

THE BETTER SANCTUARY

Hebrews 9

Introduction: We have never seen the heavenly sanctuary. Yet we believe what the Bible tells us about it. We realize that God is not worshipped today in temples made with hands (Acts 7:46–50). We may call a local church building the “house of God,” but we know that God does not live there. The building is dedicated to God and His service, but it is not His dwelling place. Hebrews 9 presents a contrast between the old sanctuary (the tabernacle) and the new heavenly sanctuary where Jesus now ministers. This contrast makes it clear that the heavenly sanctuary is superior.

I. The Inferior Sanctuary (9:1-10)

Why is the Old Sanctuary inferior?

1. It was on EARTH (v. 1).

The word “worldly” means “of this world, on the earth.” God gave Moses the pattern from heaven, but Moses built the tabernacle (and Solomon the temple) on earth and of earthly materials.

2. It was only a SHADOW of things to come (vv. 2-5).

Here we see the arrangement and furnishings of the tabernacle. Note that “the first” in vs. 2 and 6 means “the first section of the tabernacle,” the Holy Place. “The second tabernacle” of v. 7 means the second division of the tabernacle—the Holy of Holies..

3. It was inaccessible to the PEOPLE (vv. 6-7).

Only the priests could minister in the court and the holy place, and only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies. The heavenly sanctuary is open to all of God’s people.

4. It was TEMPORARY (v. 8).

The veil between men and God reminded the people that the way into God’s presence was not opened. When Christ died, the veil was torn and the need for an earthly sanctuary was abolished.

5. It was ineffective for changing HEARTS (vv. 9-10).

Day after day, the priests offered the same sacrifices. The blood covered sin but never washed it away. Nor could the blood of animals change the hearts and consciences of the worshipers. These were “carnal ordinances,” that is, *ceremonies* that dealt with the externals, not the inner person.

II. The Superior Sanctuary (9:11-28)

Why is the New Sanctuary superior?

1. It is a HEAVENLY sanctuary (v. 11).

The heavenly sanctuary is greater since it was not made with human hands. The earthly tabernacle belonged to the Old Covenant but Christ’s sanctuary is of the New Covenant. Compare v. 24.

2. It is effective for changing lives (vv. 12-23).

The high priest took another creature’s blood into the holy of holies many times during his life; but Jesus took *His own blood* into God’s presence once for all. The OT sacrifices brought about *ceremonial* cleansing for the body (v. 13) but could never reach into the heart and conscience.

3. It is the FULFILLMENT and not the shadow (v. 24).

The Aaronic priests ministered in a tabernacle that was temporary; it pointed to a Christ yet to come. He is not ministering in a man-made tabernacle full of earthly imitations; He is ministering in a heavenly sanctuary that is the fulfillment of these OT practices.

4. It is based on a FINAL and completed sacrifice (vv. 25-28).

The priest’s work was never done because the sacrifices were never final. Christ’s death was final. He appeared to *put away* sin, not merely cover it. The veil was rent and the way opened into the presence of God. The OT Jew did not have access to God’s immediate presence; he would not have dared to enter the Holy of Holies. But because of Christ’s completed work on the cross (“It is finished!”), we have an open path to God through Him.

THE THREE APPEARANCES OF CHRIST

The word “appear” is used 3 times here. We see Christ’s PAST appearance, which put away sin (v. 26), His PRESENT appearance in heaven for us (v. 24), and His FUTURE appearance to take us to glory (v. 28). When the high priest went into the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement, the people waited outside for him to reappear. What joy when he came out again! And what joy we will have when our High Priest appears to take us to our eternal Holy of Holies, to live with Him forever!

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