores more detail, because the Holy Spirit has a point to make, and he moves the pen of the writer on toward that point.

vv.6-7 The priests had daily responsibilities in the outer room. They kept the lamps burning, they put in fresh bread every week, they burned incense, etc. etc. But only once per year did anyone enter the Most Holy Place (third heaven), and then only the high priest could. On the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the high priest offered an all for one, one for all sacrifice that covered any sin committed over the past year that had not been covered by all the other sacrifices that had been offered. In other words, to cover sin that you didn't even realize you had committed ("in ignorance").

v.8 Here's the point – ***nothing within the regulations of that OT system opened the way for man to enter the Most Holy Place (the place where God's throne is, the third heaven).***

v.9 The word for illustration is "parabole," from which we get "parable," an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Two chapters in the Bible cover creation, while fifty are devoted specifically to the Tabernacle.

v.10 We looked at this in some detail this past weekend when we covered Hebrews 8.

vv.11-15 ***Jesus Christ is the sole mediator of a new covenant by which man may be completely forgiven, have his conscience completely clear regarding his sin and guilt, enter the Most Holy Place and fellowship with God, and receive the promised eternal inheritance.*** (Eph.1:18; Rom.8:17; I Cor.3:21-22; everlasting life, new body, perfect world!)

vv.16-26 ***Christ's sacrifice was offered once for all, and therefore will never be repeated, nor any other sacrifice added to it.***

- Ludwig Ott is a leading theologian for the Catholic church. He wrote a book a few years ago on Catholic doctrine. In this book he states, "The holy mass is a true and proper sacrifice... It is physical and propitiatory, removing sins and conferring the grace of repentance." That means the mass is the actual physical propitiatory sin-removing sacrifice of Christ, which means that at every Mass, Jesus is offered as a sacrifice again. If you are Catholic, you really ought to study your church's doctrine and see if it matches up with Scripture.

vv.27-28 I took a day off Friday, so I studied Wednesday for this weekend. Then Thursday morning I got up early to go over my notes from the day before, and God took me in a totally different direction than I was headed. My intention was to focus the remainder of my time today on v.28. We may do that next weekend. But here's what the Lord said to me Thursday morning from this chapter.

The terms of God's covenants are non-negotiable. God is a holy God, and can only be approached successfully on His terms.

Hebrews 8:1 said that the first covenant had "regulations" for worship. The word literally means "established judicial decisions." In other words, this is the regulation, and it's not up for negotiation with God. He's made His decision, now man must decide if he will respond in faith, ignore, or outright rebel.

Let's take just a few moments to look at some biblical examples, both of ignorance, and outright rebellion.

- Lev.10:1-3; Num.16:8-10, 16-19, 23, 31-35, 40b; II Chron.26:16-20
- II Samuel 6:1-13; I Chron.15:13
- See Isa. 6:1-7

God's non-negotiable terms are for our sake.

- "The details of the Old Covenant worship experiences related to the tabernacle must seem tedious and monotonous to most modern readers. Yet, we should not miss the key points of the Christian faith to which they speak. First, God is a holy God from whom people are separated because of sin. The "sacred barrier" of the Holy Place, the necessity of sacrifices, and the unapproachable nature of the Most Holy Place all speak to humanity's foundational problem in relation to God. Yet...God's initiative in the construction of the tabernacle whispers his desire for more in relation to us. He wants to be approached; he wants to relate to his people. While the existence of the Holy Place shows that the way into God's presence for his people had not yet been revealed, the sacrifices and high priesthood demonstrate God's desire that sin not have the final word. The sacrifice and high priesthood of Jesus gave the ultimate answer to the problem and to God's desire that we come near him." (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary, p.55).
- God wanted to make it absolutely clear that, if we seek to approach Him in a way that violates His "established judicial decision," we will suffer the just consequences of our actions.

CONCLUSION

- Jesus Christ is the only sufficient mediator between God and man (I Tim.2:5). We must not ignore this, or treat the truth of it lightly.
- See Hebrews 2:1-4; 10:26-31.