



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 9:1 - 10

“The Sanctuary and the Services”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word, again, and we praise Thee for the way in which it ministers to us, and we certainly have great needs. We pray that as we read and ponder it that we may be enabled to grow and to, by Thy grace, be enabled also to live in a way that will be pleasing to Thee. We thank Thee for the great High Priest that we have and we thank Thee for the effectual working, which He accomplishes, continually, even at this very moment. We thank Thee for the word of God that has given us an understanding of the purpose of God through the ages and we thank Thee, specifically, for the Epistle to the Hebrews and for its needed instruction for us. Give us diligence in our studies and, above all, Lord, give us responsiveness to Thy word.

We pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Many years ago, the minister of the First Presbyterian Church in this city used to have a program called Table Talk. It was about twenty-five years ago. And, in the course of the Table Talk program, which was in the late afternoon, and I, occasionally, listened to it on the way to Believers Chapel and our evening service. I think, it was around six o'clock or thereabouts that the program was carried on. It was one of the ministers, the minister of the church, Thomas Frye was talking about anything

that came up but, frequently, it turned to spiritual and moral things, of course, and this afternoon, as I was listening to it, the subject of prayer came up and he had a lady with him, whose name was Lois, and she carried on a conversation with him and he answered questions that she may have raised. So it was that type of program. And they were discussing among other things, prayer. And she had finally suggested in the discussion on prayer that one of the things that might help a person, in his prayer, would be the reading of the Bible. And so Dr. Frye said, “Nothing is more destructive of the prayer life, than the reading of the Book of Leviticus. And I was so interested in that comment that I wrote it down in quotes, and I copied it up and have thought about it, occasionally, when I looked at Hebrews chapter 9, verse 1 through verse 10.

That, of course, is not only a very mistaken comment; it’s almost a blasphemous remark for several reasons. But first of all, the Book of Hebrews makes a great deal over the Book of Leviticus. For example, in the very next chapter, in the 1st verse, we read, “For the Law, having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year, continually make the comers there unto perfect.”

Now, of course, as you know, the reading of the Book of Leviticus will introduce you to the subject of the sacrifices above almost everything else. So the idea that the Book of Leviticus is destructive of the prayer life would be contrary entirely to the outlook of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And, furthermore, in the passage we are going to look at in chapter 9, verse 1 through verse 10, in verse 8, we read, “The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first Tabernacle was yet standing.” The Holy Spirit is the author and interpreter of the Levitical system and, of course, if the Holy Spirit is so definitely involved in it, so intimately involved in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to the interpretation of the Book of Leviticus, it’s obvious that God in heaven regards the Book of Leviticus as being an important book.

Now, that can be said, of course, of every one of the sixty-six books of the Bible; but I do think that if we are really honest in reading the New Testament, we would certainly say that this is a very important book and more important than other books of the Bible though all may be called important. For example, we could say, I think, without any fear of contradiction that this Book of Leviticus is far more important than the Book of Ecclesiastes. And if you have any doubt about that the chances are that in this audience not too many are familiar with the Book of Ecclesiastes because it's not the most interesting book in the Bible as is part of Leviticus, incidentally, if you're reading through it.

At any rate, in the 9th chapter, it's clear that the author is extremely interested in the things that we find in the Book of Leviticus and in this Epistle he's seeking to explain some of the things that are very important there for us today.

Now, we said, earlier, I believe, in the studies on the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the Epistle to the Hebrews has been called “The Holiest of All.” This particular chapter has also been called, by other writers other than the one who called the whole epistle “the Holiest of All,” because it does deal with some things that are of the greatest importance for the Christian faith, and, specifically, too, for our experience of the Christian faith. So it is an important chapter; all would grant that. In it, the author draws a series of contrasts to show the infinite superiority of the reality of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to the types that were set forth in the history of divine redemption in recorded in the Old Testament.

The background is the Mosaic Law, with its pictures of Tabernacle, priesthood and Day of Atonement. And so what I'd like to do is to speak against this backdrop of the Day of Atonement, also, and the ministry that was carried on there. It will come up again in this 9th chapter. But it's important that we grasp, specifically, the things that took place on Israel's Yom Kippur, the day that the Hebrews call, simply the *Yom*, the day, “The Day,” the day of all days, Yom Kippur.

Now, let's read verses 1 through 10. I'll read, you follow along in your Bible and then we'll go back and look at verses 1 through 5, first of all. In verse 1, we read, and again, I'm reading from the Authorized Version and I will have to make one or two little corrections. And so if you find something a little different, you can say I'm reading probably a bit more accurate translation in one or two points here. The author writes.

“Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. [A sanctuary of this world.] For there was a Tabernacle made; the first, [Now, he means the first part.] the first wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.” [Or, the holy place.]

You remember, the Tabernacle itself was divided into two parts and that's what he's talking about. And, in the first part, there was, as he says, the candlestick, the table of shewbread, with the twelve loaves, for the twelve tribes and then the golden censer or the altar of incense. In the second, back behind the second veil, the first veil being to enter the little building of the Tabernacle, but behind the veil that separated the two was the Ark of the Covenant. And, he will talk about that now. He says verse 3.

“And after the second veil, the Tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all, which had [You notice, he doesn't specifically say that the golden altar of incense was “in” that second of the divisions of the Tabernacle, but he says it had it. And, I'll say something about that in a moment.] which had the golden censer, and the Ark of the Covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; [That is, the Ten Commandments, the Law.] And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing [or overshadowing] the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.”

That expression, “particularly” is a Greek expression that means part by part. Now, that would let us know that he could do it, if he wished to do it, and he’s going throughout the epistle that it pointed to, he will talk about something that’s rather minute. In other words, it’s perfectly proper for us to study the Old Testament and find the particular meanings of things that he might say, for more purposes here, we don’t need to go into that. But the very fact that later on he comments on the veil and draws a spiritual lesson about the veil of the Tabernacle between the two compartments of it is evidence of the fact that he regarded all of the instruments of the Tabernacle as being of importance. And when he says, right at the present moment he cannot now speak of it, particularly, he means the same thing that someone means, who is teaching or lecturing, who says, we don’t have time to go into that at the present, it doesn’t bear on the point that I’m trying to make. Now verse 6.

“Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first Tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.” [Or, the sins of ignorance of the people.]

You might ask, “Well, what about those sins that were not sins of ignorance?” We’ll say something about that in a moment.

“The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first Tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and various [or divers] washings, and carnal ordinances, [He means, fleshly regulations] imposed on them until the time of reformation.”

Now, the first five verses are verses that have to do with the sanctuary, and that raises the question of the purpose of the Mosaic Law. Now, remember, the Mosaic Law is not simply the Ten Commandments. When we talk about the Mosaic Law, we're talking about the moral law, the ceremonial law, and the civil law. There is no indication in the Bible that there is any division of the law, that is, the law contains all three of these things: The moral law, the Ten Commandments, the ceremonial law and the civil law.

The Law is a unit, it's a unity, I should say. That's why, if a man breaks one of the Commandments, he's guilty of all. In the New Testament in the Apostle Paul's writings, he writes as much about the law as anyone else, there is not ever any indication in his writing of the fact that he would have divided the law up and say, “We are not under the ceremonial law, but we are under the law, the moral law, of the Ten Commandments.” There's not an ounce of Scripture, not a verse of Scripture, not a clause of Scripture that suggests that.

Now, I don't mean by that that one cannot see a difference between moral law and ceremonial law. That is true. But for Paul it was one law, so that if the Bible says we are not under law, we are not justified biblically in saying, “We are not under the ceremonial law, but we are under the Ten Commandments.”

Now, we could say a lot about that because, of course, there is one sense in which we pay a great deal of attention to the Ten Commandments; they reveal the nature of God, specifically, the nature of his divine holiness. And, for that reason, they are extremely important. And in the New Testament, nine of those Ten Commandments are repeated in one way or another in the passages that have to do with application of the truth to us.

So we're not suggesting when a person says, “You're not under the law,” that therefore you are able to live a lawless life. One law is not repeated and that is the law of the Sabbath. And every Christian who celebrates the Lord's Day, rather than the Sabbath,

is breaking that Tenth Commandment. Now, he's breaking it, not in the sense that he's displeasing God. But the Sabbath is Saturday in the Bible not Sunday, no way in which we can make the Sunday the Sabbath. One is the first day of the week, the other is the seventh day of the week. All attempts to do that, ultimately, fail the test of biblical exegesis. But, of course, that doesn't mean that there is a great deal of discussion over that point and even today there are large volumes on the Sabbath question that are from time to time written.

Why did God give the Law? There are two primary purposes. First of all, he says, more than once, that he wanted to reveal the sin of men. One of the texts that makes this plain is Romans chapter 3 in verse 20, where the Apostle says, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: For by the law is the knowledge of sin.” So it's by means of the law that we come to understand our sin. The fact that over and over, God says, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not and touches such things as covetousness; it's not long before all of us are guilty of breaking the law. And, thus, we are shown by the Mosaic moral law that we are immoral people; we are sinners.

So that is one of the first things. The Law is like a mirror, as Bible teachers have often said. It's like a mirror in which we see ourselves, but we don't see what we like. We see ourselves as sinners. And if you look in the mirror of the moral law and look carefully, you will see that you don't look very good either, morally, of course, that's the purpose, one of the preeminent purposes. A second of the purposes is the Law was given us to show us the Savior who was to come. All of the Old Testament is designed, ultimately, to picture our Lord Jesus Christ. For example, in chapter 10 in verse 1, of this book, the passage we read a moment ago, “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” The Law was a shadow of the good things to come.

About thirty years ago, I was in Edinburgh and E. Stanley Jones, who was a liberal minister, thirty years ago, known all over the United States. As a matter of fact, E. Stanley Jones was known all over the world. He had, first of all, been a missionary to India in the Methodist Church, I believe, and he had written a number of books and he became very well known all over the Christian world as a liberal minister of the word of God; but a man who was also interested in the spread of the Gospel. The chances are that E. Stanley Jones was a genuine Christian man. I know that would offend a lot of Methodists to say it that way; but, I believe, that he was a Christian man, but he was a liberal in his theology. Not about the Gospel! He believed that Christ died for our sins and men could be saved through faith in Christ.

Well, he came to Edinburgh and I never heard him and I had a friend of mine, and we determined we would go. He hadn't seen him either. He was the pastor of the Montreat Presbyterian Church, and he was over there for awhile and he was also working at that time, perhaps, he was at that time just working for Billy Graham. He has been the pastor of the Montreat Presbyterian Church for a long time after that. But the two of us, two evangelicals, who probably wouldn't have attended his meeting if it was in the United States, we went to hear E. Stanley Jones.

And it was not a bad message and he was urging everybody to witness to the Lordship of Christ, as he put it. And near the end of the message, he gave an invitation and he gave the invitation, “Those of you in the audience who believe that Christ is Lord, raise your hand.” He had us bow our heads and I didn't want to raise my hand in E. Stanley Jones' meeting. If it ever got back to Dallas that I had raised my hand [laughter] in E. Stanley Jones' meeting that might cause me a little difficulty. And so, but nevertheless, I thought about it. He waited a little while and I thought about that. I could not possibly help but raise my hand because the subject is the Lordship of Christ. So in spite of the fact that it might get me in trouble, I raised my hand. And the person who was with me also raised his hand; that's Calvin Theilman. And he had a good first name,

Calvin Theilman. I had the best last name because my name is son of John and Peter, you remember, is John’s son, son of Jonas, and so, I was more apostolic than he.

But, anyway, when the meeting was over, he turned to me and he said, “Wait till I get back to Dallas.” And I was on the faculty at Dallas, “And tell them that you raised your hand in E. Stanley Jones’ meeting, responding to his invitation.” [Laughter] Well, I’m leading up to something. Mr. Jones had with him a most unusual picture. It’s a little hazy in my mind now, but I remember what it was because I wrote it down. But he had a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and it was made on cloth material, and it was rather large, something about like this. But the interesting thing about it and the point that he was trying to make was that the Bible is a book that speaks of Christ. And he said, this particular thing had, I believe, had been given to him by someone. Someone had, actually, sewn this picture with every text of the Bible in it, in the cord of it. You could go up, and if you take a microscope, you could look and see all the verses of the Bible, all the verses of the Bible, and the idea was, of course, that what you saw was the picture of Jesus Christ. And you could see it, it was a remarkable thing. I don’t know where it is now. But it illustrates the point and it was, of course, to illustrate that the point the person did it that the Bible in all of its verses and all of its literature is designed to picture the Lord Jesus Christ. The Law was given us to show us our sin. It was given us to show us our Savior. All of the New Testament, I believe, I take that back in my notes it says, all of the New Testament woven into it, so it must have been the New Testament, although I’ve forgotten all of the details now. But, anyway, the point was that it was designed to show the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the author here in chapter 9 is talking about the Tabernacle and the Tabernacle of Israel is, also, a large object lesson of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. John 1:14 says, “The word become flesh and tabernacled among us,” and the very fact that that term is used by the Apostle John, “tabernacled” among us, makes the connection that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Tabernacle of God and the Tabernacle of

the Old Testament was designed to represent him and the work that he would do. The importance of the Tabernacle is seen in this fact; how many chapters have to do with creation in the Bible? Well two; Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, oh, I know, there are references here and there, of course, but two chapters are devoted to it.

How many are devoted to the Tabernacle and its ministry? About fifty. Isn't that interesting? About fifty devoted to the Tabernacle and its services. Two to the creation but most people, reading the Bible, unless they are Bible students, they avoid the Tabernacle although they don't avoid the doctrine of divine creation.

The Tabernacle's plans were not drawn by Moses and the children of Israel. God did not tell them build a Tabernacle. He drew the plans. And, as a matter of fact, he caught Moses up and showed him a model that Moses was to follow. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to that very fact, as you probably know. So it's a Tabernacle that was drawn by God, created by him in his own infinite wisdom, not submitted to Moses, not submitted to Israel's building committee or anything like that, designed to make the point clear to everyone who reads the Bible, that the word of God and the teaching concerning the Tabernacle is a divine revelation. It's not an invention of man. It's a revelation of God. And so you'll read when in Exodus, things are said about the Tabernacle and Moses' response is given. You'll read things like, “Thou shalt make it such and such,” and then you'll read, “He made it such and such.” So we're talking about something that God, himself, is responsible for. As you know, there are about seven things, seven instruments or seven parts to it that I'm just going to cite with just a word of explanation that are important.

There is the brazen altar, the first piece of furniture that we meet in the field, when the children of Israel went into the Tabernacle area. The Tabernacle, itself, was of course, encompassed with white linen walls and it was about seventy-five feet wide by about one hundred fifty feet long. But the first thing that you entered, when you entered into the Tabernacle through the door, through the one door, incidentally, that Jesus is for

our salvation you meet the brazen altar. And the brazen altar is designed to represent Christ as the sacrifice for our sin. Then the second instrument that you meet, out in the yard before you enter the second building or the building of the Tabernacle, is the brazen laver and that's designed to represent Christ as the cleanser of his people.

Luther once made the comment, “The Devil allows no Christian to reach heaven with clean feet all the way.” And so every time the priests left the brazen altar and went into the Tabernacle itself, they had to stop and wash their hands and their feet. So it was designed to remind them that God is a holy God and his service is to be carried out by those who are to be holy.

Now, as you enter the first of the two compartments of the Tabernacle, you meet the lamp stand, Christ as the light of the believer priests, the priests were able to enter that first part of the Tabernacle and carry out their ministry, which they did in accordance with lot. Some of them didn't serve for a long time because they served by lots that were throne for the right to serve within that first part of the Tabernacle, but Christ the light of believer priests.

And then, there was the table of bread, the twelve loaves, representative of the children of Israel, as Christ the provider for his own, all sufficient in glory, representing his High Priestly ministry, for the weary, for the forsaken, for the weak, for those who have needs, such as you and I have.

And then, also, in that first part of the Tabernacle, there was the altar of incense, or Christ as our interceding High Priest. Now, you remember, on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest, on that one day, entered into the Holiest of All, there was the Ark of the Covenant, and that is designed to represent the Lord Jesus as the meeting place of God and Man. It is by virtue of him that we have access to God and only by virtue of him. In fact, in the instructions that were given in chapter 25 of the Book of Exodus in verse 8, the Lord told Moses this, “Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” That's the whole point of the Tabernacle, “that I may dwell among them.”

So the brazen altar, the brazen laver, the lamp stand, the table of shewbread, the altar of incense, the Ark of the Covenant; these are the instruments, the pieces of furniture of the Tabernacle. Now, you can see that the purpose of that was access to God, “that I may dwell among them.”

Now, the services that were carried on were, of course, constant; but the author here is particularly interested as the Epistle to the Hebrews will make very plain, in the service on the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur. And notice verse 6 through verse 10, “Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first Tabernacle.” They mean by that the first division of the Tabernacle, “The first Tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.” Yom Kippur or Yom Kipper, was the day, the greatest day of the Jewish year. Franz Delitzsch, the German Old Testament professor, used to say, “It’s the Good Friday of the Old Testament, the Day of Atonement, the true day of Calvary with the appropriation of the blessings of it still in the future.”

Now, let me just go over the ritual, for a moment, because it’s important for understanding what we are talking about here. The ritual of the Day of Atonement involved several important things. We’ll leave the details because later on they’ll come up again, but the high priest was, on that day, by God told to enter into the Holiest of All. He took off his ordinary garments; he put on the garments, the linen garments, of holiness, designed to represent him in carrying out this work. He acted as the representative of the children of Israel in carrying out the atoning work. He, of course, had to offer bull-ox for his own sins, and so the Day of Atonement made provision for that. But the highlight of the offerings, of which there were a number, was the offering of the two goats, two goats were chosen and lots were taken or thrown, over the two goats. One of the goats was said to be for the Lord. When the lots fell out and one of them had upon it, for the Lord and the other for Jehovah or for Yahweh, one of them was, of course, then for the Lord and the other for the people.

Now, the one that was for the Lord was taken and slain and the blood, together with the blood of the bull-ox, the blood was taken in to the Holiest of All and sprinkled upon the mercy seat and, also, before the Ark of the Covenant. I don't have to get into much of the detail here because that's not the purpose of this. But that was done once a year and that was designed to maintain Israel's covenant relationship for one whole year. That's why it had to be repeated every year because it never took away sin, as we shall read later on in this particular book.

Now, the three main points that I want to just say a word about and stress are these: First of all, the offering of the goat, by which the blood was taken and sprinkled upon the mercy seat, where the cherubim looked down upon it, representing the presence of God; that offering, the shedding of the blood, was designed to represent the propitiation of the Lord God, the satisfaction of the claims of his righteousness and holiness that he has against you and against me.

As a matter of fact, as a kind of a two fold meaning in that one offering, but we'll pass it by for the moment, we often in our evening service here on Sunday sing the little hymn that says, “Lifted up was he to die, it is finished, was his cry, now in heaven, exalted high, hallelujah, what a Savior.” That is, I think, a good representation of the propitiation, which the Lord Jesus Christ offers for us and is represented in the slaying of the goat and the putting of the blood upon the mercy seat.

Now, also, we read, I'm going to turn back to Leviticus chapter 16, you might turn back there for just a moment, I want to talk about the pardon that is referred to here. In Leviticus chapter 16, that's Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, for those of you that are not reading through the Bible. I know you're interested in knowing where I am on my second time through and while you're finding Leviticus, I'll tell you. I'm in the Book of Isaiah about chapter 50. So we're going to finish the second time through and if I live through this year, I'll finish the third year, the Lord helping me.

Now, in chapter 16, verse 5, we read these words, “And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.” In verse 7 through verse 10, “And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the Lord’s lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord to make an atonement with him and to let him go for a scapegoat in the wilderness.”

So there is, first of all, there is a propitiation in the slaughter of the first goat, which is for the Lord, because he must be satisfied for our sins, because he is holy and absolutely righteous. But there is, also, another principle found here, in the fact that the goat is substituted for you and me. And so right at the heart of the Day of Atonement is the principle of divine substitution.

Now, this substitution is a substitution that is very particular; it’s for the children of Israel. It’s not for the Gentiles. It’s for the children of Israel. It’s not universal, it’s particular. The redemption was particular; it was for the Twelve Tribes. This is, of course, in the heart of the “warp and woof” of the Bible, redemption is particular and so it was particular in this instance, as well. The substitution is set forth in verse 21 and 22. Moreover, he sprinkled with blood both the Tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, almost all things by the law are purged with blood and without shedding of blood is no remission.

And then, in verse, well I didn’t read verse 7, yes I did, substitution and satisfaction for men and then the final thing or the thing that I want to mention now is the, what was done with the goat that was the scapegoat? And so we read in verse 22, “And the goat shall bear upon.” Well, I’ll just go back, verse 21, “And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of

Israel and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.”

Now, that is a faulty translation because it means, simply, a land cut off, that is, one that's not nearby. It's not one that's not inhabited. But it's a land cut off that was the way the translators sought to render the idea that it's a land that is cut off from the normal lands about them. “And he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.”

Now, the reason for the second goat and the confession of the sins over it was that the other aspects of the atoning work should be set forth. When the first goat was slain, and the blood taken in before the presence of the Lord, that, of course, is the satisfaction of God's requirements against us who are sinners, his righteousness and his holiness. From our standpoint, of course, we want to be delivered and so the taking, the sending of the scapegoat off with the confession of the sins of the children of Israel over it, sending it off into the wilderness was designed to represent the fact that the atoning work had a two-fold aspect; it had reference to God, it has reference to man. It satisfies God's claims against us and it also frees us and delivers us, giving us the forgiveness of our sin.

One of the interesting things about this, too, is that in Leviticus chapter 16, it's not spoken of as two offerings, but one offering, one offering with this two-fold aspect, the aspect of propitiation and the aspect of pardon; so that there is substitution and by substitution, there is satisfaction of God. There is also satisfaction of man because our sins are forgiven; and we have the sense of security because they are taken away, they go off into a land that is cut off, as if to give us encouragement they are not going to come back and plague us anymore. That is set out in Romans chapter 3, also, in the way in which the apostle talks in that chapter. We don't have time to talk about it now.

There's another stanza in that hymn that we sing, which represents this. “Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood, sealed my pardon with His

blood, hallelujah, what a Savior.” It’s interesting, if you read the Rabbinic accounts, in the Yoma, of what took place here, on the Day of Atonement, when that goat, the scapegoat was sent off by individuals, off into the wilderness into the land cut off, the children of Israel shouted out, “Bear our sins and be gone!” Designed to represent the fact of the taking of the sins of the children of Israel.

Now, there’s one other point about that that is important and the point is this; in chapter 16 in verse 29 through verse 34, Moses writes about how the children of Israel are to respond to the Day of Atonement. It was not to be just a ceremony.

Now, notice what Moses writes, “This,” now remember the Lord is giving him this. “This,” the Lord says, “shall be a statute forever unto you that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be of your own country or a stranger that sojourneth among you: For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. It shall be a Sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute forever.” In chapter 23 in verse 29, when he is talking about the feasts, he repeats that because there he says, “For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.” So this was not simply a ceremony that the children of Israel were to observe, as they saw Aaron and the priests carrying out all the duties, particularly, Aaron, it was something into which they were to enter, by faith. And, consequently, they were to acknowledge their sin. They were to afflict their souls and, thus, enter into this in an experiential way.

Now, that is very important, it seems to me, because often we get the idea that the Old Testament ceremonies were just ceremonies; and the Christian church today has a lot of liturgy, many of them do, and you know that a lot of the liturgy of the Christian church is simply that: just ceremony. The person does not enter into the sense of what is taking place by experiencing the reality of the truth.

That means, also, my dear friends, that when you sit in the Lord's Supper on Sunday night, it's not something that is simply a ceremony. It's something into which you are to have personal interest. You are to reflect upon your own condition before the Lord and you are also to give response to the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine. It's not simply a ceremony. It's something into which we are to experientially enter if we are to enjoy it in the way in which the Scriptures set it forth.

Now, let me say just a few words about the significance that the author finds here in the things that he's writing about, and, specifically, in verse 6 through verse 10. First of all, I want you to notice that he gives us an interpretation of those Levitical services, for us, and he says the worship was limited. Notice verse 6.

“Now when these things were thus ordained, the priest went always into the first Tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, while as the first Tabernacle was still standing.”

This is a striking symbol of the ineffectuality of the Mosaic economy. Man may come close to God but not too close. Only Aaron could enter the Holiest of All. Only Aaron could enter that that was designed to represent the presence of the Lord God. If anyone entered, during the year, into the Holiest of All, including Aaron, he was struck dead. So the Old Testament was designed to represent the ineffectuality of that old Mosaic economy.

Man may come, not too close, love calls, but righteousness keeps him back. The high priest alone, even the priests who ministered in the holy place, not in the Holiest of All, even they did not dare enter the Holiest of All, in the midst of their daily service of keeping the bread fresh, of keeping the lamp lit, of having incense on the altar of incense,

they could not get behind that final curtain, unless they die. So the worship was limited. Only one person actually entered the presence of God in the Old Testament times. Isn't that striking? Only one person, once a year. Now, that does not mean, of course, that only one person enjoyed fellowship with God. But by the Levitical ceremonies, only one person was able to have fellowship with God, once a year, enter his presence. A second thing, not only is the worship limited, it does not really bring a man into the presence of God, but the cleansing is imperfect, verse 9.

“Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.”

Sin was covered but sin was not put away. In the Old Testament, if an individual had his sins removed, it was not by the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law was designed to tell us that the cleansing of the Old Testament is an imperfect cleansing.

I think of how do we explain then these places where the men of the Old Testament like David or didn't David know fellowship with God? Well, listen to what he says in Psalm 51, after he's committed his intentional sin, not a sin of ignorance, intentional sin. In Psalm 51, verse 7, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” Verse 3 through verse 5, “For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Verse 16, “For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

How was David cleansed? By grace not by the Mosaic ceremonies. He was cleansed by the acknowledgement of his sin and received the freeness of the forgiveness of his sins. The cleansing that was practiced through the Mosaic Law in picture form was imperfect. Why? Because the redeemer had not yet come! The price had not yet been paid. And so, consequently, it could never be perfect in the Old Testament times. There's another thing that we notice in verse 10, “Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and ordinances of the flesh, fleshly regulations imposed on them until the time of reformation.” That word means something like, setting things right, until the time of the setting things right. So in the Old Testament, there was limited efficacy, there was limited access, and no absolute hope from the Law of Moses; only the covering of sins and only the individual faith in God's marvelous forgiving grace sustained the saints of the Old Testament. If our Lord Jesus had not come, even they would not have been finally forgiven.

You see how indebted we are to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, our time is just about up. Let me make just a couple of comments. You'll notice that he talks about the sins of ignorance. He mentions, in verse 7, “But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the sins of ignorance of the people.” That's why, incidentally, David had to plead mercy only; and grace only. His sin was not a sin of ignorance. It was an intentional sin. The Old Testament provided no sacrifice for intentional sin. No sacrifice! That's stated in the Old Testament, as you probably know. No sacrifice for intentional sins! Let me read Numbers chapter 15 in verse 30 and 31. Listen to what we read here.

“But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, [or willfully, it's better rendered.] whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the

Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.”

That’s what David faced, were it not for the fact that he acknowledge his sin, acknowledge his need of divine grace and received from God, who forgives sin, the forgiveness that was offered by our great God in heaven.

Well, I just want to make one or two points, as we close. First, Christianity is the goal and substance of the Old Testament expectation and it provides the final and complete access to God. It is by Christianity and by Christianity alone or by the truth set forth in the New Testament, that we have the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins, only through Christ! The two compartments of the Tabernacle illustrate the Old and New Testament life, as the Spirit signified no access then, now the Son, having opened the way, and the Father beckoning us to him, the Spirit signifies within us, “Enter in.” And, as you know, this epistle invites us, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil.” That is to say, his flesh. “Let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith.” What only Aaron could do limited, ineffectual every single believing Christian is free to do, invited to do, called to do, constantly, today. What a great salvation we have.

Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the marvelous way in which Thou hast set forth the truth, the eternal truth, of the relationship that Thou dost have to us, Thy people. We thank Thee for all that has been done, down through the centuries, in accordance with the word of God. We thank Thee for the sovereign providence, guiding all of the steps to the completion of our Lord’s work, and guiding all of the steps of the progress of the Gospel and bringing it home to us, individually. O God, give us

something of the heart of David, with whom Thou was so pleased, the man after Thine own heart, who acknowledged sin, pled for divine grace and mercy, and found in his own experience that Thou didst forgive him, manifest Thyself to him, in a marvelous way, and make him a fruitful servant of Thine in spite of his humanness for this Lord. We pray for each one of us in this room.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.