

Sunday May 28th sermon: "We Have a Better Tabernacle -- The God of All Comforts (Pt 17)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,  
by John Pittman Hey

Hebrews 9:1-11; Matthew 27:45-54

God comforts us by the oath He made to Christ, appointing Him our high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Because Christ has obtained a better priesthood, He is the mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises.

Hebrews explains to us that a New covenant was necessary, because poor sinners cannot keep the old covenant. The blessings of the old covenant therefore cannot be obtained.

The forgiveness and mercy to our unrighteousness that God promises in His New Covenant was, of course, executed by the sacrifice our high priest, the Lord Jesus, made for us at Calvary.

Hebrews goes on to assert, that the old covenant is done away for us in Christ. The law of sin and death has been replaced by the New covenant, which has the far better promises of God: justification, forgiveness of our sin, and promised sanctification as we are conformed to the image of Christ.

In Hebrews 9, the writer takes up the question, where is the priest's work done? Where is the sacrifice presented to God for the propitiation of our sins? Where is satisfaction made unto God?

Hebrews outlines the purpose of the tabernacle in the old covenant. It was made after a heavenly pattern, but it only provided an earthly type or picture of the tabernacle that is in heaven.

The Aaronic priests practiced their services as pictures foretelling the true services which Christ now performs. There was a golden table, the showbread, the candlestick, and the golden censers.

Then through the veil, inside the holy of holies, there was the ark of the covenant and atop it, the golden mercy seat and cherubim, where the sacrificial blood was sprinkled in the presence of God's glory. That glory had to be obscured by clouds of incense, lest the priest die.

The Aaronic high priest could only enter into the holiest place once a year, and only with the sacrificial blood.

At the mercy seat, the animal blood was for the appeasement of God's wrath for the sins of the people. That was where mercy for sins was found.

In that man-made tabernacle, upon that mercy seat, was where the priest presented the blood of atonement for sin.

Without this tabernacle, and this mercy seat, there would be no propitiation of God's wrath for the sin of the people. Imagine the agony they felt when the ark and the mercy seat had been carried away by the Philistines, or by the Babylonians. In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and from that day to this, there has been no animal sacrifice presented to God for propitiation of the people's sin.

The writer of Hebrews points out the deficiency of the old tabernacle system: because the people could never enter that holiest place in the presence of God's glory, and because the priests were barred except for once a year, and because they were required to bring the blood of atonement each time, the Holy Ghost thereby signified that the way into the holiest place had not yet been made manifest in the old tabernacle.

What was done there was but a figure or picture, using sacrifices which could not make anyone perfect, nor cleanse the guilty conscience of its sin.

The old tabernacle and its rules and its restricted access served as a reminder of abiding sin, and the priest's inability to finally atone for sin. The sacrifices he made had to be repeated in perpetuity, yet our sins were never truly taken away.

All these physical rituals, and services, and offerings, were meant to point to the perfect priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchizedek!

But now Christ is made our great high priest of good things to come, of a better covenant, with better promises, and He performs His priestly duties in a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands!

Hebrews has mentioned this better, heavenly tabernacle previously. In chapter 6, our anchor is set in Christ, Who has already entered behind the veil for us.

In chapter 8, Christ is a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

Later in chapter 9, Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us!

Because of Christ's priestly work in the tabernacle in glory, which is in the presence of the throne of God, now His people are invited to come in behind the veil where He is!

Having been forever perfected by His sacrifice for our sin, there is now no remembrance of our sin against us anymore, and we are made fit to come boldly into the holiest place by the blood of Jesus!

Indeed, we come by a new and living way, which Christ our high priest has consecrated for us, through the veil, which is Christ's sacrificial body!

The veil in the old tabernacle kept God's people out. Christ's body, torn for us on the cross, now beckons us to enter into the holiest place into the glory of God.

We are no longer kept out by curtains and smoke, as before when the true way in had not yet been provided.

Now we are welcomed by the body of Jesus and His blood, to enter unto our God without stain or fear!

What a comfort God has given us by Jesus Christ as our high priest, for the liberty to go where poor lost men are barred!

We have a better tabernacle that welcomes us by Christ's sacrifice that has cleansed us.

Thus, Christ performs His priestly work of making propitiation for our crimes, in the heavenly tabernacle of God, where He presents the blood of atonement unto our God, and forever purges our sins from us.

All this was pictured at the time of Christ's death at Calvary. When His sacrifice was completed, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom! The way was cleared for God's people to enter into the holiest of holies by the sacrifice of Jesus, which took away our sins.

In this better, heavenly tabernacle, our high priest is never thrust out, but He stays there constantly, making intercession for His people by His bloody offering as God's Lamb.

And because the veil was rent at Calvary, His people, for whom He made the final offering for sin, that really took it away for good, are welcome to enter behind to veil, to be with Jesus, in the presence of the glory of a satisfied God.

Elizabeth Dark penned these glorious words:

"Through Thy precious body broken Inside the veil;  
O what words to sinners spoken Inside the veil!  
Precious as the blood that bought us,  
Perfect as the love that sought us,  
Holy as the Lamb that brought us Inside the veil!

"Lamb of God, through Thee we enter Inside the veil;  
Cleansed by Thee, we boldly venture Inside the veil:  
Not a stain; a new creation;  
Ours is such a full salvation;  
Low we bow in adoration Inside the veil.

"Soon Thy saints shall all be gathered Inside the veil:  
All at home, no more be scattered, Inside the veil.  
Naught from Thee our hearts shall sever;  
We shall see Thee, grieve Thee never;  
'Praise the Lamb!' shall sound forever Inside the veil!"