

## **The High Priest of Our Confession: 4**

### **The Inferiority of the Earthly Sanctuary**

#### **Hebrews 9.1-28**

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession” **Hebrews 4.14**

We finished our study last time by stating that the High Priestly ministry of Jesus is not subject to an earthly tabernacle as the better New Covenant is ministered from a better sanctuary – the heavenly sanctuary.

In Hebrews 9 we will see how the sanctuary of the New Covenant is far better than the Tabernacle (or Temple) of the Old Covenant.

#### **The Earthly Sanctuary**

The first ten verses of this chapter show us five things about the earthly sanctuary that make it inferior to the heavenly sanctuary:

##### **1. (v1) It Was On Earth**

“Then indeed, even the first *covenant* had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary”

Whilst this might sound very obvious it highlights certain inferiorities.

- It was constructed out of earthly materials which themselves were subject to damage and wear.
- Although under God's direction, it still required a priest to be mediator of the Old Covenant, who himself was only a man, under the curse of sin. The High Priest had to first bring an offering to atone for his own sin before he could enter the Most Holy Place to bring the offering to atone for the people's sins.

##### **2. (v2-5) It Was A Shadow Of Things To Come.**

“For a tabernacle was prepared: the first *part*, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; (3) and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, (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; (5) and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.”

In the previous chapter we read that Moses was divinely instructed to build the Tabernacle according to the pattern shown him on the Mt Sinai (Hebrews 8.5).

In these verses the apostle reminds us how the Tabernacle was prepared, how the furnishings were arranged:

- In the Holy Place was the golden lampstand, the table of showbread and the altar of incense.

- Then there was the second part of the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies/Most Holy Place/Holiest of All, partitioned off by the veil, in this part was the Ark of the Covenant.

All these furnishings pointed to Jesus Christ and were shadows or types of the spiritual truths and realities that God would give under the New Covenant. It is worth noting that by taking an aerial look at the tabernacle furnishings we see they were set out in the shape of a cross.

### 3. (v6-7) It Was Inaccessible To The People

“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 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*”

Only the priests were allowed to enter the Holy Place to perform their duties – the general public could only go as far as the courtyards.

Then even the priests were not allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, only the High Priest could enter here and then only once a year.

### 4. (v8-9) It Was Temporary

“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”

The veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies separated men from God. This veil reminded the people that the way into God's presence had not yet been opened up. While this veil remained there would always be this inaccessibility to God.

Once Jesus died, the veil was torn in two and the need for an earthly sanctuary was done away with.

### 5. (v9-10) The Earthly Sanctuary Was Ineffective For Changing Hearts.

“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 reformation.”

Every day the priests would offer the same sacrifices – the blood could only cover sin but it never washed it away. The Bible calls these daily sacrifices and rituals '*fleshly ordinances*' – they could only deal with the external and not make anyone '*perfect in regard to the conscience*'. It required something better.

Compare this to the Heavenly Sanctuary, which continues from vs 11

- It is a Heavenly sanctuary – the earthly sanctuary had it's limitations
- It is effective for changing lives – the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin
- The Heavenly sanctuary is the fulfilment not the shadow
- Based on a completed sacrifice