

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 17 October 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## Setting Things Right

### Hebrews 9:1-5

In the last couple decades, natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes have increased in intensity, and have devastated cities and countries. Most of us remember **Hurricane Katrina**, which hit **New Orleans** in 2005. We remember the horrific earthquake and tsunami in **Indonesia** in 2004, which swept hundreds of souls out to sea. We remember the devastating tsunami in **Japan** in 2011. We remember the decimating earthquake in **Haiti** in 2010, and the earthquake in **Chile in 2015**, as well as the massive earthquake in **Nepal** in that same year. Of course, there have been hundreds of other mega disasters worldwide, which we don't have time to name. These disasters not only killed thousands of people, but also displaced huge numbers of people from their homes.

Now, in response to these emergencies, governmental agencies in these various countries provided their citizens with temporary housing, facilities, and services. In New Orleans, huge numbers of people were given small trailers to live in. Of course, these arrangements were not meant to be permanent. They were only temporary accommodations, until things were "set right" again.

Yet, what if the people got *used to* the temporary conditions? What if they got used to the little trailers, and weren't interested in living in real houses? What if they didn't want things to be "set right," and preferred to live in their temporary accommodations? Surely no one would want to live that way, right?

Now, perhaps you're wondering why I ask this hypothetical question. I do so in order to illustrate what we are about to read in **Hebrews 9**. You see, there was a huge catastrophe that befell mankind 6,000 years ago. It is called "The Fall." Our father Adam sinned against God; and God cursed him and his descendants with spiritual and physical death. Yet, in His mercy, God promised to provide a way of salvation for man. God promised that He would one day raise up a Messiah--an anointed, chosen Descendant of Adam--to provide salvation for the human family. In the meantime, God picked one nation, from among all the nations on earth, to be the nation through whom the Messiah would come. That nation was **Israel**. God established a Covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai; and as part of the provisions of that Covenant, God gave Israel a place to worship Him, called the Tabernacle.

However, the arrangements of this Covenant were only temporary. God let Israel know, hundreds of years beforehand, that a new, perfect, and *permanent* Covenant was coming. Most importantly, God let them know that the **Messiah Himself** would establish this New Covenant; and when He would come, He would "set things right."

Yet, when the Messiah finally came, most of the people of Israel rejected Him. They preferred the temporary conditions of the Old Covenant to the real, permanent, and abiding promises of the New Covenant. They preferred the temporary House of God, with its pictures and symbols, to God Himself, who had taken on human flesh in order to save them from their sins! They preferred shadows instead of reality. They chose to trust in types and symbols, instead of in the Man who could actually wash their sins away; and, tragically, because they rejected Him, they ended up in hell.

Over the next few weeks, we will be examining why the Tabernacle was temporary. As we examine this subject, we will see how Jesus Christ was able to “set things right,” and establish a perfect Covenant.

### **Read Hebrews 9:1-5.**

In **verse 1**, Paul begins by assuring us that the ordinances of the Old Covenant *were* divine, and that they *were* important. Paul wants us to know that he is *not* dismissing the Old Testament Sanctuary, or the ordinances. These things *were* given by God. **Yet, at the same time, Paul reminds us that these things were “worldly.”** He doesn’t mean that they were “*worldly*” in the sense of being bad or evil; he simply means that the furniture and the utensils of the Tabernacle were *earthly* objects, not heavenly ones. He is saying that the items in the Temple were *material*, not spiritual. They *illustrated* spiritual realities; but they couldn’t *make* anyone spiritual, or right with God. For this reason, they were impermanent, and insufficient. As we delve further into this chapter in the coming weeks, we will see *why* they were insufficient.

However, before we do, I would like, this morning, to focus on the pieces of furniture that were in the Tabernacle. Now, Paul doesn’t spend much time talking about these articles of furniture; but he does list them. Let’s look at them again. (**Read 2-5 again.**) You’ll notice that in **verse 5**, Paul says that we “*cannot now speak particularly*” of these things. In other words, he is saying, “We aren’t going to go into the particulars of the Temple furniture.” Paul didn’t *need* to go into detail about the Temple furniture, because his Jewish readers knew about them very well. However, since not all of us may be familiar with the items of the Tabernacle, I would like to talk about them this morning. We will be talking about the **Candlestick**; the **Table of Shewbread**; the **Veil**; the **Altar of Incense**; and the **Ark of the Covenant**. Each one of these things illustrates profound truth about God. First, let’s examine...

#### **I. The Candlestick (v. 2)**

(**Read verse 2 again.**) In this verse, Paul reminds his Hebrew audience that there was a Tabernacle (or “tent”) where the people of Israel worshipped God. He also reminds them that there were *two compartments* within this Tabernacle. The “*first*” compartment was called the “*sanctuary*” (or the Holy Place). In this verse, Paul lists the items that were in this part of the Tabernacle; and the Candlestick is the first of them. Let’s look at God’s description of the Candlestick in the Old Testament.

#### **Read Exodus 25:31-37.**

This seven-branched, golden candlestick is what the Jews call “the Menorah.” Now, when most people see a Menorah, they think of the Jewish people. The Menorah has practically become a symbol of Israel. However, God didn’t intend for the Menorah to be a symbol of the Jewish people, or of Judaism. Rather, **it is a picture of the Holy Spirit.**

How is the Menorah a picture of the Holy Spirit? Simply this: *the Menorah gave light*. The light from the Menorah pictures the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It does so in several ways.

First of all, the Menorah was kept burning day and night. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is always there to give wisdom and spiritual understanding to the believer. Just as the light never went out in the Holy Place, so the Holy Spirit never leaves a true Christian.

Secondly, the Menorah was the *only* source of light for the Tabernacle. God didn't make any provision for *windows* in the Tabernacle: all the light came from the candlesticks of the Menorah. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is the *only* One who can give spiritual light to our sinful hearts. We could not possibly understand or seek after God without the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds. Jesus said, "***No man can come unto me, except my Father, which hath sent me, draw him.***" The Holy Spirit is the One whom the Father has sent to draw people to His Son. The Holy Spirit convicts the world "***of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.***" The Spirit of God enlightens our darkened minds, and shows us our need of Christ, and the meaning of God's Word.

Now, why were there *seven* branches to the candlestick? What does this represent? The answer can be found in **Isaiah 11**.

**Read Isaiah 11:1-2.**

What we are reading in these verses is a prophecy of the coming Messiah. The Messiah, Isaiah says, would be like a sapling tree, springing up from the rotting "tree stump" of the royal family of David. The dynasty of King David had been "cut down" in 586 B.C., when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Judah, and destroyed Jerusalem. Yet, 586 years later, Jesus the Messiah sprang up from the line of David, just like a branch springing up from a rotting tree stump.

However, Jesus was no ordinary man. He was the God-Man. Isaiah said that seven "Spirits" would rest upon Him--namely, the Spirit of the LORD; the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; the Spirit of counsel and might; and the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. These are the seven attributes of the Holy Spirit of God. Isaiah was saying that Jesus would be filled with these seven attributes, because He would be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, why is this important to us? It is important to us because six of these seven attributes are attributes that the Holy Spirit can impart to believers. The Holy Spirit is able to impart wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the LORD to every child of God. Now, we will never possess that first attribute--the "***spirit of the LORD.***" Christ alone possesses that attribute, because He is God. He is one with the Father and the Spirit. We will never become God! However, we who are saved do have the Spirit of the LORD *dwelling inside* us! The Holy Spirit comes to live inside a person at the moment he is saved; and He never leaves. He takes up permanent residence, and claims *ownership* of that person!

I'm here to tell you, Christian, that the Holy Spirit is *jealous* over you! He wants *you*. He wants your *whole heart*. He doesn't want half-hearted affection. He doesn't want you to have a half-hearted pursuit of godliness. He wants you to be *filled* with wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of the LORD. He will give you those godly qualities, if you will only yield yourself fully to Him!

Christian, are *you* submitting fully to the Holy Spirit, and allowing Him to impart these godly qualities to you? If so, the world *will* notice! Remember what Pharaoh said about Joseph? He said, "***Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art.***" King

Darius said the same thing about **Daniel**. He said that an “*excellent spirit*” was “*in him.*” Are you allowing that “excellent Spirit” of God to shine forth from your life, Christian?

## II. The Table of Shewbread (v. 2)

(**Read verse 2 again.**) The next item in Paul’s list of Tabernacle furniture is the **Table of Shewbread**. Let’s read God’s description of the Table of Shewbread.

**Read Exodus 25:23-30.**

In these verses, God gives us the description of the Table of Shewbread. The Table of Shewbread sat on the north side of the Holy Place, just opposite the Menorah. It was overlaid with gold, with a crown-like pattern all the way around the edge. On this table, the priests kept a constant supply of unleavened bread; and while they ministered in the Sanctuary, they would stop now and then, and eat bread from this table.

Now, what did this table picture? First of all, the gold represents God’s divine royalty and Kingship. Secondly, the unleavened bread represented sinlessness. Throughout the Bible, leaven is a picture of sin; thus, unleavened bread is a picture of sinlessness. Yet, is this the whole picture? No, there is more. Let’s look at **John 6**.

**Read John 6:35-51.**

Do you see now what the Table of Shewbread represents? It is a picture of Christ! Jesus Christ is the “Bread of Life.” This whole table, and everything on it, is a picture of Him. As the Son of God, He is **royal** (as pictured by the gold). As the Son of Man, He is **sinless** (as pictured by the unleavened bread). Also, **He is the only One who can give us spiritual life!** Believing on Jesus is like eating Bread. Just as we cannot live physically without eating bread (or food), so we cannot live spiritually without believing on Jesus Christ.

Jesus says that those who know Him should “eat” Him daily. Of course, Jesus isn’t talking about *literally* eating His body. He is talking about having sweet fellowship with Him. He’s talking about feasting on His Word, and abiding in Him. King David put it this way: “***O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him*” (Psalm 34:8). “Trusting” Christ is like “tasting” delicious bread, and seeing that it is good.**

This brings me to an important question: “Have *you* placed your trust in Christ for salvation? Have you been born again?” Is the idea of having a sweet relationship with God foreign to you? If so, perhaps it is because you don’t know Him. Those who have not been born again into God’s family can’t understand the sweetness of knowing God, because they *don’t* have such a relationship. Would you have to admit that this is true of you? Has God always seemed far off and inaccessible to you? If so, you need to be saved. Please don’t put it off!

In a small tract called *The Last Testimonies of Saints and Sinners*, a pastor told the account of a young woman named **Jenny**, who once attended revival services at a local church. During the meetings, she felt convicted of her sin; yet, she stopped short of receiving Christ as her Saviour. The reason? There was a dance coming up that Friday. She clearly understood the Gospel, and she knew that if she got saved, she would have a relationship with Christ—

which would mean that sensual things, such as dances, should no longer be part of her life. She knew that she was being offered not only salvation from hell, but also a sweet relationship with the Lord; yet, she didn't want to pass up one more chance to indulge in the pleasures of the world. So, she skipped the revival service that Friday, and went to the dance.

Well, Jenny never felt convicted of her sin again; and a few months later, she became deathly sick. The pastor went to visit Jenny; and he urged her to repent of her sin, and to believe on Christ. She told the pastor that she knew she was unsaved, and that she was only hours from slipping into hell; but she felt nothing in her heart. She couldn't repent, and she knew it. He urged her again and again; but she insisted that she couldn't. That night she died, and slipped off into a Christless eternity! Friend, don't let this be you! Christ wants to have a wonderful relationship with you. He wants to "eat" with you, and fellowship with you. Jesus said, ***"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"*** (Revelation 3:20).

For those of you who *are* saved, I would ask this: "Are you *continuing* to abide in Christ as you should?" Do you take time to have sweet communion with Him every day? Do you allow other things to take the place of your fellowship with Christ? Is your day filled with work, and hobbies, and entertainment, yet void of time with God? Do you take time with your family to worship God and read His Word together? Or do you spend little to no time instructing your family in the ways of the Lord? If so, you are spiritually malnourished! Take up the Bread of Life, and feast on Him, and *with* Him, today!

### III. The Veil (v. 3)

(Read verse 3 again.) We now come to the third item of the Sanctuary--the **veil**. Once again, we will look at God's description of this item.

#### Read Exodus 26:31-35.

In the Tabernacle, there two veils. The *first* veil was the veil that the priests passed through when they stepped out of the courtyard, and into the Sanctuary, or Holy Place. The ***"second veil"*** was the veil *inside* the Sanctuary, which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. *All* the priests were allowed inside the Holy Place (the place where the Menorah, Table of Shewbread, and the Altar of Incense were); but only the *high* priest was permitted to go into the Holy of Holies. Even then, the high priest could go into that room only one time per year, on Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement). On that special day when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, he had to go through this thick, heavy veil, which Paul calls ***"the second veil"*** here in **Hebrews 9:3**.

Now, what does this ***"second veil"*** represent? Well, before we can understand what the veil represents, we first need to understand whom the *priests* represent. We know that the *High Priest* is a picture of Christ: but whom did all the other priests picture? Peter answers that question in **1 Peter 2:9**. In writing to believers, Peter said, ***"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."*** Simply put, *every Christian is a priest!* A "priest" today is not someone who wears a collar, and who belongs to an elite "holy order": a "priest" is a believer in Jesus! So, what does this mean? It means that

the priests in Old Testament times were a picture **of each and every believer**. We who are saved are all priests before God, serving Him in the Temple of our local church!

Now, with this in mind, let's get back to the question: "What does that '*second veil*' represent?" If the regular priests represent those of us who are saved, and if only the high priest (who represents Christ) was allowed to go past that veil, does that mean that *we* can't go past the veil? What does the veil mean, anyway? Paul answers that question in **Hebrews 10**.

**Read Hebrews 10:19-22.**

What is the "*veil*," according to this verse? The veil represents Christ's body! Christ's body had to be "broken" on the cross so that the Holy of Holies (which represents God's throne room) could be opened to us. We, as God's people, may now freely enter God's throne room, without fear of hesitation. Why? Because our true High Priest, Jesus Christ, has "opened" the veil between us and God the Father. Because His body was broken for us, the way has been opened for us to draw near to God the Father. This is exactly why God allowed the veil in the Temple to be ripped in two. In **Matthew 27**, we are told that at the very moment when Jesus died on the cross, the thick, heavy veil of the Temple rent in two. God was saying, "The way is opened now!" I don't know about you, but this truth makes me feel like singing!

Christian, are you taking advantage of this great privilege--the privilege of going freely to God and calling Him, "Abba, Father"? Do you take time, in your prayers, to thank God that you can "come to the Father through Jesus the Son"?

#### **IV. The Altar of Incense (v. 4)**

(**Read verse 4 again.**) In this verse, Paul mentions another important article of the Tabernacle: **the Altar of Incense**. (He calls it the "*golden censer*.") Let's look at God's description of the Altar of Incense.

**Read Exodus 30:1-8.**

As we read these verses, you may have noticed that the Altar of Incense was in the *Holy Place*, **not** in the Holy of Holies. The Altar of Incense sat right in front of the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This means that the Altar of Incense was only a few feet from the Ark of the Covenant, which sat just on the other side of the curtain.

Why, then, does Paul speak as though the Altar of Incense were inside the *Holy of Holies*? Well, here's why. Remember how once a year, the high priest went through the veil into the Holy of Holies? Well, when he pulled back that veil to enter the Holy of Holies, there was no more barrier between the Altar of Incense and the Ark of the Covenant. When the veil was opened, the smoke of the incense from the altar *went into* the Holy of Holies, and "covered" the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. When that veil was pulled back, it was as though the Altar of Incense were actually *inside* the Holy of Holies. In fact, for those few moments, the Sanctuary was all *one room*. The whole area was now the "Holy of Holies"!

So, what does all this represent? **Revelation 8:3-4** gives us the answer. In this passage, John gives us a glimpse of the Temple of God in Heaven; and He says that the incense is offered the

altar along with *“the prayers of all saints.”* Simply put, the smoke from the Altar of Incense is a picture of the *prayers of God’s people*. Our prayers are like a beautiful aroma in God’s nostrils. The prayers of God’s true children do not “rise to the ceiling,” and no further. They ascend to the throne of God; and when we pray to Him in sincerity and humility, a merciful God hears our cries, and answers according to His good will and pleasure!

Christian, God *really* hears and answers your prayers, when your heart is cleansed and right before Him. Jesus said, *“Shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him?”* He certainly *will* do so; and He will do it speedily!

#### V. The Ark of the Covenant (v. 4).

**(Read verse 4 again.)** Paul mentions one more item of the Tabernacle; and this is the most important item of all. The **Ark of the Covenant** was the place where God visibly manifested Himself on earth in a pillar of light! Let’s look at the Old Testament one more time, and read about this amazing item of the Tabernacle.

#### **Read Exodus 25:10-22.**

The Ark of the Covenant was the visual representation on earth of God’s throne in Heaven! Like the Table of Shewbread, it was overlaid with gold, and bordered by a crown. This is a picture of God’s royal Kingship and majesty. The two golden Cherubim represented the highest angels of Heaven, who hover about the throne of God, and lead the citizens of Heaven in worshipping God.

However, the most important part of the Ark of the Covenant was the **mercy seat**. The mercy seat was on the lid of the box, between the Cherubim. The mercy seat represented the very seat of God Himself! The mercy seat is where the High Priest symbolically sprinkled the blood of goats and bulls once a year, as a covering for the people’s sins. The mercy seat is a picture of the place in Heaven where Jesus Christ, our High Priest and Sacrifice, sprinkled His own blood as the covering for man’s sins! Jesus Christ, our High Priest, offered Himself as a Sacrifice for sins, arose from the dead, ascended to the Temple in Heaven, went straight to His Father’s throne, and offered His own blood before the Father as the covering for our sins. He then *sat down on that throne*; and He is still seated on that throne, as our eternal High Priest!

#### **Read Hebrews 10:11-14.**

**Conclusion:** Salvation’s work is done! Christ has offered up Himself as the once-for-all Sacrifice for our sins. His body was broken; and the way to God’s throne room has been opened to us. He has sprinkled His blood on the mercy seat, as the eternal covering for our sins; and He is now seated on His Father’s throne. We who have anchored our souls to Him will one day be drawn to the heavenly shore. We also have the privilege, in this life, of having sweet fellowship with Christ. We have the Living Bread to feast upon; and we have the Holy Spirit, who imparts wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the LORD. As our prayers arise like sweet incense, He hears our prayers, and He answers.

All these things are available through Christ. However, to have them, you must come to Him in simple repentance and faith in Christ. Going to church, singing hymns, or even being baptised, or taking the Lord’s Supper, cannot save you. You cannot substitute shadows for spiritual reality. You *must have Christ*, and Him alone. If you have never truly trusted in Christ, I urge you to do so today!

If you know Christ already, you have had the privilege, this morning, of seeing rich truths about your relationship with God. However, with this knowledge comes greater responsibility and accountability. Be filled with the Spirit, Christian! Feast on Christ and his Word! Be instant in prayer! And, as you send up your prayer to Heaven, remember to thank Him for coming to earth to “set things right.”