

An Earthly Tabernacle

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into Hebrews chapter 9, comparing the earthly tabernacle and service to the heavenly reality, emphasizing the significance of the new covenant and the limitations of the old covenant rituals. It highlights the symbolism of the tabernacle's layout, the items within it like the lampstand, showbread, and the Ark of the Covenant, and the role of the high priest in offering sacrifices for sins. The sermon underscores the transition from the temporary, earthly practices to the eternal, spiritual truths revealed through Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Hebrews 9:1, Hebrews 9:11, Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 9:24, Hebrews 9:28, Hebrews 10:1, Hebrews 10:19, Hebrews 10:23, Hebrews 10:24, Hebrews 10:39

Topics: "New Covenant", "Spiritual Reality"

Description

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Transcript

Hebrews chapter 9, Hebrews chapter 9, and the writer now moves on. He's dealt with the new covenant, and he's now going to pull this all together and compare with the earthly tabernacle and service to the heavenly. And this is a wonderful chapter.

Well, all of Hebrews is great, but this is a great chapter. So let's read Hebrews chapter 9, verses one through 10. Hebrews chapter 9, verses one through 10.

Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared, the first part in which was the lampstand, the table and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary. And behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle, which is called the holiest of all, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid in all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had manna, iron's rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant.

And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Now, when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part

of the tabernacle performing the services, but into the second part went the high priest alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance.

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. 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. Concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of the reformation.

So he says then, obviously referring back to the Old Testament, even the first covenant, so he's dealt with a covenant and he's dealt with a law and with a priesthood that were attached to the old covenant. Now he's saying that there were also ordinances of divine service and an earthly sanctuary. So there were certain rituals, certain procedures, certain things that needed to be done that was part of the worship in the Old Testament.

And obviously he's gonna contrast that with the New Testament. So there were the ordinances of divine service and there was an earthly sanctuary, obviously referring to the tabernacle. Now he says a tabernacle was prepared.

We spoke about this a couple of weeks ago where Moses builds the tabernacle according to the plan or the pattern that God had shown him in the mountain. And so remember that the specifications for the tabernacle were very detailed. The dimensions, the materials that were to be used, the positioning of the various pieces of furniture, every detail was prescribed.

The only things that are not recorded in the Old Testament, and we don't know whether God had prescribed that and it wasn't recorded in the Old Testament, was the size of the laver, the laver for the washing. The size for that is not given. But other than that, all of the other sizes are there.

And so a tabernacle was prepared. The first part in which was the lampstand, the table and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary. So I hope you can see that.

And unfortunately the pointer only points on one screen at a time. So we have the outer court. And so what you have there are pillars and then there's a linen fence that goes around the outer court.

Then there is a doorway made also of fabric, of cloth. There is the first veil and there is a second veil. Guess I have to show you.

So the outer court and the tabernacle itself and then a curtain that creates the entrance into the outer court and then the sanctuary or the holy place and the holiest of all. Now you'll see he uses the word sanctuary, but some translations use the term the holy place and the holiest of all or the holy of holies, different terms for the same things. So again, the dimensions are given.

This is a cube. The holiest of all is 10 cubits by 10 cubits by 10 cubits, which is a cubit being about 20 inches from the elbow to the tip of the hand, 20, 22 inches depending on how big you are. And the historians don't have an exact, some say it's as little as 18 inches.

It doesn't matter, it's pretty big. And then the holy place or the sanctuary is 20 by 10 by 10. So you can see it's oblong, it's a box shape and of course it was square inside with a covering on the outside.

So if we go back then, the tabernacle was prepared. The first part in which was the lampstand, the table and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary. So we have, and this section does not deal with the outer court.

So in the outer court, you have the altar, the square box and the laver. He's not dealing with that here in Hebrews chapter nine. He's only dealing with the tabernacle itself.

So while the whole thing is called the tabernacle, the actual building inside of the fence is the tabernacle proper and then consisting of those two parts, the holy place, the holiest of all or the sanctuary and the holy of holies. Now he says that in the holy place, there were three things. Now, if we go back to chapter nine verse two, he says a tabernacle was prepared, the first part in which was the lampstand, the table and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary.

So let's be nice if we had two screens, but nevermind. So the lampstand and the showbread, the table of showbread standing opposite each other. So as you came in on the left hand side, the lampstand and the table of showbread.

Now, you'll notice something when we get to the next verse. So he says, that's what's in the outer court. And here's a picture, a model actually with the curtains or the coverings folded back.

There are four layers of different coverings. The inside layer was gold, blue, red and white. And it had angels embroidered on it.

And it was really beautiful. And then on the very outside was leather, depending on the translation and we're not sure whether it was badger skins or porpoise skins. Now those are two very, very different kinds of animals, but it's a problem with the language.

They probably badger skins, I'm not sure that they had access to porpoise skins. And so it would be leather on the outside, which would have been a common material to use for tents. And so it wasn't very pretty from the outside.

But once you got inside, it was absolutely beautiful. Everything was gold. The boards that made up the wall, and you can see that they've left two and they've taken these others out to show the inside in the model.

They were made out of acacia wood and they were covered in gold. Then there were five bars going across holding the boards together. They were in sockets of silver at the bottom, because remember they would pack this thing up all the time and it would just sit on the sand.

And so located in sockets of silver. And all of these things obviously have meaning. So here is the lamp stand and hidden behind it on the other side is the table of showbread.

Now I'm not going to get into those in great detail. So then he says a tabernacle, I forget verse three. Here's just another picture.

This picture has sentimental value for me because this is a series of paintings that my grandfather used. They're about that size that he used to teach from. And I'm not sure if we still have them.

I think they're in South Africa, but I photographed them. And you'll see the same idea. So the high priest or the priest is standing before the actual veil with the lamp stand on the left-hand side, the menorah on the

left-hand side, the table of showbread on the right-hand side, and he's offering incense before the Lord.

Now verse three, and behind the second veil. So that then is the second veil. Remember that when Jesus died, the veil was rent and that was the second veil.

So you actually had, while it's called the second veil because there was one that went as you came into the holy place, and then there was a second one as you got into the holiest of all. The one on the outside forming the gate, if you will, into the outer court is also called a veil sometimes. But this is the veil that was torn.

So behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all or the holy of holies. And so you have the outer court, the holy place, the holy of holies. These speak of the human beings of people that were made up of three parts, the outer court, the body, the holy place, the soul, and the holiest of all where God dwells, the spirit.

So you have the same picture. So behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all. All right, now, which had the golden censer and the Ark of the Covenant overlaid in all sides with gold in which were a golden pot that had the manna, orange rod that budded and the tablets of the covenant.

Now we need to go through those step by step. So the first thing he says, now let's go back to verse three. Part of the tabernacle behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all.

Then he says in there is the golden censer. The golden censer is just another name for the altar of incense. So the altar of incense is according to him in the holiest of all, but where was it? It was actually in the holy place.

So you see the Bible makes mistakes. No, it doesn't. I believe that and obviously the writer to the Hebrews is very well versed in the Old Testament.

He understands the Old Testament better than any of us ever will. He's not going to make any mistakes. He knows exactly what he's talking about.

So why does he then place the altar of incense on the other side of the veil? Now remember what the altar of incense represents. It represents prayer. It represents prayer.

Even in the book of Revelation you find that the angel takes the prayers of the saints and offers it together with incense before the Lord. So the altar of incense represents prayer. The point that he is making here and it's only if you are alert because if you're not alert you won't pick it up.

But if you're alert and notice that in fact the altar of incense is on the other side of the veil, he is making a point that in the New Testament where do we pray? We pray in the very presence of God. In the Old Testament they prayed outside of God's presence. God manifested himself in the holiest of all.

Here between the cherubim. We'll look at this in more detail in a moment. That is where God presented himself and it says that God spoke to Moses from between the cherubim, from between the angels.

So God dwelt and obviously we understand God does not dwell in temples made with hands, Paul said. God does not dwell in the tabernacle but he manifested his presence. He revealed himself as we believe a light that was present there.

And of course as we saw in the picture that we had up when we started, the pillar of fire and the cloud would rest upon the tabernacle and specifically upon the holiest of all which represented the Holy Spirit or represented God's presence. And so in the Old Testament if you offered incense and you came to pray, and when you say pray we don't just mean petitioning God, asking him for things but worship and prayer. So if you, so this priest here who is worshiping and praying, he is praying outside of God's presence and he's praying to God behind the veil.

The point that he is, that I believe that the writer is making here if we paid attention is that we no longer pray outside of God's presence but because the veil has been rent we have access into his very presence and when we pray, we pray in the presence of God. And so we don't have to go through intermediaries, we don't have to go through the saints, we don't have to go through Mary, we don't have to go through the priest. We have access into the very presence of God where two or three have gathered in my name there I am in the midst of them.

Not only where two or three are gathered but whenever we pray he dwells within us. He is no longer dwelling in the tabernacle, he's dwelling in our hearts. And so we have direct access to the presence of God.

So that's the point that he is making there. Now we go back to verse four. So the holiest of all had the golden censer and then he says the Ark of the Covenant overlaid on all sides with gold in which were the golden pot that had the manna, orange rotted buttered and the tablets of the covenant.

Now that's a picture of course of the Ark. We have descriptions obviously but we don't have pictures. We don't, nobody, you know they, it was just before iPhones came out so you couldn't really take a picture of it.

But so obviously if you look at pictures on the internet you'll see different pictures, different shapes, different designs, different ornamentation because those details are not captured. Other details are captured and we have those very specifically. The first thing that we know is the size.

It was two and a half cubits which made it about five foot long. So it would have been about, yay long, would have been about three foot wide, one and a half cubits by three foot that way. So I guess it would be about the size of this pulpit but lying on its side.

It was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold and all of these things obviously had meaning. And then it had four rings on the four corners. This shows them more as cylinders but they really were rings.

And the poles that it was to be carried on would go through the rings. The Book of Exodus specifies that the poles are not to be removed and there's a lesson in that. And the poles were made also of acacia wood and overlaid with gold.

And obviously you can see that the priests would then lift this up on their shoulders, presumably for, again it doesn't specify how many would carry it, but presumably for because this would have been very heavy. Now on top of the ark is what the scripture calls the mercy seat. Now the mercy seat is not a chair or a seat as such.

It is simply the place where God manifested himself as we said between the sheriffs, between the angels. It specifies that there were to be two sheriffs and they were to be on the two ends and they were to cover with their wings and they were to look down on the mercy seat. So that part we know exactly how that

happened.

They were made, well let me come back to that. And then on the outside was to be a room. And so you have the room on the outside or a crown and you have the sheriffs and the sheriffs are looking down on to the mercy seat.

The mercy seat is the lid for the box. But obviously it's far more than that. And that was made of solid gold.

Now the angels, the sheriffs and the room and the mercy seat was to be made out of one piece of gold. So this would take tremendous amount of skill and artistry to make because they would have to forge it. They would have to beat it out of a huge lump of gold.

And you can just imagine the size of that piece of gold that they had to begin with. So while everything else was made out of wood and then covered with a layer of gold, this was solid gold. And that's why the thing would be so heavy.

I'm going to come back to the contents of the ark. Let's see, go back to verse four. So which had the golden censer, the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Orin's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.

Let's see how the slides go, okay. So there the artist has given us those three things that were inside. Orin's rod that budded.

Now I hope you remember the story about Orin's rod. But you remember that there was a dispute against Moses and Orin. And the people said, who's Moses and who's Orin? We can be a democracy.

We can all be priests. We can all be leaders. And God says, well, you know, let's see.

And so the leader of every one of the 12 tribes was to bring his walking stick. I actually meant to bring the stick that I've walked with since 1989. It has a date on it.

It is very dead. It is very dry. And every man was to bring his cane, his stick or his walking stick, and to lay it out before the Lord.

And they laid it out before the Lord. And the next morning, Orin's rod had budded, and it had produced blossoms, and it had produced almonds. And so that was a clear sign that God had chosen Orin to be the high priest, and that no one else could take the job.

And of course, we see the significance of that as we've been going through Hebrews, how that they had to be of the tribe of Aaron or Orin. They couldn't come, the priest could not come from any other tribe. But obviously, the thing that this specifically speaks about is the resurrection.

It is life out of the dead. Though that stick was dead, who knows how long he had had it. He may have had it as many years as I've had my stick.

It certainly had no life in it whatsoever. And yet by God's miraculous power, life came out of that stick, and fruit was born. And so this is a picture of the resurrection.

So it's a picture of the authority that God places upon those whom he calls. And it is a picture of the resurrection. Then there is the tablets of stone.

And of course, this is the law. These are the tablets that Moses had brought to the top of the mountain. Remember that initially Moses is in the mountain, and God seems to provide the two tables of stone.

For the young people, a tablet is not a thing, it's not an iPad. A tablet is a piece of stone in this context, a slab of stone. Very much like a, I guess the closest thing would be a grave marker, a headstone.

Probably not as big and heavy because Moses could carry them, but they were two slabs of stone. Now Moses goes up and it seems that God provides the two, the first two, and God writes upon those tablets of stone. Somehow, with the finger of God, he writes the Ten Commandments.

Moses comes down from the mountain. The people of Israel are worshiping the idol, the golden calf that they had made. Moses throws the stones down.

They are broken, and of course this is symbolic of the fact that they had broken the first command. The first command said you shall have no other gods, and so the law is broken. Moses then goes back up, and in between there's this whole process of who's on the Lord's side, and the tribe of Levi say we're on the Lord's side, and God says go in and strap your swords, and every man kill his brother, and they kill 3,000 Jews as a sign of God's wrath on that day, and of course that is juxtaposed against the day of Pentecost when 3,000 people are saved.

And so Moses goes back up into the mountain, but this time he has to prepare the stones. So Moses use out of the rock two tablets again. It's not supplied by God this time, but Moses took them and he takes them up and God then writes on them, and he brings them down, and they are now placed inside of the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark of the Covenant obviously, because this is where the essence of the covenant is with God. They're called the tables or the tablets of the covenant, and then there is the pot of manna, and you remember that the manna, and of course it speaks about the word of God. The tablets of stone speak about the word of God, but specifically the law, and I'm going to come back to that in a moment.

And then there is a pot of manna, and so they were instructed to take some of the manna that fell in the wilderness, and they were to put it in the pot, and it was to be kept as a memorial. And remember, the manna was God's supernatural provision for Israel. It wasn't something that happened naturally.

Unfortunately, most modern theologians say, well, it may be a bug that secretes some kind of sweet stuff out of the trees, or it may be this, or it may be that. This was God's supernatural provision. The Book of Psalms says it was angels' food and bread from heaven.

And we know that it was supernatural because it was there for five days, for six days, and not on the seventh day, regular as clockwork. If you collected a double portion on any day and said, well, I'm going to take tomorrow off, I'm going to sleep in, I don't want to get up early because you have to go out before the sun got up because once the sun came up, it would melt and disappear. So if you said, well, I'm going to take a double lot tonight, today, so that I can sleep in tomorrow, it would go rotten, there would be nothing for the next day.

If you took a double portion on the sixth day, it would last for the seventh day. And of course, part of that was the issue of the Sabbaths, not working on the Sabbaths, but more specifically, it was God divinely showing them that this is not chance, this is not just something that happens out here in the wilderness. It is something that is under God's provision, it is God's supply for the people.

And of course, the manna speaks specifically of Jesus because the manna was everything they needed. They didn't need multivitamins, they didn't need protein, they didn't need starch, they didn't need carbohydrates, everything was in that manna and everything we need is to be found in Jesus Christ. We don't need Jesus plus this or plus that or plus the other thing, he is everything we need.

All right, so verse five, so verse four says, which had the golden censer, the ark of the covenant, overlaid all sides with gold, which were the golden pot that had the manna, orange rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. Now verse five, and above it were the cherubim, of glory, overshadowing the mercy seat. So they have their wings extended over the mercy seat.

Of these things, we cannot now speak in detail. Now, there's a different picture and you'll see that people have all sorts of different ideas as to what this actually looked like. The principle is still the same.

And so it was from between the cherubs that God, it was there that God manifested his presence. And of course, the point that he's gonna come to is that only the high priest could come and approach God and that would only be once a year and that would be on the day of atonement. And he would make atonement for the people.

Why is it called the mercy seat? Well, it was on the mercy seat that the high priest would sprinkle the blood. And so the special sacrifice that was made on the day of atonement, he would take that blood and he would bring it into the holiest of all and he would sprinkle it on the mercy seat, on the slab of gold that would be on the top of the lid of the box, if you will. Now, why did he have to do that? And why is it called the mercy seat? It's called the mercy seat and the blood is sprinkled on the mercy seat because remember what's inside, the law.

And when God looks down, so if God is, and again, please understand that God is not physically there, but he is revealing himself. There's something that is manifest that reveals his presence. So if God is here because he speaks to Moses from between the cherubim, so if that is where God is and the law is down here, God is looking at the law but the law has been broken.

The law is constantly being broken by Israel. And so between God and the broken law is the blood. And so when God looks down, he doesn't see the broken law, he sees the blood.

Now you remember what he said to Israel when they came out of Egypt on the night of the Passover. When I see the blood, I will pass over. And so God extends mercy, not because of the mercy seat but because of the blood that is sprinkled on the mercy seat.

And so God does not destroy Israel for another year. Next year, they have to come again. And the high priest does this again the next year on the day of atonement.

But in that process, the blood covers the broken law symbolically. And God doesn't see the broken law. And of course we have exactly the same thing today.

Now the gold, obviously all of the gold in the tabernacle speaks of Jesus. Gold is precious. Gold cannot rust or oxidize.

Gold cannot be devalued in any way. It is the most precious metal that we have. And of course Jesus is that gold.

He is absolutely pure. He is absolutely righteous. He is absolutely valuable.

He is wonderful. He is all of those things. And so what we have is standing between God and the law is the blood and Jesus.

Those two things. And God's wrath is appeased. God's wrath is set aside for a period.

And so above it, verse five then, were the cherubim of glory. And we're not gonna come to any conclusion this evening. These first six verses are just an introduction and we'll pick up on this next time.

And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priest always went into the first part of the tabernacle performing the services. I'm just going to introduce this and then close.

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. Notice sins committed in ignorance. Sins that were committed willfully are not covered, are not dealt with.

Verse eight, and the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered, which cannot make him who performed the sacrifice the service perfect in regard to the conscience. And then verse 10, concerning only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

Remember the reformation here, he's not talking about the reformation of Calvin, he's talking about the reformation that came through Jesus when Jesus changed all of these things, made everything new. And so all of these things were until Jesus came and they were all weak, they were all temporary, they were all very, very limited in what they could do. And he's going to then, in the next section, he's going to speak about the wonderful privilege that is ours.

But I think that without bringing an application this evening, you can get the picture of how while what they had was glorious, there was actually a light, it seems. There was actually the pillar of fire and the pillars of the cloud. Manifesting God's presence.

The tabernacle itself was a really glorious, rich thing. And yet none of that can compare with what we have in the reality. These things are all what he has called up to now shadows.

They are simply shadows of the glorious reality which is ours, which is Christ. And we're able to come into his very presence, we don't need a physical mercy seat because Jesus has presented himself before the father as that full and final sacrifice. And therefore God is able to look upon us the same way as he would look upon the law and be satisfied by the blood.

He is able to look upon us and he is satisfied not because we have not sinned, but because there is Jesus who is our mercy seat, who covers us. And as God looks at us, he doesn't see us, but he sees Jesus. And he says, I'm satisfied.

This is my son in whom I'm well pleased. And as long as we remain abiding in him, remember that's the whole point. As we abide in him, the father sees him and the moment I said, hey, I'm good enough on my own, I don't need Jesus, we are destroyed.

God does not accept us because all he can see is our sin. But as we remain in Christ, we are covered by his sacrifice. Father, we thank you for this glorious blessing and privilege which is ours, of being able to see the fulfillment of these things.

Lord, they looked at these things in the Old Testament and they marveled at what they had, the glories and the beauties of the inside of this tabernacle. And yet Lord, it was nothing in comparison to the substance, in comparison to the reality that we have in Jesus Christ. Lord, even as the high priest could only come once a year, the average Jew could not come into your presence, even the priests could not come into the holiest of all.

And yet Lord, the privilege is ours as Christians and those who've been washed in the blood of Jesus to be able to come directly into your very presence and to be able to speak with you as Moses spoke with you, as a man speaks with his friend. And so Lord, I pray that you would just create within our hearts a deep appreciation for what you've done for us, what you've given to us, what privileges are ours. Lord, that we may never neglect these things, but Lord, that we may live our lives in worship and adoration and thanksgiving and adoration because of what you've done and where you brought us into.

Lord, we do not deserve any of these things. We are unworthy in every way. And yet, because of your grace and your mercy, you've saved us and you brought us from outside, from those who were not, as Gentiles, were not even allowed to come to the outer court.

You brought us nigh and you brought us into your very presence. We thank you for this, Lord, in Jesus' name. We pray that you'd go with us, keep us, and protect us.

Bring us together again safely on Sunday, we pray, in Jesus' name.

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