

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 312 – November 8th – Hebrews 9:1-10

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Hebrews

Bruce, FF	<i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964
Guthrie, Donald	<i>Hebrews</i> (Tyndale Commentary), IVP, Leicester, 1983
Hughes, Philip Edgcombe	<i>A Commentary on The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1977
Westcott, BF	<i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Macmillan, London, 1889

Hebrews 9

Verses 1-10 describe in summary the features of Old Testament worship. Verses 11-26 contrast this with the work of Christ. Verses 1-5 focus on the Tabernacle

Verse 1

Εἶχε μὲν οὖν ἡ πρώτη δικαιοῦματα λατρείας τό τε ἅγιον κοσμικόν.

εἶχε Verb, imperf act indic, 3 s ἔχω
πρωτος, η, ον see 8:7

ἡ πρωτη refers to διαθηκη

δικαιωμα, τος n regulation, requirement
λατρεία, ας f service, worship

"What follows is, in fact, an explanation of these 'regulations for worship,' with particular reference to the parallels and contrasts between them and the high-priestly ministry of Christ." Hughes.

ἅγιος, α, ον holy, consecrated

"The singular το ἅγιον is the sense of *the sanctuary* is not found elsewhere in the NT." Westcott

κοσμικος, η, ον worldly; man-made

Here bears the sense 'belonging to this world.'

Verse 2

σκηνη γάρ κατασκευάσθη ἡ πρώτη ἐν ᾗ ἦ τε λυχνία καὶ ἡ τράπεζα καὶ ἡ πρόθεσις τῶν ἄρτων, ἧτις λέγεται Ἅγια·

σκηνη, ης f tent, tabernacle
κατασκευάσθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s
κατασκευαζω prepare, construct,
furnish

ἡ πρωτη here means the *outer* tent, i.e. the holy place rather than the holy of holies.

λυχνια, ας f lampstand, stand
τραπεζα, ης f table, food, meal; bank
προθεσις, εως f something set forth; ἄρτοι
της π. bread offered to God
ἄρτος, ου m bread, a loaf

"After ἀρτων several witnesses (B cop^{fay} eth^{ro}) add και το χρυσοῦν θυμιατηριον, and in verse 4, instead of χρυσοῦν ἔχουσα θυμιατηριον και the same witnesses read only ἔχουσα. The transposition was obviously made in order to remove the difficulty concerning the author's statement regarding the location of the golden altar of incense in the Tabernacle." Metzger *Textual Commentary*

ὄστις, ἧτις, ὅ τι who, which

Verse 3

μετὰ δὲ τὸ δεῦτερον καταπέτασμα σκηνῆς ἡ λεγομένη Ἅγια Ἅγιων,

"This is the only place in which μετὰ is used in this local sense in the NT." Westcott

δευτερος, α, ον see 8:7

"No other, or first, curtain has been mentioned by our author, but he has two in mind, the first being the curtain to which one entering the tabernacle would come as he passed from the courtyard into the holy place. To move on further into the innermost sanctuary of the holy of holies he would have to pass through a second curtain." Hughes.

καταπετασμα, τος n curtain

Ἅγια Ἅγιων – 'Holy of Holies' or 'most holy place'

Verse 4

χρυσοῦν ἔχουσα θυμιατήριον καὶ τὴν κιβωτὸν τῆς διαθήκης περικεκαλυμμένην πάντοθεν χρυσίῳ, ἐν ᾗ στάμνος χρυσοῦν ἔχουσα τὸ μάννα καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος Ἀαρὼν ἡ βλαστήσασα καὶ αἱ πλάκες τῆς διαθήκης,

χρυσους, η, ουν made of gold, golden
θυμιατηριον, ου n altar of incense

θυμιατηριον means literally, 'place where incense is burnt'. It is used in the LXX with the meaning "censer" but not of the incense altar. Some argue that the reference here is therefore to the golden censer used on the Day of Atonement which *was* taken within the veil (so AV which reads 'the golden censer'). However, Westcott argues it is unlikely that the altar of incense would have been omitted from the description. He suggests "The Altar of incense bore the same relation to the Holy of Holies as the Altar of burnt offering to the Holy Place. It furnished in some sense the means of approach to it. Indeed the substitute of ἐχουσα for ἐν ἧ ἐν ἧ (v.2) itself points clearly to something different from mere position." A similar assertion that the altar of incense *belonged to* the holy of holies, though it was situated outside the curtain, is found in Keil and Delitsch and is favoured by Spicq and Hughes. The latter cites Rev 3:8f as reflecting a similar understanding of the doctrinal association of the altar of incense with the throne of God.

κιβωτος, ου f ark, box

περικεκαλυμμένην Verb, perf pass ptc, f acc s

περικαλυπτω cover, cover over

παντοθεν adv on all sides

χρυσιον, ου n gold

The OT mentions only the two tables of the law as being *in* the ark but this does not mean that the other things which were placed before the ark were not later put inside for safe keeping, particularly as it was moved.

The ark and its contents disappeared with the destruction of Solomon's temple in 587 BC.

The holy of holies in NT times was empty.

σταμνος, ου f jar

Cf. Rev 2:17

ῥαβδος, ου f stick, rod

βλαστήσασα Verb, aor act ptc, f nom s

βλαστανω sprout

The divine proof of Aaron's exclusive right to the priesthood.

Hughes comments, "Though the wilderness manna and Aaron's rod have perished long since, the Christian who overcomes is promised that he will be given 'the hidden manna' to eat (Rev 2:17), that heavenly nourishment with which God eternally sustains his faithful servants. And through union with Christ he whose life previously was productive only of dead works (Heb 6:1) is now enabled to bring forth much good fruit to the glory of God (Jn 15:4,5,8; Gal 5:22f.). The same power that caused Aaron's rod to bud, blossom and bear fruit (Num 17) is even more powerfully at work in his experience."

πλαξ, πλακτος f tablet

Verse 5

ὑπεράνω δὲ αὐτῆς Χερουβὶν δόξης
κατασκιάζοντα τὸ ἱλαστήριον· περὶ ὧν οὐκ
ἔστιν νῦν λέγειν κατὰ μέρος.

ὑπερανω prep with gen far above; above,
over

"Not simply 'glorious Cherubim,' as if the epithet characterised their nature, but 'Cherubim of glory' ministering to the divine revelation. The divine glory, the revelation of God's majesty was in a peculiar sense connected with them. God revealed Himself 'from between them'." Westcott

κατασκιάζω overshadow

ἱλαστήριον, ου n atoning sacrifice, place
where sins are forgiven

The Hebrew word *kapporeth* which this translates means simply 'cover.' Hughes comments, "This Hebrew word was descriptive in a literal sense, because, as we have seen, the mercy seat exactly covered the ark of the covenant. But it may well also have had a symbolical significance from the earliest times in that, as Westcott and others have pointed out, it was interposed between the tables of the law contained in the ark, by which the sinner stood condemned, and the glory of God's holy presence. This is certainly the implication of the Greek ἱλαστήριον, which means a place of propitiation. On the great annual Day of Atonement the culminating moment of propitiation and reconciliation came when the high priest, on entering the holy of holies, sprinkled the blood of atonement on the mercy seat in the awesome presence of God's glory (Lev 16:14ff.). It may reasonably be assumed that the same association between the atoning blood of sacrifice and the mercy of God was in the mind of the Psalmist when he exclaimed: 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity' (Ps 32:1f.). For the Christian, the rightness of linking the blood of atonement which was shed at Calvary with the mercy of God is confirmed both in the argument our author is about to develop (see vv 11ff. below) and in the only other place in the New Testament where the noun ἱλαστήριον occurs, namely Romans 3:25, a passage in which Paul applies the term directly to Christ: God, says the Apostle, set Christ Jesus forth 'to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood' (ERF)."

μερος, ους n part; in part; κατα μέρος in
detail

Hughes warns against excessive detailed allegorising of the minutiae of the tabernacle with examples by way of warning from medieval commentators.

Verse 6

Τούτων δὲ οὕτως κατεσκευασμένων, εἰς μὲν τὴν πρώτην σκηνὴν διὰ παντὸς εἰσίασιν οἱ ἱερεῖς τὰς λατρείας ἐπιτελοῦντες,

οὕτως thus, in this way

κατεσκευασμένων Verb, perf pass ptc, gen pl κατασκευαζῶ see v.2

πρωτος, η, ον see 8:7

Here meaning the outer Tabernacle

σκηνη, ης f see v.2

δια παντος continually

"As distinguished from παντοτε (cf. 7:25) it seems to express the continuous, unbroken permanence of a characteristic habit while παντοτε marks that which is realised on each several occasion." Westcott

εἰσίασιν Verb, pres indic 3s εἰσεῖμι enter, go in

λατρεία, ας f service, worship; pl. rites ἐπιτελεῶ complete, accomplish

"The ritual duties performed by them there were three in particular: (1) the tending from evening to morning of the golden lampstand to ensure that its lamps were kept burning without interruption (Ex 27:20f.); (2) the burning of incense on the altar of incense each morning and evening when the lamps were dressed (Ex 30:7f.); and (3), in contrast to the two duties already mentioned, which were performed daily, the weekly replacement, on every sabbath day, of the loaves on the table of showbread (Lev 24:8f)." Hughes.

Verse 7

εἰς δὲ τὴν δευτέραν ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ μόνος ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς, οὐ χωρὶς αἵματος, ὃ προσφέρει ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ ἀγνοημάτων,

δευτερος, α, ον second

I.e. the Holy of Holies.

ἅπαξ once, one time, once for all time

Meaning, only on that one day. The priest entered the Holy of Holies more than once on that day.

ἐνιαυτος, ου m year

μονος, η, ον adj only, alone

χωρις prep with gen without, apart from αἷμα, ατος f blood

He brought first the blood of the bullock which was a sin offering for himself and then the blood of the goat, a sin offering for the people. See Leviticus 16.

προσφέρω offer, present

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

Cf. 5:3; 7:27.

λαος, ου m people

ἀγνοημα, τος n a sin committed through ignorance

Again, the limitations of the Old Covenant are stressed. It could only deal with sins committed in ignorance.

Verse 8

τοῦτο δηλοῦντος τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου, μήπω πεφανερῶσθαι τὴν τῶν ἁγίων ὁδὸν ἔτι τῆς πρώτης σκηνῆς ἐχούσης στάσιμ,

δηλωω make clear, indicate

The details of the Tabernacle were ordained by God and through them, and the rituals of worship, God the Holy Spirit was teaching vital lessons.

μηπω adv not yet

πεφανερῶσθαι Verb, perf pass infin φανερωω make known, reveal, make evident

ὁδος, ου f way, path

τὴν τῶν ἁγίων ὁδὸν 'The way into the holies', i.e. probably the 'Holy of Holies'.

ἔτι still, yet

στασις, εως f standing, existence

"... as long as the old system with its imperfections remained in force." Hughes. "Does not necessarily imply that the earthly sanctuary, as a natural structure, no longer existed; what is implied is that, with Christ's passing 'through the heavens' (4:14) into the presence of God, the earthly structure has lost its sanctuary status." Bruce. I.e. no longer has its divinely appointed standing.

Verse 9

ἥτις παραβολὴ εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τὸν ἐνεστηκότα, καθ' ἣν δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίαι προσφέρονται μὴ δυνάμεναι κατὰ συνείδησιν τελειῶσαι τὸν λατρεύοντα,

ὁστις, ἥτις, ὅ τι who, which

παραβολη, ης f parable, comparison

καιρος, ου m time, season, age

ἐνεστηκότα Verb, perf act ptc, m acc s

ἐνιστημι be present

This phrase is the focus of some debate as to whether it refers to 'the time *then* present' i.e. the time of the Old Covenant, or 'the time *now* present', introducing the contrasting freeness of access *now* enjoyed under the New Covenant compared with the shadows of the Old. Westcott suggests that the writer of Hebrews distinguishes between three periods – the past (the Old Covenant), the present (the New Covenant inaugurated), and the future (the consummation of the New Covenant at Christ's return). Hughes follows Delitzsch in thinking that the meaning is that the Mosaic ritual was a parable pointing to the new dispensation in which the types and shadows are now being fulfilled.

ἐπικειμαι lie upon, be imposed (of regulations)

καθ ἣν the antecedent is the σκηνης

δωρον, ου n gift, offering

θυσια, ας f sacrifice

προσφερω see v.7

δυναμαι be able to, be capable of

συνειδησις, εως f conscience

Cf. 5:14; 7:18f.,27. "By these sacrifices the conscience could only be cleansed from the kind of guilt which had been incurred through ritual offences." Montefiore.

τελειωω make perfect

λατρευω serve, worship

Verse 10

μόνον ἐπὶ βρώμασιν καὶ πόμασιν καὶ
διαφόροις βαπτισμοῖς, δικαιώματα σαρκὸς
μέχρι καιροῦ διορθώσεως ἐπικείμενα.

μονον adv only, alone

βρωμα, τος n food, solid food

πομα, τος n drink

διαφορος, ον different

βαπτισμος, ου m washing (of hands); ritual
washing

δικαιωμα, τος n regulation, requirement

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body

Ordinances which dealt with that which is external, cf. 7:16.

μεχρι and μεχρις prep with gen until

διορθωσις, εως f new order, reformation

A word not found elsewhere in Biblical Greek. Montefiore thinks it refers to the future 'new world' (cf. Matt 19:28; Acts 3:21). But the context seems to require reference to Christ's inauguration of the New Covenant through his death and resurrection which *is* the institution of the new age, as Hughes comments, "This 'time of reformation' has already been defined in terms of Jeremiah's prophecy of the new covenant and its fulfilment in Christ (Heb 8:7ff.)."