

Text: Heb. 9:1-14

Title: "Christ: our high priest and sacrifice"

Time: 11/1/2015 pm

Place: NBBC

Introduction: I enjoyed some very special and extraordinary time with my sister and her 3-year-old little girl Acelyn this past week. Uncle Kevin does not get to do much of that, unfortunately. It felt like practice for grandfathering, to be honest.

I think the thing little Ace enjoyed the most during her visit with us was the visit we made to Dodges' Farm. We saw the animals, but Acelyn really liked the tractor collection that is there. She asked to sit atop every one and see if she could make it go. I found myself especially attracted to the goat pen and four baby kids who were there. I thought about the use of the lamb and the kid in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and how those creatures provide a wonderful object lesson that teaches us what Jesus became for us to endure the penalty for our sins.

It turns out that nearly everything about the nation of Israel is an object lesson of spiritual truth. God used that nation's laws and worship and history as a tool of revelation. Simply put, with rare exception, the Old Testament is about Israel, and Israel is all about the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Matthew summed up that principle when he noted that Jesus was taken to Egypt as a boy and then brought to his home in Nazareth. He quoted a passage about Israel reflecting on this experience of our Lord from Hosea 11:1, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." Even Israel's exodus from Egypt was an object lesson of the life of Christ.

This amazing fact of biblical revelation is especially true of the tabernacle, and this point is important to our author's message in this passage (vv. 8-9; *parable*). So he refers to furniture and priestly procedures and a national holiday in this passage, but he is really focused on telling us about Christ, our High Priest and Sacrifice. So understanding that we are dealing with a wonderful object lesson in this passage this evening, I want us to focus on three points – the objects, the lesson about a problem, and the lesson about the solution to the problem.

I. The objects – God's revelation through the tabernacle (vv. 1-7).

Illustration: My wife often tells me that I am a big-picture guy and she is a detailed person. Perhaps you did not know that humanity can be categorized that way, but now you do. It is certainly difficult to argue that there is anything but a lot of truth to this idea, at least in the Hobi home.

Application: As our author describes this tabernacle environment, he seems to indicate that there are details and a big picture. Both are important, but he is not going to get into the details right now (v. 5). That would be a rich and wonderful study, certainly. By God's grace, we will get there together some day. But for now, the author instead wants to focus on some big-picture items when it comes to these objects. I'll highlight three that I think are emphasized here.

1. The objects are righteous-acts, but only earthly (v. 1). The word *ordinances* in this passage is related to the word *righteousness* in the original language. Some translations use the word *regulations*. These are all good translations, but I point out this connection to the word *righteousness* because I do not want us to miss the fact that the activities and procedures related to these objects were indeed the right things to do.

When our author calls them *ordinances*, he is not telling us that they are wrong, he is telling us that they are right.

But then he also tells us on the other hand that they are worldly or of this world. Do you remember what Jesus told Pilate about His kingdom? He said, "My kingdom is not of this world, and if it were armies would be smashing you right now." The day is coming when the kingdoms of this world do become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, but that is for our Savior's second coming, not His first.

The tabernacle procedures, by way of contrast, were of this world. They were physical, not really spiritual. They were earthly, not really heavenly. They were right, but you had to be able to go past them to find God's purposes for them. Going through the motions was not enough. What is necessary is a correct understanding of their meaning, God's intended truth revealed through them, and then a faithful and obedient response from the life to that truth. Going through the motions with them does nothing for the sinner.

This is why we do not agree with Roman Catholicism that tells us that baptizing an infant causes that infant to become born again. Baptism, even when correctly administered to saved adults, is the right thing to do, but it is only worldly, earthly, and physical. It is faith and obedience to what baptism represents that will change our lives and free us from sin.

2. The objects are holy (vv. 1, *sanctuary*; vv. 2-3, called *Holies*; called *Holy of Holies*). This tent was not to be used for the purpose of family camping in the woods. You were not to have a picnic using the table of showbread for your picnic table. It was wrong to light your garage while you work on

your car at night with this candlestick. Why? Because God had designated these things as holy.

He had ordained a special program for a special time in this world, and certain things were set aside as instruments of that program. We have them in our day with a different program: baptism is holy, the Lord's Table is holy, our assembly times are holy, our spiritual gifts are holy. They are of this world, but they are holy. They must be set apart for God's special use.

It is in this sense that Paul says that we should never despise the church of God by treating its things as mundane as the things we do at home (1 Cor. 11:22). We have houses we can eat and drink in, but the church worship assembly is holy, not for Big Macs and pumpkin pie, and the Lord's Table is holy, not to be desecrated outside the local church assembly.

3. The objects are golden, rare, and glorious (vv. 4-5).

Illustration: I like those Master Card commercials that talk about priceless things. This costs that much, and that this much, but the smile that it brings to the face of a child is priceless.

Application: Well, we should value our spiritual birthright as members of this church as a priceless thing. The privilege of taking part in God's program is golden, rare, and glorious. I do not want to leave this church because I count it a priceless privilege to be in ministry with so many who are here. That I should be allowed to be called Pastor by you is amazingly valuable to me. Satan tempts me at times to not value my spiritual privileges correctly. We need our eyes opened to see the gold, the rarity, and the glory of our standing in Christ and our call to His work.

4. The objects were sanctified for service with blood in atonement for sin (vv. 6-7). That once-a-year day described in this passage, when the high priest brought blood to the mercy seat in the Holies of Holies, is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. This was and still is the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Everything that the priests did all year long came to a great crescendo on that Day. It was a day of blood, and a day when atonement was made for the sin of the people.

It was designed by the Lord to teach Israel of their need for that wounded Lamb of God that Isaiah 53 speaks of. Its truth gave David confidence to pray, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be white as snow" (Ps. 51:7). Repentance and faith are meaningless without a work of atonement in which to place our faith. Everything about God's program in every age reaches its crescendo in the salvation of His people from their sins. Is that why we are here this evening?

II. A lesson about a problem – distance between us and our God (vv. 8-10).

Illustration: Robert Murray McCheyne, in his message on John 14:6, wrote of the problem of the fall of mankind and his expulsion from the Garden of Eden as he preached that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. When Adam fell, "God drove the man out of paradise; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.

"This flaming sword between the cherubim was a magnificent emblem of God, – the just and sin-hating God. In the bush, He appeared to Moses as a consuming fire; in the temple, He appeared between the cherubim in the milder glory of the Shechinah; but here He appeared between the cherubim as a sword, – a just and sin-hating God. And I beseech

you to remark, that this flaming sword turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. If it had not turned every way, — if it had left some footpath unglared across, — then Adam might have stolen in by that footpath, and made his own way to the tree of life. But no: whatever avenue he tried, — however secret, however narrow, however steep and difficult, however silently he crept along, — still this flaming meteor met him, and it seemed to say, ‘How can man be just with God? by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh living be justified.’ Well might Adam sit down, wearied with the vain search for a pathway into life; for man by nature has no way to the Father. But Christ says, ‘I am the way.’”

The problem is that man has been expelled from the Holy of Holies because of his sin. That is our author’s point (v. 8). God’s Spirit was revealing this in all the furniture and priestly procedure of the tabernacle. The way in existed, but it was not yet made manifest by the tabernacle revelation. That manifestation would come at a later time, and that time is described at the end of verse 10 as the time of reformation.

That is as close as we come in the Scriptural terminology to describing what we call today *a new dispensation*. The word *reformation* literally translates, *a new order*. A new program would fully manifest the truth that there is a way into the Holy of Holies. And as McCheyne so eloquently and forcibly observed, “Christ is the way.”

He continued: “But how did He open the way? Did He pull aside the veil, that we might steal in secretly and easily into the presence of the Father? No; but He offered himself an offering to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God.

“He said, ‘It is finished,’ and bowed his head and gave up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom. It is finished: the punishment of the law is borne, the demands of the law are answered, the

way is finished, the veil is rent from the top to the bottom! Not a shred of the dreadful curtain now remains to intercept us. The guiltiest, the vilest sinner of you all, has now liberty to enter in through the rent veil, under the light of Jehovah's countenance, – to dwell in the secret of his tabernacle, to behold his beauty, and to inquire in his temple. And now, my friends, is this your way of coming to the Father?" What a question for us this evening! Do we go into the Holy of Holies through Christ? Does our access through Him mean anything to us?

III. A lesson about the problem solved – life in glory (vv. 11-14).

Illustration: We have already said that the simple phrase, "Christ is the way," is the solution to the problem. Our author gives us more wonderful details to consider about this as he describes the superiority of the work of Christ on the cross to the right regulations of the old order.

1. His tabernacle is better, because it is heavenly - v. 11. It is interesting that the Most Holy Place was a perfect cube, and the New Jerusalem is described in Rev. 21:16 with dimensions that make it a perfect cube. We are told there that the twelve gates of the city are named after the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve foundation stones after the twelve apostles. Just as Israel's sanctuary provided a faint outline of the heavenly sanctuary, so our gathered local church assembly, with or without a building, as the house of God, also gives the world a glimpse of the glory of that coming city.

2. His sacrifice is better, because it was His (v. 12). And because it was His, it was once for all and it obtained an eternal redemption. As the redeemed of God this year, I am not going to need another work of redemption sometime next year. My redemption does not work on the schedule of a holiday

calendar. No, my redemption is eternal. My Savior's sacrifice is once for all. The Roman Catholic Mass is a sad mockery of this truth.

3. His cleansing is better, because it reaches the inside (vv. 13-14). Religion can give me things to do, but only the blood of Christ can change and heal what I am. This is the solution to the problem. Do you need it this evening?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*