

Into the Holy of Holies with Him Heb 8-9:15

Proposition: What our souls *really* crave for is His presence/ glory.

There are many, many different names for God in the bible but they all refer to the same God. Elohim was the first, then came I am, then Yahweh, then Jehovah and the list goes on. Each name for God describes for us something more about who He is and what He does. The writer to the young Hebrew church in Jerusalem also wanted these Christians to discover a new aspect of Jesus' character and function and so he wrote to them and as we have been studying and explained that one title for Jesus is our High Priest. Heb 8:1

¹What I mean is that we have a high priest who sits at the right side of God's great throne in heaven

Jesus is our High Priest, our mediator, our advocate but he is not running around pleading with the Father for our forgiveness. He is seated at the right hand side of the Father. The case for us has already been won. There is nothing else he needs to say on our behalf. His body is intercession. What Jesus did for you and me on the cross of Calvary has opened the way up for us to have fellowship with the Father regardless of whether or not we did our morning devotions this morning, whether or not we have been praying heaps or tithing regularly. All those things are good and help keep me close to God but ... the only thing that gives us right of access into the presence of the Father is what Jesus has already achieved for us at the cross.

We read a few weeks ago in Hebrews 4:16

¹⁶So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved kindness, and we will find help.

You and I can come bravely before the throne of our merciful God based purely on what Jesus has achieved for us as our High priest.

As we read our passage this morning there are two streams of thought going through it. The first is that Jesus is our High Priest now in heaven in the perfect tabernacle. The one that was built here on earth and was carried around with the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings was just a replica, a shadow of the real deal in heaven.

Secondly notice as I read that the old covenant with its rules and regulations, the old testament, the old agreement was never going to be good enough because it simply proved that man was not up to keeping these external standards, but now quoting Jeriemiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36 we are told that there is a new covenant, a better agreement not based on external rules and rituals but based upon the will of God that He has written in our hearts and in our minds.

²He also serves as the priest in the most holy place inside the real tent there in heaven. This tent of worship was set up by the Lord, not by humans. ³Since all priests must offer gifts and sacrifices, Christ also needed to have something to offer. ⁴If he were here on earth, he would not be a priest at all, because here the Law appoints other priests to offer sacrifices. ⁵But the tent where they serve is just a copy and a shadow of the real one in heaven. Before Moses made the tent, he was told, "Be sure to make it exactly like the pattern you were shown on the mountain!" ⁶Now Christ has been

appointed to serve as a priest in a much better way, and he has given us much assurance of a better agreement.

⁷If the first agreement with God had been all right, there would not have been any need for another one. ⁸But the Lord found fault with it and said,

"I tell you the time will come, when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and the people of Judah. ⁹It won't be like the agreement that I made with their ancestors, when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. They broke their agreement with me, and I stopped caring about them!

¹⁰"But now I tell the people of Israel this is my new agreement:

'The time will come when I, the Lord, will write my laws on their minds and hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people. ¹¹Not one of them will have to teach another to know me, their Lord.' "All of them will know me, no matter who they are.

¹²I will treat them with kindness, even though they are wicked. I will forget their sins."

¹³When the Lord talks about a new agreement, he means that the first one is out of date. And anything that is old and useless will soon disappear.

Hebrews 9

The Tent in Heaven

¹The first promise that was made included rules for worship and a tent for worship here on earth.

²The first part of the tent was called the holy place, and a lampstand, a table, and the sacred loaves of bread were kept there.

³Behind the curtain was the most holy place. ⁴The gold altar that was used for burning incense was in this holy place. The gold-covered sacred chest was also there, and inside it were three things. First, there was a gold jar filled with manna. Then there was Aaron's walking stick that sprouted. Finally, there were the flat stones with the Ten Commandments written on them. ⁵On top of the chest were the glorious creatures with wings opened out above the place of mercy. Now isn't the time to go into detail about these things. ⁶But this is how everything was when the priests went each day into the first part of the tent to do their duties. ⁷However, only the high priest could go into the second part of the tent, and he went in only once a year. Each time he carried blood to offer for his sins and for any sins that the people had committed without meaning to.

⁸All of this is the Holy Spirit's way of saying that no one could enter the most holy place while the tent was still the place of worship. ⁹This also has a meaning for today. It shows that we cannot make our consciences clear by offering gifts and sacrifices. ¹⁰These rules are merely about such things as eating and drinking and ceremonies for washing ourselves. And rules about physical things will last only until the time comes to change them for something better.

¹¹Christ came as the high priest of the good things that are now here. He also went into a much better tent that wasn't made by humans and that doesn't belong to this world. ¹²Then Christ went

once for all into the most holy place and freed us from sin forever. He did this by offering his own blood instead of the blood of goats and bulls. ¹³According to the Law of Moses, those people who become unclean are not fit to worship God. Yet they will be considered clean, if they are sprinkled with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a sacrificed calf. ¹⁴But Christ was sinless, and he offered himself as an eternal and spiritual sacrifice to God. That's why his blood is much more powerful and makes our consciences clear. Now we can serve the living God and no longer do things that lead to death. ¹⁵Christ died to rescue those who had sinned and broken the old agreement. Now he brings his chosen ones a new agreement with its guarantee of God's eternal blessings!

The first thing that I want you to notice in this passage is this.

While the Old Testament laws and the Ten Commandments were perfect we couldn't keep them, we fell far short, everyone has lied, everyone has been greedy at times, and everyone has been rude to their parents and thought bad thoughts. The law was holy but it just showed us that we aren't and that we couldn't keep it, we needed a saviour.

The Old Testament agreement was all about do this and not that and obeys God and you will be blessed. It was all about external behaviour.

Notice this. The new covenant, the better covenant that replaces the old which we couldn't keep will not be about external behaviours and do this and don't do that to walk in the will of God. The new covenant which Christ brought about will be different. God's laws; God's will, will be written in our hearts and on our minds.

Before you read the rule book and tried hard to keep them all so that you could walk in the will of God for your life.

Now because of Jesus our High Priest we can fellowship with God directly, come into that holy place continually and as we do that God's will for us, God's desire for our lives will become our will and our desire.

When you spend time in relationship with Him, just enjoying Him and loving Him His will for your life becomes downloaded into your heart and you begin wanting what he wants. You want to serve where He wants you to serve, you want to make choices for friendships and for careers based on what is in your heart but God put those desires and leadings there.

When you dream of doing that ministry for God or there is a real repentance in your heart to walk away from that sin it's no longer about will power or try harder, God gives you the grace to make those changes the gifting and power to do that ministry. Because He is leading you directly you find you have the power to do things and make changes that you never could before.

He writes His laws, His will on our minds and hearts and we just know what it is we are meant to do.

When you spend time with the Lord He downloads into your heart and mind His will and His grace for your future!

The second thing I want you to notice is this perfect tabernacle in heaven.

God had given Moses exact instructions for building that tabernacle for worship in the desert. Precise instructions so that what they had here on earth would be a shadow a type of replica of what they had in heaven.

The problem was that they didn't get it exactly right.

Hebrews 9:4 tells us that the gold altar used for burning incense was to be in the holy of holies, behind the curtain. History tells us that this table in the tabernacle and in the temple was put outside of the holy of holies.

Now why is that significant? So they put their temple furniture in the wrong place. They set up their worship inaccurately.

I'll tell you why that is significant for me. God used the tabernacle and the ancient temple to bless and meet with and minister to His people. But they weren't doing it right; they weren't following all the instructions exactly as they were given to Moses.

In every church in every denomination you can find little things that seem a bit weird. The furniture isn't in the right place; things aren't being done exactly the right way. People are dressing funny or worshiping strangely. In every church there are some very imperfect things going on. But, but... you know what encourages me. Even though the furniture isn't in the right place, God still breaks through in all those churches and this church. Even though we haven't got it all right, we aren't following every instruction perfectly as we ought, week after week God is God and He turns up and changes lives and blesses people.

Now I want to describe for you the historical process of temple worship and then help you see how that relates to you and I in our quest to go deeper with God to enter the Holy of Holies with Him.

The ancient tabernacle and in fact the temple layout consisted of three areas.

There were the outer courts where any believer could go. Where there might be teaching, where animals might be prepared for sacrifice, where everyone was welcome.

If you were of the tribe of Levi then it was possible that you could go into the next area the Holy place. In the Holy Place the Levite Priests would be busy serving. They had plenty of work to do. For instance every morning and evening they would trim the wicks on the large Menorah that burned there and keep the oil levels topped up. They would replace the showbread, the twelve loaves that were set out there on a weekly basis. It was a zone an area where the priests would serve diligently.

Behind the curtain further in from the Holy Place was the Holy Of Holies. Now in this area about 15 foot in size was the mighty presence of God. The weighty presence of God; the Kabod. This was the ark of the covenant; this box about three feet by two feet that contained both the ten commandments on tablets of stone but also the special rod Aaron's rod that budded miraculously as we have discussed previously and a jar filled with manna that had been kept from the wilderness wanderings. On top of the ark was a special lid called the mercy seat. On either side of the mercy seat were two angels who looked down at the mercy seat and stretched their wings over it so that they touched together above it.

Once a year, the High Priest would go into this holy place. He would spend a week preparing himself, purifying himself and practising what he was about to do. On the day of atonement, Yom Kippur he would put on his most priestly robes and with the multitude watching he would sacrifice a bull in the outer court on the altar there as a dedication offering. Then he would go through a ritual washing, take off his flash clothes and put on his linen garments and a tunic and a wide belt around his waist and a turban. Then he would make a second sacrifice of a second bull this time as a sin offering for himself.

Two goats were then selected by lots. One would have a red cord tied around it. He would be the goat that would later be sacrificed. The other goat would later become the scapegoat. The High Priest would then take some hot coals from the first altar and two handfuls of incense and pass into the Holy Place where he would put the incense on the hot coals and a cloud would cover him. Then he would go back outside to where the bulls had been sacrificed and take a bowl of blood and go through the Holy Place into the Holy Of Holies where he could see and feel the Shekinah glory of God. He would then sprinkle the blood 7x on the floor then 7x on the mercy seat. Then if he didn't die there and sometimes they did, in fact they would tie rope to the left ankle of the high priest because if he entered God presence presumptuously or sinfully he would die and they would drag his body out by the rope. If however he lived he would then go back out to the outer court, lay his hands on the scapegoat and say bear our sins and be gone. A priest would then take this goat out of the city and chase it away. He would then sacrifice the other goat as a sin offering for the people and return to the holy of holies to sprinkle the blood 7x on the floor and 7x on the mercy seat again. If he lived and therefore the sacrifice and repentance was acceptable to God he would return to the outer court where the crowds were waiting and declare it worked, God accepted our sacrifice, we are forgiven for another year. And the people would cheer and celebrate.

Now under the new covenant, Jesus has given Himself for us so that our sins are forgiven for eternity, they are remembered no more by God.

Now here is the picture I want you to see and a question I want you to put to yourself this morning.

Three Holy Places in the tabernacle and in the temple in Jerusalem.

The outer court, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

The outer court is the place where everyone is welcome. It is where we celebrate our salvation, we declare we believe that Jesus died in our place, we have repented, been baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit we are saved, normal Christians who one day will go to heaven. Outer court. Great good stuff, I wish everyone was there but wait there is more.

Christianity is more than just being forgiven and saved. A person can get closer to God if they move from the outer court in their faith experience to the Holy Place. The Holy Place is the place of service. This Holy Place is where you trim your lamps you let your light shine for others. You are involved in the incense offering which biblically is intercession. You are praying for others and serving God according to His call on your life. It's great to be in the outer court the place of salvation, to know you are born again, but the Holy Place serving Him is even more fulfilling and enjoyable.

But wait there is more. There is a Holy of Holies that you and I are invited to move into every time we worship, every time we go to a bible study, every time we pray and sit in his presence. In life people will tell you man what I need is more money, or more sex, or a better job, or more fame, or this new thing. Man if I just had that Burger fuel burger I would be so much happier. They see themselves as craving for a whole lot of different things. But ultimately the human soul whether people are aware of it or not craves one thing and that is to know the Father and to experience and to feel His weighty presence on their lives. Whether they know it or not that is what they really crave.

They are craving for the Holy of Holies. The outer courts are good, come everyone you are welcome, God loves you, you can be saved today. The Holy place is better, moving into serving the Lord as he has called you to serve but the best of all the most satisfying by far is to move daily into the Holy of Holies, where the presence of God can be seen and felt.

It's what Mary did when she sat at the Lords feet. Do you remember the incident? Jesus is at his friends' house and Mary is just soaking up His teaching and His presence then Martha comes into the room and says Jesus, please tell my sister Martha to move her lazy butt and give me a hand preparing a meal for everyone. What did Jesus say? "He said Leave her alone, she has chosen a better thing, she is sitting with me."

A lady came before Jesus one day and broke an expensive alabaster box full of expensive perfume over Him. Judas immediately protested, "Hey, what are you doing, that much perfume could be used for service, it could feed the poor." Jesus then turns to Judas and says "This woman has done a better thing and what she has done will be spoken of throughout the world and down through the ages."

She was in the Holy of Holies sitting with Him and enjoying His presence.

So was Mary.

Friends, I am all for the outer court experience of God. I want to see the world, believe, repent and receive both baptisms as soon as possible, but there is a better place than the outer court. The Holy place where people find what God wants them to do in ministry and they learn to serve according to their gifts and passions. Where will they serve – I don't know but He does, He will write it on their hearts. Serving Him is so much fun and so satisfying but there is an even better place than the Holy Place and that is the Holy of Holies and all of us are invited by the Lord daily to stop all the activity, even the good activity and choose his presence throughout the day, the best place.

If you are not yet in the outer court I would love to help you get there. All are welcome.

If you are not yet in the Holy Place, I can help you and God will show you that this is a better place than the outer court.

But most of all I want to encourage you to go all the way to the Holy Place and enjoy the presence of the One your soul really is craving for. Like Mary, take time to sit at his feet in worship, in study, in prayer and in life. Choose the best place of all this week.