

The Old Served The People Well

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Preacher: Pastor Ken

[0 : 00] So it was pretty exciting, the worship set this morning, especially where we ended with the Holy of Holies. I never really know how much preparation that Josh puts into it.

Like if he looks ahead at what verses of Scripture, you can put your hand on it, you don't need to let everyone know you don't. But if he looks ahead at Scripture or whatnot, or if God just works it out, I think both probably come in play there.

Because we're going to be talking about the Holy of Holies a little bit today. We're going to be talking about parts of the Old Covenant system, and the different parts of it, and how it relates to Jesus.

I find this to be a fascinating study, but I didn't want to get too bogged down into the details with you. So I think I'm going to be fair to the text and to what's there, and I'm going to be fair to you as well, not just getting too deep, too quick, because there's just a lot that we can take from this.

So going through the book of Hebrews, it's been quite a journey in theological depth at times. The writer of Hebrews has made many comparisons. He's compared the prophets, the angels, Joshua, and Aaron in the priesthood to Christ, always pointing out and proving Christ's superiority.

[1 : 27] But if you've noticed, he never depreciates the people or the things that he compares with Christ or with Christ's work. In fact, he exalts them.

He exalts the prophets and the angels and Aaron and Moses and the Old Covenant. And he does not compare Christ to people or things that are meaningless or worthless, but to ones that were God-ordained and faithful and purposeful.

He does not try to build Christ up by running others down. Actually, he magnifies them. He brings these things up to light, Aaron and Moses and the Old Covenant and such, and in magnifying them, he exalts Christ all the more.

And the more the other things and people are legitimately magnified, the more Jesus is magnified, the more superior he is shown to be. And last week, we wrapped up Hebrews 8.

But the final verse of chapter 8 is the introduction to the content of chapter 9. Hebrews 8.13, and speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete.

[2 : 39] And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. The writer of Hebrews could not have known how literally the truth would be fulfilled within a few years of his writing.

See, we're going to get into chapter 9. We're going to see what he meant by things becoming obsolete and vanishing away. But within a few years of Hebrews actually being written, the Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem.

And he destroyed the temple. And without the temple, there was no altar. There was no holy of holies. There could, therefore, be no sacrifices and no ministering priesthood.

And without a priesthood and its sacrifices, there could be no old covenant. Thus, it would be finished. But I want to bring it back to the writer's intent.

I want to dive deeper into chapter 9 and see what they're intending to convey to their Jewish readership with that verse at the end of chapter 8 when he speaks of the old becoming obsolete and vanishing away.

[3 : 40] Father, thank you for this time. Guide us, I pray. Let's look at, start at verse 1.

It's a good place to start. Hebrews 9.1. Now, even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness.

So, as we consider the old being obsolete, I entitled this sermon, The Old Served the People Well.

Because, as I mentioned, the writer of Hebrews, by no means does he run things down in order to magnify Christ, but he actually points to these things as being good and being great things that the people had and that Jesus is just far more superior than that.

And one of the things is the system of worship that they had in coming to God and what God had given them in order to approach him. And so, in verses 1 through 5, we see the usefulness of the old.

[4 : 47] And we see that it had regulations for worship and it had an earthly place of holiness. He's reminding his readers that the old covenant had particular regulations concerning worship.

That God, through Moses, prescribed specific covenantal duties in a precise place in which to perform them. And I opted to go with the picture of the tabernacle rather than the temple that's really just the nuance of its permanency.

The temple didn't move. The tabernacle did move. But the inside looked very much the same. So, I'll give you the tabernacle because this is what was given to Moses.

And this is what was established at the time of the old covenant and what the people would have had and understood for hundreds of years before the temple was established.

So, unlike their pagan neighbors, the Israelites were not to worship God however they wanted. The one true and living God specifically told Israel how and where to worship him.

[5 : 57] His regulations for worship were expressly authorized by his word and a failure to abide by them led to grave consequences. I want to just turn your attention real quick to Leviticus 10 verses 1 and 2.

You don't have to turn there in your Bibles if you don't want to. But in Leviticus 10 verses 1 and 2 we see a failure on the part of the priesthood in keeping God's expressed regulations for worship.

And I'll just say this. It was not long after he had given them. And now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took this censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them.

And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them and they died before the Lord. So there were grave consequences for not following through with what God expected of his people.

And Nadab and Abihu being priests serving before God, they knew better. It wasn't long before they did this that they were given the instructions in the first place. And they messed it up.

[7 : 11] And God judged them accordingly. Thankfully, that's not the case here and now. At least I don't expect to have something happen to me up here for anything I may mess up on.

And I've done plenty of that, I'm sure. Let's continue in verses 2 through 5 in Hebrews 9. For a tent was prepared. The first section in which were the lampstand, the table, and the bread of the presence.

It is called the holy place. Behind the second curtain was a second section called the most holy place. 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. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.

Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. So this is the tabernacle that was given to Moses.

[8 : 18] The design that was given to Moses. This is also what it looks like in heaven where Jesus serves. If you remember that from a few weeks back.

We were talking about Jesus serving a tabernacle that was there. That the Lord had constructed. And that what Moses was given. Or what Moses has and constructed for the Israelites. Was a shadow of what already existed.

So this is the tabernacle. Now the author of Hebrews goes in to talk about this tent. That was there. In which the holy place. And the holy of holies lies.

I'm sorry for all the words. I couldn't find one that didn't have all the words on it. So this first section here. And of course I don't have my little pointy thing. So I'll just use the pointy thing God gave me.

So the first part here is the holy of holies. The second smaller area where it says ark there. Or I'm sorry. That's the holy of holies. This is the holy place. Holy place. Holy of holies.

[9 : 16] And the outer veil is how you start entering into this tent. There we go. You knew this. But now we're all on the same page. So the thing about this is that this was all divinely appointed.

It was given by God. The form of the rooms. The style of the furniture. Everything was ordained of God. And not merely for ornament. But for purposes of instruction. I want to talk to you about a few of these pieces.

The ones that were mentioned here in the passage. Again, we can go deep on this. But I'm just going to go middle deep. So the lampstand.

The menorah. It was tended by Aaron and his sons. So that its light never went out. The lampstand was to give forth light day and night.

And it was the only source of light in the holy place. And so they needed that light. Because if they didn't have that light. Oh boy. You can't see anything in the dark tent that they had.

[10 : 20] Because that covering on that. That's several layers deep. You know. And so it's probably warm in there with that fire going. So that was the point of the lampstand.

Was to provide the light in the holy place. We're going to come back to all these. I'm just giving you the rundown on it. Next you've got the table of show bread.

Or the table of the bread of the presence. As it's mentioned in Hebrews 9. So the bread of the presence was special bread. That was always present on the table in the tabernacle.

According to Leviticus 24 verses 8 and 9. The bread was made of fine flour. It was baked in 12 loaves. It was arranged in two piles of six loaves each.

On a table of pure gold. It was covered with frankincense. And it was served as a memorial food offering to the Lord. The bread could only be eaten by Aaron and his sons.

[11 : 17] In a holy place. And was set out every Sabbath day. So it was supposed to only be eaten by Aaron and his sons. But uh oh. Who else ate it?

In the Old Testament. David. Remember he and his men got in there. Aaron ate some bread that they weren't supposed to eat. Well God didn't strike him dead for it.

But anyway. Just put that out there. The golden altar of incense. Aaron was instructed to burn incense. On the altar each morning.

And at twilight every day. As a regular offering to the Lord. In scripture. Incense is often associated with prayer. We see in Psalm 141.

That David prayed. May my prayer be set before you. Like incense. In Revelation 5 and 8. In his vision of heaven. John saw the elders around the throne.

[12 : 18] Were holding golden bowls. Full of incense. Which are the prayers of God's people. As Zechariah the priest. Was offering incense in the temple.

In Luke 1.10. All the assembled worshipers. Were praying outside. So thus the altar of incense. Can be seen as a symbol. Of the prayers of God's people.

Being offered up to him. Now you're going to the Holy of Holies. And you've got the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant.

Was a symbol. For the people of Israel. Of God's covenant with them. On Mount Sinai. Where he promised good to them. And their children. For generations. If they obeyed him and his laws.

But he always warned of despair. Punishment and dispersion. If they were to disobey. The real significance. Of the Ark of the Covenant though. Was what took place.

[13 : 14] Involving the lid of the box. Known as the mercy seat. The term mercy seat. Comes from a Hebrew word. Meaning to cover. Or placate. Or appease.

Cleanse. Cancel. Or make atonement for. It was here. That the high priest. Won't. And only once a year. Entered the Holy of Holies. Where the Ark was. Where it was kept.

And atoned for. His sins. And the sins of the Israelites. The priest sprinkled. The blood of a sacrificed animal. Onto the mercy seat.

To appease. The wrath. And anger of God. For past. Sins committed. And it was the only place. In the world. Where this atonement. Could take place.

All right. So you got a little introduction here. To the tabernacle. And to the workings. Of. The utensils. Or the. You know. The stuff of.

[14 : 11] Worship. Of the covenant. The objects of usefulness. Now verses. Six through ten. We get to the people.

Of usefulness. These preparations. Having thus been made. The priest. Go regularly. Into the first section. Performing their ritual duties.

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. By this. The Holy Spirit. Indicates that the. Way into the holy place. Into the holy places. Is not yet opened. As long as the first section.

Is still standing. Which is symbolic. For the present age. According to this arrangement. Gifts and sacrifices. Are offered. That cannot. Perfect the conscience.

[15 : 06] Of the worshiper. But deal only with food. And drink. And various washings. Regulations for the body. Imposed. Until the time of reformation. So this has already been made.

Several times. It was the Levitical priesthood. That served. In the tabernacle. On behalf of the people. Yet even. Their service. Was limited. The Holy of Holies.

Was not open to all men. But only. To Jews. And not to all Jews. But only to. Priests. And not to all priests. But to the high priest. Alone. And not even. To him at all times.

Or at any time. Except on one day. In the year. So even though. Even though they had the. The tabernacle.

And they had the holy place. And they had the Holy of Holies. And the Holy of Holies. Represented the access. To God. It represented. God's presence. Among his people. At the Ark of the Covenant.

[16 : 09] Even though they had that. They could only access it. One time a year. They didn't have. As much as they wanted to. As much as they wanted. To come to him. The priesthood. Was limited.

In how they could serve. The people. And thus. It showed. Its temporariness. It showed.

Its inability. To perfect. The worshiper. It. It. It showed. Its inability. To perfectly atone. For sin. Of the people. Or to perfectly.

Offer. The prayers of the people. Before God. And so. While provision. Was made. Under the old covenant. For the people of God. To worship him. The sanctuary.

And the practices. That were erected. For this worship. Were limited. In temporary. Thus. Something. New. Had to come. Something. Better. Had to come.

[17 : 02] Something. Permanent. Had to come. Come. Let's look at verses 11 through 14. But when Christ appeared.

As a high priest. Of the good things. That have come. Then through the greater. And more perfect. Tent. Not made with hands. That is not of this creation.

Pause. Remember. He had already talked about this tent. That exists. That exists in heaven. Which is where. Jesus. Serves. Now. Verse 12. He entered once for all.

Into the holy places. Not by means of the blood of goats. And calves. Which were temporary. But by means of his own blood. Thus securing eternal redemption.

For if the blood of goats. And bulls. And the sprinkling of defiled persons. With the ashes of a heifer. Sanctify. For the purification of the flesh. How much more will the blood of Christ.

[17 : 59] Who through the eternal spirit. Offered himself. Without blemish to God. Purify our conscience. From dead works. To serve the living God.

This is the entire argument. Of the book of Hebrews. Is the superiority of Jesus. In all things. Especially as it relates. To our area of worship. And in chapter 8.

And here in chapter 9. He's talking about the new covenant. The old covenant. Was established by God. It was good. God gave his people good things. With which he could. They could come and worship him.

But they were temporary. And they were foreshadowing. Of something greater and better to come. In the new covenant. Which is Jesus. And so here in verses 11 through 14.

You have the inauguration. of this new covenant. Through the blood of Christ. We talked about that last week. When we went through chapter 8. And we partook of the Lord's table.

[18 : 56] We partook of communion together. And since the old covenant. And its systems of worship. Were mere shadows of something greater.

I want to look back over. The parts of the temple. That we mentioned. And looked at earlier. And see how they relate to Jesus. First the lampstand. As I mentioned before.

The lampstand was. It was attended to by the priests. To keep the fire going. They had to make sure. It was still going at all times. It was the only source of light.

In the holy place. But the lampstand. Being the only source of light. Points directly to Christ. As being the light of the world. Jesus is the true light.

That gives light to everyone. And the only way. Anyone can come to the Father. John chapter 8 verse 12. Says again. Jesus spoke to them. Saying. I am the light of the world.

[19 : 53] Whoever follows me. Will not walk in darkness. But will have. The light of life. So Jesus. The lampstand. As the source of light.

Is pointing towards Jesus. As the light of the world. Table of the bread. Of the presence. Where you had the. The 12 loaves of bread.

Representing the 12 tribes. Of Israel. And being offered. As an offering. For God. Is a picture of Jesus.

As the bread of life. See Jesus is holy. Before God. He provides true sustenance. And he is. Always. Present. He's always there. Those 12 loaves.

Those 12. Loaves of bread. Were always. On that table. It wasn't always. The same 12. Right. They had to take him out. You know. Mold. That type of stuff. Not good. So they.

[20 : 46] Every Sabbath. Replaced those 12 loaves. But Jesus. The bread of life. Always present. Before God. Never having to be. Replaced himself. John 6. Verse 35. Says Jesus said to them. I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me. Shall not hunger.

And whoever believes in me. Shall never. Thirst. He's the bread of life. Who provides. sustenance. Who is always present. Before God. The altar of incense.

So we mentioned. The altar of incense. What did that represent? Did we say. That was. Tied to. Often. Prayer. The prayer of the people. Prayer of God's people.

Rising to him. So the altar of incense. Can also be seen. As a picture. Of the intercession. Of Jesus. Just as the altar of sacrifice. In the courtyard. Was a type of Christ's death.

[21 : 42] Sorry. We didn't talk about that. The altar of incense. Is. Is where Christ. Is ever before God. In God's presence. The father's presence. Praying. On behalf.

Of his people. Interceding. For us. At all times. The incense. Didn't always. Go up. Before God. It had to be. Lit.

It had to be. Taken care of. And served. Properly. By the priest. Jesus. As the great high priest. The perfect high priest. The eternal high priest. Can offer. His sacrifice.

His blood sacrifice. As an eternal. Redemptive sacrifice. His. His prayers. Are always. Before God. He's always. Interceding forever.

Before God. The altar. Was situated. Before the mercy seat. Of the ark. So if you look at this. Um.

[22 : 35] Um. So the altar. Of incense. Though it's. Located. In the holy place. Its function. Really. Became known.

When the high priest. Would enter. The holy of holies. Because the incense. Would come before God. Prayers before God. As he was. Entering. Into. The holy of holies.

To put the blood. On the altar. Father. And this is a. Picture of our. Advocate standing. In the presence.

Of the father. Just remind you. Of Hebrews 7. In verse 25. Where it says. That he is able. To save. To the other most. Those who draw near.

To God. Through him. Since he. Always. Lives. To make intercession. For them. And in chapter 9. Verse 24. Which we haven't. Got to yet. But it says. For Christ has entered.

[23 : 28] Not into holiness. Holy places. Made with hands. Which are copies. Of the true things. But in the heaven. Itself. Now to appear. In the presence of God. On our behalf. Forever. Well that.

I added the forever. Because that's. 725. So the incense. Was to be burning. Continually on the altar. To show the prayers.

Of the people. Rising to God. But God. Jesus is there. Always. Interceding. In the midst. Interceding. For his people. And finally.

The Ark of the Covenant. And as I mentioned. The mercy seat. On the Ark. Was a symbolic foreshadowing. Of the ultimate sacrifice. For all sin. The blood of Christ.

Shed on the cross. For the remission of sins. Every year. The high priest. Had to enter. The Holy of Holies. With the blood. Of. Goats.

[24 : 24] To offer them. On the altar. For the forgiveness. Of his sins. And the sins of the people. But Jesus Christ. Once for all.

People. In all time. Offered himself. On the cross. Shed his blood. Not for his sins. But for ours.

So that we can be. Redeemed. And forgiven. Romans chapter 3. Verses 23. Through 25. For all have sinned. And fall short. Of the glory of God.

And are justified. By his grace. As a gift. Through the redemption. That is in Christ Jesus. Whom God put forward. As a propitiation. By his blood.

To be received. By faith. Jesus offers himself. He's taken his blood. Into the heavenly. Tabernacle.

[25 : 18] Into the holy. Of holies. And put it on. The altar. That is there. In heaven. As the one. And only sacrifice. For all people. For all time.

And the way. In which that. Gets applied to us. Is when we put our faith. And trust. In him. When we call on him. For salvation. So the old covenant.

The old covenant symbol. It's not bad. It was never bad. It had a beautiful. God-given purpose. The tabernacle. Had a God-given purpose.

It was the opportunity. It was the way. In which. God's people. Could come. And worship him. But ultimately. It pointed. To. And it represented. The son of God.

It foreshadowed. Jesus. Before he came to earth. Earth. But now that the son. Has come. The symbol. Has no more purpose. And God means. For it to be discarded.

[26 : 19] As I mentioned. At the. At the start. The writer of Hebrews. Writing before. The destruction. Of Jerusalem. In the temple. Mentioned that. It was temporary.

The old. Is vanishing away. Because the new. And eternal. Had come. And within five years. Of the writing of Hebrews. The temple.

Was gone. Destroyed. That system. Destroyed. And is not. Standing. Now. And it's been.

Two thousand years. It's not been rebuilt. There's going to be coming time. But. We're not talking about. End times. Right now. But Jesus.

That's who. The author of Hebrews. Wants to put forth. As superior. Above all. Everything. That the Jewish individual. Held dear. And was important to them.

[27 : 20] Jesus. Is superior to it. Because he's the ultimate. Fulfillment of it. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.