

Message 3: The Pattern of Worship

HEBREWS 9:1-9A Now even the first covenant had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary. 2 For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place. 3 Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies, 4 having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail. 6 Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, 7 but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. 8 The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing, 9 which is a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience,

MESSAGE GOAL: In this sermon we will examine how the tabernacle provides a pattern for how we are to worship; specifically, the preparatory steps we need to take before we enter into God's presence.

INTRODUCTION: Whenever anyone sits down to begin a sewing project, the first thing they must do is to find or develop a pattern to guide them as they make whatever it is that they are making.

If you try to make a dress or a shirt by guesswork, you'll probably end up with something which no one would want to wear.

It will almost certainly be a mess!

Without a pattern, all the pieces will not fit together properly.

So, before beginning such a project you need to build it around a pattern, which provides the structure and guidelines for the garment you have in mind.

And then, you need to refer to that pattern through all the stages of the project.

But when someone creates a pattern, it is not for its own sake.

The seamstress shouldn't fall in love with the pattern itself.

She doesn't lay out a pattern so that she can sew a pattern.

She uses that pattern to sew a dress, or pants, or whatever it is that she is applying her talents toward.

It is the same way when you are undertaking an architectural project.

When you decide to build a new church, for example, you first must create blueprints and lay out the floor plan.

The floor plan contains all the measurements so that the building comes together as a beautiful and functional space.

The floor plan is never an end in itself but has its purpose in constructing something bigger than itself.

Whatever we make usually requires a pattern and a plan, whether it be a piece of clothing, a building, an automobile, a garden or a piece of art.

We start with a pattern and sometimes even create a prototype as we strive toward the finished work.

But the point isn't to fall in love with the pattern or be satisfied with driving the prototype.

And it would be a tragedy if we constantly talked about the floor plan but never got to visit the actual building.

The purpose of the pattern is simply to introduce you to that which is like it but is greater than it.

God has provided us with a pattern for entering into His presence.

The book of Hebrews explores this pattern, and it can be a challenging book to understand.

To properly interpret it, we need to understand the Old Testament, because Hebrews was originally written from a Jewish mindset for an audience of Jewish Christians who were confused about the relationship between the Old and New covenants.

Hebrews 8:4-5 looks back to God’s instructions for the creation of the earthly tabernacle in Old Testament times and says, ***“Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and a shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, ‘See,’ He says, ‘that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.’”***

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What we see here is that God gave Moses a pattern for how people should come into His presence.

Let’s explore what we can learn about God’s pattern for worship from our passage in the book of Hebrews.

1. GOD PROVIDES A PATTERN FOR WORSHIP

- ***Hebrews 9:8-9*** *By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing 9 (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper,*

- This tells us that the earlier tabernacle is a symbol for us today; for the “present time.”
- But this pattern has its limits.
- ***Hebrews 9:23*** says, ***“Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heaven to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.”***
- The author of Hebrews is writing to those who had become enamored with the earthly things, which are only a pattern of the heavenly.
- The earthly tabernacle is only the pattern for the heavenly tabernacle.
- We miss the point when we settle for a copy.
- The pattern is important, but we must always remember it points toward something greater.

2.GOD PROVIDES A PATTERN FOR HIS PRESENCE AMONG HIS PEOPLE

- The tabernacle is where God resided in the midst of His people, so God gave Moses very specific instructions about how it was to be constructed.
- We can find these in the latter chapters of Exodus.
- Later, He also gave the same kind of detailed directions for the temple.

- God's glory—His Shekinah glory—is how He makes His presence manifest among His people.
- When we are in His presence even today, we can see His glory.
- We want to see that glory for ourselves, not be told about it secondhand, which is why worship is so important.
- If we explore the elements of the tabernacle, we will learn more about how we should come into God's presence.

A. THE BRAZEN ALTAR: CONFESSION

- The first thing you came across when you entered the tabernacle was the brazen altar, which was the most prominent piece of furniture.
- This was the place where animals were sacrificed and their blood was shed.
- If you didn't stop to make an offering, you could forget about arriving in God's presence.
- To get into His presence, you're going to have to come through the blood.
- The guilt of sin must be removed, because only holy things get into God's presence.
- The high priest would lay hands on the animal to be sacrificed, and the people's sins would be imputed to it.
- So, our sins must be dealt with before we enter into God's presence.

Confession of sin is our brazen altar today (**Proverbs 28:13**; *Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.*

- **1 John 1:7-9**). *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
- The blood of Jesus does for us what the animal sacrifices were meant to accomplish.
- The altar of confession must be the first stop on the way to God's presence.

B.THE LAVER: CLEANSING

- The laver was a bowl for cleansing the hands and feet of the priest.
- Because the sacrifice was a bloody job, the priest had to clean up constantly. +
- We need cleansing before we enter the presence of God.
- Such cleansing comes through the Word of God operating in your life (Ephesians 5:26).
- The Word of God scrubs away our sin, washing away the accumulated filth of living in an evil world.

- Remember how Jesus washed the feet of the disciples before they celebrated in the Upper Room?
- When Peter protested, Jesus said that He has already cleansed them, but they still needed the dirt of the road washed off their feet.

C. THE TABLE OF SHOWBREAD: THANKSGIVING

- This was the place where they kept the twelve loaves of bread, which were changed out every Sabbath, as a symbol of God's provision.
- God didn't want His people to forget how He had rescued them and been with them through all their trials.
- He didn't want them to forget that He had fed them with manna in the wilderness.
- The response to this reminder should always be gratitude and thanksgiving.
- Looking back at our lives, we can be thankful for God's care and provision.
- This is an important reminder as we come into His presence.
- It is also a reminder of our need to submit our will to God and trust in Him.

D. THE LAMPSTAND: ILLUMINATION

- The lampstand, a golden menorah, was the only light in the tabernacle.

- This light was crucial since the tabernacle had no windows.
- The lamp was for illumination. God never wants us to enter worship without our mind being illumined and engaged.
- It isn't just about emotions.
- Our minds sometimes wander during worship, so it is important that we keep allowing our mind to be illuminated by God's light.
- ***First Corinthians 2:16*** says that God wants to give us the mind of Christ.
- The main way we are guided is through our mind
- Therefore, we need to let God renew our mind.

E. THE ALTAR OF INCENSE: PRAISE

- Incense is fragrant smoke, and this altar was placed right before the holy of holies.
- This represents our praise rising up to God.
- ***Hebrews 13:15*** tells us that we are to offer up sacrifices of praise.
- Our praise is a declaration of God's person and character.
- In ***Acts 16***, Paul and Silas were in prison, but it was through raising their voices in praise that their freedom and deliverance came.
- If Satan has you locked in chains, praising God is a way that these chains can be broken.

- Praise always affects our emotions.
- It reminds us of who God is, and what He has done for us.

3. THE MOST HOLY PLACE AND THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

- This is our goal in worship.
- We pass through the veil into the very presence of God.
- We have to pass through confession, cleansing, thanksgiving, illumination and praise to come into His presence.
- In this most holy place was the ark of the covenant, a symbol and representation of God's covenant with His people.
- Inside the ark was the Law, and on top of the chest was a gold plate.
- Two golden angels were on either side of the ark.
- And on the top of the ark was the mercy seat.
- Here the priest would sprinkle blood, which covered the laws that had been broken by God's people.

4. JESUS IS OUR ENTRY INTO THE HOLY PLACE

- He is the brazen altar: ***“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).***
- He is the laver: ***“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3).***

- He is the lampstand: ***“I am the light of the world” (John 9:5).***
- He is the showbread: ***“I am the bread of life” (John 6:35).***
- He is the altar of incense: ***“Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God” (Hebrews 13:15).***
- He is the ark of the covenant: ***“...our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).***
- The Old Testament pattern is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- He is the One who John says became flesh and dwelt among us. The Greek word used here says that He “tabernacled” among us ***(see John 1:14).***
- He is the one and only way into the presence of God. ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:5).***

GREAT WORKS OF ART, A copy is always just a shadow of the real thing.

If you look at a picture of Van Gogh’s painting The Starry Night in a book, you might be impressed with its colors and its vibrant movement.

But this is not the same experience as standing in front of the actual original painting, where the colors seem alive and where all the vigorous textures of Van Gogh's paintbrush can be seen.

With any great work of art, the copies can never fully capture the beauty and liveliness of the original!

ASSEMBLING FURNITURE If you've ever bought some furniture that requires assembly, you know how important it is to carefully follow the provided instructions to the letter.

"If you skip the altar, saying, 'I don't have time for rams, and lambs, and I don't have time for this bloody mess.

Just take me to the Holiest of all,' you aren't going anywhere.

In order to get into His presence, you've got to come through the blood."

"Just walking in this world has made your feet dirty."

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