

HEBREWS

9:1-28

Introduction

A **parable** is usually in the form of a short story and is about something that might occur in real life or in nature by which a spiritual principle is illustrated.

The word “parable” occurs in verse nine of chapter nine. You don’t see it immediately because it is translated *figure* in the KJV and *symbol* in the NKJV, but it is *parabole* in the Greek text. It isn’t a story-parable; **it’s a structure-parable!** The tabernacle of Jewish worship was a structure that was given by God to be a parable.

The tabernacle was given as a parable to symbolize your need for a Savior. Jesus was and is your Savior. It would be foolish to go back to the rituals of the symbol when you have a relationship with the Savior.

You might not have too much trouble with this but a first century Jew would have to give it some serious thought. The tabernacle in the wilderness, and later the Temple at Jerusalem that replaced it, had been the center of their religious life for centuries. The writer patiently but firmly tells them to abandon the typical tabernacle on earth for the true tabernacle in heaven.

We’ll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 On Earth You Had A Typical Tabernacle That Pointed You To Your Savior, and #2 In Heaven You Have A Savior Who Presents You In The True Tabernacle.

#1 On Earth You Had A Typical Tabernacle That Pointed You To Your Savior (v1-10)

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the tablets of the Ten Commandments he also had details about building the tabernacle. The tabernacle was a moveable tent within which the Israelites were

taught how a sinful man could approach an infinitely holy God. Some centuries later King David wanted to build a permanent Temple in Jerusalem to replace the moveable tabernacle. It fell to his son, Solomon, to do it. The various Temples which followed were copies of the tabernacle on a grander scale. Our text focuses on the tabernacle because it was God's original design.

The writer first reminds the Hebrew Christians about the *schematic* and then about the *service* of the tabernacle.

You see the schematic of the tabernacle in verses one through five:

Hebrews 9:1 Then indeed, even the first *covenant* had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.

Hebrews 9:2 For a tabernacle was prepared: the first *part*, in which *was* the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary;

Hebrews 9:3 and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All,

Hebrews 9:4 which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which *were* the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant;

Hebrews 9:5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

You and I are not all that familiar with this structure so I want to walk us through it. If the tabernacle was set up outside, in the parking lot, we would see a fenced-off structure roughly one hundred fifty feet long by seventy-five feet wide. It would be lined-up in an east-west direction. What you would see is a white linen "fence" roughly seven-and-one-half feet high all around the perimeter, supported by brass poles. There is only one entrance, on the east end.

If you walked inside the first thing you would see is an altar; a fairly large brass altar – about three feet high and seven-and-one-half feet square. A horn was located on each corner of the altar to help hold the animal sacrifices offered there. A little further in, just beyond the brass altar, was a large brass bowl on a pedestal, called the laver. It was a wash-bowl filled with water used for actual and ceremonial cleansings.

Beyond the laver you come to a building approximately fifteen-feet wide, fifteen-feet high, and forty-five-feet long. It is made up of boards overlaid with gold that are a little over two-feet wide and

fifteen-feet high. They are fitted together vertically in one hundred sockets of silver that weigh about one hundred pounds each. There are rings on the boards for horizontal rods to be passed through them to give the structure greater stability.

The building itself has an open ceiling but is covered with four layers of materials: linen with blue, scarlet, and purple embroidery in it of cherubim; then, over the linen, was a layer made of goat's hair; over the goat's hair is a layer of ram's skin dyed red; on top of that, covering the whole thing, was a layer called "badger skin." (Most scholars believe this refers to the leathery skin of sea creatures, perhaps porpoises).

There was only one entrance into this building, again on the east, through a veil. If you went inside you would discover it was divided into two rooms. The first, called the holy place, was fifteen-feet by fifteen-feet by thirty-feet. The second, called the holy of holies, was fifteen by fifteen by fifteen.

As you enter the holy place, on your right there is a long narrow table upon which are twelve loaves of bread. These represented the twelve tribes and were renewed each week. On the left side is the seven-branched lampstand or *minorah*. Jewish tradition says it was five feet high and three-and-one-half feet wide.

In front of you was a small golden altar for burning incense each morning and evening. It stood just before another veil – the veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies. Assuming you could go in beyond the veil you would see the ark of the covenant - a box roughly six feet long by two-and-one-half feet high and wide that had rings through it and two poles by which it could be carried. It has a cover, or lid, that is really a separate piece of furniture, called the mercy seat. It's solid gold with cherubim standing on it – two angels whose wings touch and who are looking down upon the contents of the ark. The contents were the tablets of the Ten commandments, a pot of manna, and a rod belonging to Aaron that had budded miraculously.

It was in this holy of holies where a manifestation of God actually dwelt among His people.

We've described the tabernacle; but along with the writer to the Hebrews I need to say, quoting from verse five, "of these things we cannot now speak in detail." Let me just say that it **all** points to Jesus. The lampstand reminds you that Jesus is the Light of the world; the bread that He is the Bread of life; the one entrance that Jesus is the Door and the only way to God.

The writer next mentions the service of the tabernacle, in verses six and seven:

Hebrews 9:6 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing *the services*.

Hebrews 9:7 But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance;

The Jewish priests served in this tabernacle all day everyday, day after day, making sacrifices for sins. Once a year only, on the Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur - year after year for centuries, the high priest alone could dare to approach the presence of God within the veil of the holy of holies... And only after much ceremony and sacrifice for himself first, then for the people.

As glorious as it was to have God in their midst, and to be able to approach Him at all, the tabernacle was showing them something:

Hebrews 9:8 the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.

The physical tabernacle "indicated" to you that believers had no real spiritual access into the presence of God. The word "indicating" means *to show or to signify; to show by way of signs*, if you will. The schematic of the tabernacle showed you it was impossible for the average person to stand in the presence of God. The repetition in the tabernacle service was to show you that access to God was blocked by your sin regardless the ongoing animal sacrifices. Something better was needed to take away your sin once and for all.

The something better is called "the time of reformation" in verses nine and ten:

Hebrews 9:9 It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience -

Hebrews 9:10 *concerned* only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

The tabernacle was “symbolic” – a structural parable. The outward rituals of “food and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances” could never make you perfect; they could never change your “conscience,” change you within. They were “imposed” as a temporary measure “until the time of reformation.”

He’s not talking about the Protestant Reformation! He’s talking about the Jesus reformation. “Reformation” can be translated, *to straighten out*. It is from Isaiah, quoted by John the Baptist, when he said concerning Jesus, “**Make straight** the way of the Lord” (John 1:23).

The writer of Hebrews is telling you that the tabernacle and Temple ordinances should be abandoned now that Jesus has come and straightened-out the way to God!

It may sound trite, but here is an application for us: ***Go straight to God!*** If people come to you for help – believers or unbelievers – ***send them straight to God!***

God was done with the earthly tabernacle and Temple. You worship God through Jesus Christ in the heavenly tabernacle.

#2 In Heaven You Have A Savior
Who Presents You In The True Tabernacle
(v11-28)

The remainder of chapter nine presents at least four ways that Jesus has straightened-out your way to God.

First - You can go straight to God from anywhere on the earth:

Hebrews 9:11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

There is a “greater and more perfect tabernacle” in heaven. It was “not made by [human] hands” but by God Himself. It was “not of this creation” means it does not have time and space limitations. You can enter it at *any time* from *any place* - through Jesus if He is your “High

Priest.” The “good things to come” have already arrived for you: You can approach God in heaven spiritually no matter where on earth you are physically.

Second - You can go straight to God without the need of any further sacrifice for your sins:

Hebrews 9:12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,

Hebrews 9:14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Hebrews 9:15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 9:16 For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

Hebrews 9:17 For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.

Animals were sacrificed in the tabernacle. Their blood *temporarily* covered your sins so you might *temporarily* approach God. The ceremonies associated with the animal sacrifice focused on external cleansing. All of the tabernacle rituals made it quite clear that you remained a sinner who needed to make constant sacrifice for sins.

Jesus offered Himself as the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Because He was both God and man, His sacrifice was the final, once-for-all sacrifice that all the animal sacrifices typified. He has obtained “eternal redemption” for all those “who are called” who believe in Him. From heaven He can offer you the “promise of the eternal inheritance,” which means you share His life and blessings both now and forever. Part of your inheritance is the indwelling Holy Spirit by which you are transformed internally.

The word “testament” in verses sixteen and seventeen is what we would call a *will*. You can change your will while you are alive; but, once you are dead, its terms are set. Jesus died and we now inherit the blessings He promised us through His death on our behalf.

Although you are a sinner, if you are a believing sinner you can go straight to God because Jesus has offered Himself as your sacrifice for sin once-and-for-all.

Third - You can go straight to God with confidence:

Hebrews 9:18 Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood.

What's up with blood? The life principle of humans operates through the blood; or so you read in Leviticus 17:11, "the life of the flesh is in the blood." God declared to mankind that only blood could make an atonement for the soul. The entire verse in Leviticus reads,

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul.'

Animals and humans have blood, but God and angels do not. God had to become human in order to redeem mankind because He had no blood to shed. He predicted His coming as a man right after the first sin in the Garden of Eden. While He waited for the fullness of time, He established animal sacrifices as a temporary substitute for the final sacrifice He promised.

Hebrews 9:19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,

Hebrews 9:20 saying, "*This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.*"

Hebrews 9:21 Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.

Hebrews 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

These verses are taken from Exodus chapter twenty-four. After Moses gave the people the Law he sprinkled everything with blood to remind them that the shedding of blood was still necessary for the remission of sins. When blood was applied, the people had access to God. It was temporary... But it was access.

Now we need to put our thinking-caps on for the next verse. If the earthly tabernacle is a parable, symbolic of the tabernacle in heaven... Does the tabernacle in heaven need to be sprinkled with blood to be purified? It sounds odd, but you read,

Hebrews 9:23 Therefore *it* was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

Apparently there *was* a need for the tabernacle in heaven to be sprinkled with blood! I don't want to suggest in any way that heaven

was not “perfect...” But it is interesting to note that the first sin occurred in heaven when Lucifer and one-third of the angels rebelled against God. Lucifer continues to have access to heaven according to the opening chapters of the Book of Job. We know that eventually God will dissolve both the heavens and the earth and create them new.

Let’s come back to our point: The precious blood of Jesus Christ has been applied on your behalf in the tabernacle in heaven. His blood was the fulfillment of God’s promise to Adam and Eve that He would deal with sin once-and-for-all so that you and I might have fellowship with Him forever. Because of the precious blood of Jesus you can go straight to God with confidence.

Fourth - You can go straight to God and have hope:

Hebrews 9:24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;
Hebrews 9:25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another -
Hebrews 9:26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Your sin has been “put away.” It is put away in the sense that He eliminated both its *penalty* and its *power* over you. Thus, you have a present hope of triumphing over sin and circumstance.

You have a future hope, too:

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
Hebrews 9:28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

Notwithstanding a few people who were raised from the dead to die a second time, the normal thing is for a person to die. After death comes “judgment.” If you are an unbeliever, the judgment will be at the Great White Throne. It will be a judgment for your sins and you will be condemned eternally to suffer for them in the Lake of Fire.

If you are a believer, you “eagerly wait for Him” to “appear a second time.” If you die, you will immediately be with Jesus; or you may never die but might be alive when the Lord comes to Rapture the Church. In either case, His appearance for believers is “apart from

sin, for salvation.” You will be judged, too, but not for your sins; those were dealt with at the Cross. Your judgment will be for eternal rewards.

Future hope is one of the truly great blessings of the Christian life. God, Who has begun a good work in you, will bring it to its full and final completion. Hope purifies you; hope empowers you.

Conclusion

Did you notice that the word “appear” is used three times in these closing verses? Jesus **has appeared** to put away sin by dying on the Cross; He **is appearing** now in heaven to present us to God; He **will appear** to take you home forever.

The Hebrew Christians faced a choice between the earthly tabernacle or the heavenly tabernacle. We face choices between earthly and heavenly things, too. Let’s remain heavenly minded as we await the return of Jesus for us.