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The Insufficiency of the Former Sanctuary

9: 1-5

The insufficiency of the former sanctuary DIG: Why should we study about the Tabernacle? What were the three pieces of furniture within the Holy Place? What does each picture about our Lord? Into what part of the Tabernacle did the high priest enter only once a year? Specifically, where did YHVH say He would meet with Isra'el? Review the furniture in the Tabernacle. What lessons do you think ADONAI wanted to teach the Israelites through these items? As a dwelling place for God, what were the limitations of the Tabernacle?

REFLECT: What are the limitations of your life and heart as a dwelling place for God? What barriers are keeping you from fellowshiping with Him? What do you find to be challenging in keeping the balance between your earthly home and your heavenly one?

Having argued for the superiority of the New Covenant (**to see link click [Bo](#) - Proof of the Superiority of the New Covenant**), the author now introduces the insufficiency of **the Sanctuary**. Even though it was set up with human hands, earthly, and faulty, it was still valuable as a teaching tool. The author gives us a rapid review of the layout of **the Tabernacle** and how it consisted of a system of barriers between the worshipper and **God**.



The Tabernacle was an earthly sanctuary: This means it was **made with human hands (9:11)**, and **set up with human hands (8:2)**. The Israelites generously brought the spoils of Egypt to Moshe, and from those materials **the Tabernacle** was made. **YHVH** gave two men the wisdom and skill to do the intricate work of making the various pieces of furniture and furnishings of **the Tabernacle** (see the commentary on **Exodus Ew - The Appointment of Bezalel and Oholiab**). After the construction was completed, **the Tabernacle** was put in place and dedicated to **God** (see the commentary on **Exodus Hh - The Glory of the LORD Filled the Tabernacle**). But even though **the glory of ADONAI** moved into **the Tabernacle**, it was still an earthly building, **made with human hands** out of earthly materials. Despite the fact it was **man-made** and earthly, it was still valuable as a teaching tool.²¹³

Now the First Covenant had both regulations for worship and a Holy Place here on earth (9:1 CJB). The First Covenant, inspired by **the Spirit of God**, was not worthless or pointless. Believers in the New Covenant should also love **the Torah**. At the festival of Shavu'ot about **three thousand were saved (Acts 2:41)**. Many years later, however, tens of thousands of believers were still **zealous for the Torah (Acts 21:20)**. As a result, **the Torah** is not merely for the righteous of the TaNaKh, but for all believers. Rabbi Sha'ul teaches us that **the Torah is holy (Romans 7:12)**, and **we know that the Torah is good, provided one uses it in the way the Torah itself intends (First Timothy 1:8)**. Through **it, God** required certain kinds of worship and a special place in which to worship. **The Tabernacle** was temporary, as implied by its earthly character. Only two chapters are devoted to the creation story, whereas some fifty chapters focus on **the Tabernacle**. It is important and demands attention in our study because everywhere you look in **the Tabernacle**, you can see **Jesus Christ** (see the commentary on **Exodus Eq - Christ in the Tabernacle**).

The inspired human author of **Hebrews** makes many comparisons. He compared the prophets, the angels, Joshua, and Aaron to **Messiah** – always pointing out **Christ's** superiority. But he never depreciates the people or things he compares with **Messiah** or **His** work. In fact he exalts them in the TaNaKh. He doesn't compare **Christ** to people or things that are meaningless or worthless, but ones that were **God-ordained**, faithful and purposeful. Not only that, but he doesn't try to build **Yeshua** up by running these down. Quite the contrary, he lifts them up and praises them. And in doing so, he exalts **Messiah** all the more. The more the other persons and things and legitimately lifted up, the more **Christ** is glorified, the more superior, the **better, He** is shown to be.²¹⁴

The Tabernacle was a picture of something greater: In the outer court (see the

commentary on **Exodus Ex - The Courtyard and Gate of the Tabernacle**) a **tent was prepared** which was **the Sanctuary**. As the priest passed **the bronze altar** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fa - Build an Altar of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Bronze**), and **the bronze basin** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fh - The Bronze Basin in the Tabernacle: Christ, Our Cleanser**), he would enter **the Sanctuary** through **the outer veil** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fj - The Outer Veil of the Sanctuary**) and enter **the Holy Place**. It was thirty feet long, fifteen feet wide, fifteen feet high, and had three pieces of furniture.

In it was the Lampstand (see the commentary on **Exodus Fn - The Lampstand in the Sanctuary: Christ, the Light of the World**), on the left as the priest walked in. **It** had seven branches and was made of gold. Variations are found in the synagogues throughout the world, and the design rivals the six-pointed star of David popularity as a Jewish symbol.²¹⁵

On the right was **the table of the bread of the Presence** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fo - The Bread of the Presence in the Sanctuary: Christ, the Bread of Life**) (**9:2 CJB**), which held **the sacred bread**. Every Shabbat twelve loaves of **bread** were set on it, one for each of the twelve tribes. At the end of the week, the priests, and only the priests, were allowed to eat **it**.

Behind the inner veil (see the commentary on **Exodus Fq - The Inner Veil of the Sanctuary: That is Christ, His Body**) **was the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar for burning incense**. It would seem that the author made the mistake of locating **the golden altar of incense "in" the Most Holy Place**, which would be an error. But on the contrary, choosing his words very carefully, he *associated the altar of incense with the Most Holy Place* even though it was outside **the inner veil**. The Greek text says that **the table of the bread of the Presence** and **the seven-branched Lampstand** were **"in" the Holy Place**. And below we learn that the Greek text says that **the jar of manna, Aaron's rod that budded and stone tablets of the Covenant** were **"in" the Ark** (see my commentary on **Exodus Fr - The Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace**). But the Greek expression for the relationship between **the Most Holy Place** and **the altar of incense** is not **"in"** but **"having,"** or *having associated with* itself. Like **the Ark, the golden altar for burning incense** was *associated with the Most Holy Place* (**9:3**).²¹⁶

Although **the golden altar** was used for daily purposes, it was also used in a special way by **the high priest** on the Day of Yom Kippur. **He** would take from it a special golden censer of

coals, different from that of any other day, and bring it into **the Most Holy Place**. The meaning of the writer therefore, would be that **the golden altar** and golden censor were *associated with the Most Holy Place*, but was not a permanent article of furniture.

And the gold covered ark of the Covenant. This Ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that budded, and the stone tablets of the Covenant (9:4). Above the Ark were the cherubim (Hebrew: *k'ruvim*) representing the Sh'khinah glory of God (see the commentary on [Isaiah Ju - The Glory of the LORD Rises Upon You](#)), casting their shadow on the mercy seat (see the commentary on [Exodus Fs - The Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace](#)). It was between the wings of those cherubim on the mercy seat that God met mankind (9:5a CJB). There, above the mercy seat between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Covenant, I will meet with you and give you all My commands for the Isrealites (Exodus 25:22).

The point of this whole overview, and why the author says: **But now is not the time to discuss these things in detail (9:5b CJB)**, is to show that the Levitical priesthood consisted of a system of barriers between the worshipper and **God**. Only **the High Priest** could ever enter **the Most Holy Place**, and then only once a year. For all practical purposes, the men and women of Isra'el had no access to **God** at all. The gate (see the commentary on [Exodus Ez - The Gate of the Tabernacle: Christ, The Way to God](#)) and the courtyard separated Gentiles from Jews. **The Sanctuary** separated the Levites from the non-Levites. **The outer veil** separated the priests from the non-priests and **the inner veil** separated the high priest from the common priests.²¹⁷ **Hence, the Dispensation of Torah had a Tabernacle with divine pictures and symbols, but it was earthly, and temporary, and it never provided true access to ADONAI.**²¹⁸