

God Desires to Dwell Among Us

Opener: Has God ever given you super clear instructions about something? If so, what were they?

Scripture: The Lord said to Moses, ²“Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. ³These are the offerings you are to receive: gold, silver and bronze; ⁴blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ⁵ram skins dyed red and durable leather; acacia wood; ⁶olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and fragrant incense; ⁷and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. ⁸“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. ⁹Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you. Exodus 25:1-9

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. ²A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and table with its consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. ³Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, ⁴which had the golden altar of incense 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. ⁵Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. ⁶The priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. ⁷But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. ⁸The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning.

⁹This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

The Blood of Christ. ¹¹But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. ¹²He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. ¹³The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! ¹⁵For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. Hebrews 9:1-15 (condensed)

Discussion Questions

1. To build the Tabernacle, the Lord had Moses instruct the people to give an offering. Specifically, who was Moses to receive offerings from? Exodus 25:2
2. What role does giving play in our relationship with the Lord? Why do we sometimes resent being asked to give? What appeals annoy you most and how can we know when and where to give?
3. The Ark contained the Tablets of the Law, Aaron’s rod that budded, and a jar of manna. What does the Ark and its contents represent and what do they tell us about God’s provision for His people? Hebrews 9:4
4. According to Hebrews 9:8-10, how were sacrifices under the Old Covenant limited? Why weren’t they sufficient to clear our conscience?
5. How does Hebrews 9:11-15 describe Christ as the High Priest of the New Covenant? What makes His priesthood different from that of priests under the Old Covenant?
6. How does Christ's sacrifice as described in Hebrews 9:12-14 surpass the sacrifices under the Old Covenant? What’s significant about Him entering the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood? How does this apply to our relationship with God?

Wrap Up: The sacrificial system in the OT was a piecemeal operation—it required a fallible high priest to make sacrifices, enter the Holy of Holies once a year and make offerings of animal blood and ashes. It should come as no surprise that all that was inadequate. But when Jesus came, he entered into the Holy of Holies as High Priest in a greater and more perfect tabernacle in heaven. Then He offered Himself as a sinless sacrifice for all our sins once and for all. That’s why we who believe in Jesus are truly forgiven. That’s not religion; it’s redemption.