

Gifts and Sacrifices of Old Didn't Remove Guilt
Hebrews 9:1-10 (VV. 8-10)
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I. Historical Context and Biblical Background

A. Historical Background

The Hebrew Christians were tempted to leave the Christian faith and return to Judaism. Paul was showing them why that would be spiritually fatal. The Old Covenant under Moses was inferior to the New Covenant that Jesus initiated. The Levitical priests under the Old Covenant were sinful, mortal men, as contrasted with Jesus, our sinless Priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. In our text today, Paul showed that the Old Covenant sacrificial system was temporary and imperfect. It could not provide a clean conscience for the believers. God designed the old system to point ahead to the superior, final sacrifice of our High Priest, Christ, who offered His own blood to obtain for us eternal redemption. Christ did not have to keep going to the altar to die. Jesus' superior sacrifice paid the price for our sins once and for all times (Heb. 10:10). Because Jesus conquered death, we can be assured that our High Priest will reign for eternity.

B. Biblical Context

The first covenant was an agreement between God and His people. The Law God gave Moses included various regulations for how man was to come before God and what He required. Today's study refers to the desert tabernacle that Moses created according to God's instructions, shown to Moses on Mount Sinai. It was to be the Israelites' primary worship place. God warned Moses to not deviate His construction of the tabernacle because everything about the structure

and its furnishings were designed to serve as a teaching tool to convey the importance of God's word.

The verses in our study show how the chambers and the artifacts of the tented tabernacle were meant as symbols only, specifically intended to show how the Old Covenant could not remove the barrier between God and man. The external rituals of the covenant could only suppress feelings of guilt; they were unable to remove one's sins or change a person's nature.

II. The Lesson: Gifts and Sacrifices of Od Didn't Remove Guilt

1. vv. 1-7.

The entire tabernacle was a tent, a movable structure. God wanted Israel to know He was with them wherever they went, It wasn't a case of "You come to Me", but the idea was "I have come to you". Paul called attention to the furnishings of the inner and outer chambers of the tabernacle, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. In the outer tabernacle was the lampstand (Ex. 25-31-40) which served as a reminder to the Israelites that they were to be the light to the world and point people toward God who ultimately is the Light to the world (John 8:12).

The sacred bread was also kept in the outer room on a table; on it were twelve loaves of bread (Lv. 24:5), symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel; the loaves represented God's fellowship with the twelve tribes of Israel(Ex. 25:23-30).

Beyond the first room, there was the Holy of Holies divided or separated by a veil or curtain (Ex. 26:33). In this room was the Ark of the Covenant which contained a golden jar of manna (Ex. 16:33), Aaron's rod which budded (Num. 17:6-11) and tablets of the covenant,

inscribed with the Ten Commandments (Ex. 25:16). The golden altar of incense was to create a sweet, smelling environment in the tabernacle; every morning incense was to be offered to create a perpetual aroma pleasing to God (Ex. 30:7-8).

The mercy seat sat at the top of the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:21) with two cherubim (angels) of glory over it. Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat to atone for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. Those were only atoned for once a year by the High Priest, who offered sacrifices for himself and for the people. All of the priests offered sacrifices daily for the sins of the people but not for the sins committed in ignorance.

2. **vv. 8-10.**

The author attributed the Old Testament account to the Holy Spirit who signified that the way into the Holy Place had not yet been disclosed while the tabernacle was still standing. Both the layout of the tabernacle and the required offerings teach a lesson shown by the Holy Spirit. This reference to the Holy Spirit included the concept that the Old Testament passages described the tabernacle and the sacrificial requirements inspired by the Holy Spirit. Man did not possess direct and complete access to God and would not while the tabernacle with its Mosaic Law still stood. The way into the heavenly or real Most Holy Place was not revealed until Christ opened up the way.

The tabernacle further served as a figure, a physical picture or symbol of Christ for all to see. Just as access was not open to the Holy of Holies, so access to God was not complete. The Old Testament sacrificial system was not God's complete and final provision for the guilt of our sins. It all pointed ahead to Christ. When Jesus died in the cross, the curtain of Jerusalem's temple, that barrier between the Holy

Place and the Holy of Holies, was supernaturally torn in two (Matt. 27:51; Mk. 15:38; Luke 23:45). The split symbolized that in the new order an animal's blood would no longer be needed. Personal access to God is now available to everyone through Christ's death.

The provisions for worship given by the Old Covenant were symbolic. Though the Day of Atonement sacrifices provided temporary comfort for the conscience stricken by sin, it had no lasting remedy. A sacrifice that had to be repeated at intervals could not satisfactorily purify a conscience that remembered the sin that separated one from God. Since the Day of Atonement arrangements provided only temporary help, they were in a level with matters of food and drink and various baptisms, regulations for the body. As such these arrangements were only temporary until the time to set things right would come. The bottom line is that gifts and sacrifices could not erase the sins of the believers.

III. Conclusion

Believers are righteous, and therefore, have Access to God. We are His temple; we dwell in His presence! The shadow is all gone, and we dwell in reality. Because of the perfect sacrifice of Christ and His finished work on our behalf, we can now come into the holy presence of God. In the Old Covenant, the temple was accessible only to the priests. All others in Israel met God in the court. We thank God for the right to come into His courts.