

What Was the Purpose of the Tabernacle and Temple?

[Hebrews 8:1-5](#)

Hebrews, Day 25

Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." - Hebrews 8:1-5, ESV

So, what's the point? Have you ever been watching a TV show or reading a book or listening to something on the radio, and you just thought, "What's the point of this, really?"

I will admit to having this feeling sometimes about the Tournament of Roses parade. The elaborate floats covered in plant material take months to design and build and cost thousands of dollars, for a brief display on television, and then it's all over. But perhaps beauty and artistry need no other reason for existing. I'm sure my wife has sometimes had the same thoughts about the football games that come on after the parade.

For almost 1,500 years, God had His people worship Him in a Tabernacle and then a Temple, which was basically just a permanent-building version of the Tabernacle. Yet we learned in chapter 7 of Hebrews that the Tabernacle/Temple worship and the Levitical priesthood made no one perfect and was not a way of salvation. So, what was the point?

Hebrews 8 begins to tell us the answer, which will continue to be unfolded in chapters 9 and 10: They were "a copy and shadow of the heavenly things." Moses was told by God to make the Tabernacle after the pattern shown him on Mount Sinai. The pattern Moses was shown was a copy, a shadow of the heavenly throne room.

When Jesus accomplished salvation for us, He was exalted to being high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. But where? Not in the Temple in Jerusalem. That was only for Levitical priests. No, Jesus was made priest in the heavenly sanctuary, in the throne room of God, where He sits at God's right hand.

If Jesus was going to come and accomplish salvation and then minister in the heavenly sanctuary, why have a copy? God gave it to show the people the pattern for what Jesus would do. Jesus would offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin, to cleanse His people, and then rise again and ascend into heaven to make intercession for us. This was all patterned in the altar of sacrifices, the bronze sea, the altar of incense, and the Holy of Holies with the ark of the covenant with its mercy seat. It was all given as a pattern to show what we needed and what Jesus would do for us.

God was and is the master teacher, and the Tabernacle pattern of worship was given as an ongoing, generation-after-generation object lesson. In it, God displayed His people's need and promised ultimate provision for that need. But like all copies and shadows, once the reality comes, it is no longer needed, which we'll see more clearly next time.