

# ***The Book of Hebrews***

## ***Part 22: The Mysteries of the Temple (Heb. 9:1-5)***

### **I. The Fading System**

We have essentially learned that Jesus is both the fulfillment and end of the Law (Matthew 5:17 & Romans 10:4). He has come to fulfill the promises hidden in the Old Covenant while putting an end to its priestly orders and guilt-driven sacrifices.

He is like Melchizedek in Genesis 14 who represented an unending life. He is the eternal priest, the eternal sacrifice, and the eternal covenant itself. He brings the truth of what was always in the heart of God—unending mercy and grace.

As the letter goes deeper into its reflections on the Old Testament, more mysteries of the eternal realm unfold. The writer continues to call people out of an old wineskin—an old understanding of scripture and God—in order to come into this new (to us) and eternal reality.

But the author does not stop shining a light on the Old Testament. Not only were there priests, sacrifices, and covenants involved, there was the whole physical structure where everything took place. This was the “temple” designed by Moses who received blueprints for it on Mount Sinai, the same place the Old Covenant was established with its corresponding priesthood and sacrifices. The temple was the central location for all these aspects of the covenant to play out.

- *Note: Moses received blueprints for a tented structure called the tabernacle. David and his son Solomon are the ones who would turn it into the temple of Jerusalem.*

The author is about to challenge people’s perceptions about the temple. This is dangerous territory, for saying something even remotely close to blaspheming the temple was met with violent opposition. It was part of Jesus’s own arrest and murder (Matthew 26:60-61).

This was one of the most precious things to the Jewish reader of the time. It was at the heart of their religious and political culture. The temple was supposedly the house of God himself, so to dishonor the temple was to dishonor God.

Yet the author of Hebrews follows in the footsteps of the prophet Jeremiah who rebuked this kind of thinking. In the same chapter where God said he never spoke about animal sacrifices, he also said, *“Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD’”* (7:4). He rebuked people for their reliance on the physical structure itself when they were dismissing the call to honor the “temple” of human beings around them.

We are now in a *kainos* covenant realm where all are called to know God by the Spirit who dwells in the temple of human hearts. No longer are we to see God as tied to a physical building and priesthood. Those days are ending, which the author warns about at the end of Hebrews 8:

**13 ... But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.  
(Hebrews 8:13b)**

As we've amply noted, this letter is a historical record of a final warning before this actually occurred. The entire temple would be destroyed for the rest of human history all the way up to the present day.

We are in a similar day where shaking is occurring, and God is revealing even more glory of this New Covenant reality. Now it is time to awaken to what Christ has redeemed and revealed. He is the first-fruits of humanity's destiny—to be the Spirit-filled image and likeness of God on earth. This is what has begun to come forth in what is now called the age of the Kingdom.

## **II. The Holy Place**

None of this means that the temple was without divine purpose. Like the priesthood and the sacrifices that took place there, the temple held incredible secrets about God's ultimate plans. Studying the temple is now a source for great revelation and blessing.

With this goal in mind, the author begins the ninth chapter:

**1 Now in the first covenant there were specific rules for worship including a sanctuary on earth to worship in. 2 When you entered the tabernacle you would first come into the holy chamber where you would find the lampstand and the bread of his presence on the fellowship table. 3 Then as you pass through the next curtain you would enter the innermost chamber called, the holiest sanctuary of all. 4 It contained the golden altar of incense and the ark of covenant mercy, which was a wooden box covered entirely with gold. And placed inside the ark of covenant mercy was the golden jar with mystery-manna inside, Aaron's resurrection rod, which had sprouted, and the stone tablets engraved with the covenant laws. 5 On top of the lid of the ark were two cherubim, angels of splendor, with outstretched wings overshadowing the throne of mercy. But now is not the time to discuss further the significant details of these things.**

**(Hebrews 9:1-5 TPT)**

Within the temple/tabernacle was an outer court, an inner holy place (called the "holy chamber" in this passage), and the innermost room ("the holiest sanctuary of all," more commonly known as the Holy of Holies).

The author takes a moment to describe the main things inside of the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. This is before he will go back to focusing on what the High Priest did as he entered

these rooms, bringing together all the revelation being dispensed of Jesus being a new High Priest of a “kainos” covenant. Before we go there, however, we will pause to take in some of the beautiful things God told Moses to design and set within these rooms.

In the Holy Place were three sacred items:

### ❖ **The Lampstand**

“Menorah” in Hebrew. This is the multi-branched candlestick with three branches coming from the left and right of a center piece. This is explained in further detail in Exodus 25:31-40.

Six branches extend from a seventh center pipe. Six is the number of man (Revelation 13:18 & Genesis 1:31) and seven is the number of completion (Genesis 2:2). The image reminds us that man finds his completion by abiding in Christ. As Jesus said in John 15, he is the Vine and we are the branches that extend from him. We are made to live in union with him, receiving of his identity and life. This is the only way to bear the fruit—or fire—of his Spirit in the individual branch or candlestick of our lives.

The lampstand was designed after the almond tree which in Hebrew is translated *as the Awake Tree*. This is because the almond tree is known as the first tree to blossom, even while winter is still hanging on. It is a forerunner and messenger of a new springtime of resurrection life.

In Revelation 1:20, Jesus reveals that this almond tree lampstand designed by Moses hundreds of years prior always represented the church. Jesus is the first “almond tree” and the church is comprised of those who abide in him. We bear the light/fruit of the Spirit; thus, we are also the first-fruits of a new Kingdom that has come. We herald a new day of love, power, and redeemed identity.

### ❖ **The Table of Showbread**

The author mentions the “fellowship table” where the “showbread” or “bread of his presence” was placed. Every day, priests prepared and baked twelve loaves of bread and placed them on this table before God.

Just as Jesus and his church are the true lampstand—the “Light of the world” (John 8:12)—he and the church are also the “Bread of life” (John 6:35). He is the Bread on the table. Just as he multiplies his light through us, he multiplies his life through us. Therefore, we are called to be bread to the world as well.

This is why when Jesus fed the 5,000, there were 12 baskets of bread leftover, one for each apostle (Matthew 14:20). This was not just as a miraculous sign to dazzle people and satisfy their hunger. This was the same message as the lampstand but in a different form. God loves parables,

mysteries, and symbols. Understanding the truth requires metaphors to help highlight different angles of it.

In this miracle “sign,” Jesus was showing the twelve apostles that he would multiply his life through them. He would give them all they need to provide nourishment and truth to the world.

The table of fellowship also speaks to the church in our call to gather around the communion table to worship Jesus and bless one another with his presence. We are called to invite others to this table of family and fellowship as well.

### ❖ **The Altar of Incense**

The third object in the Holy Place was the altar of incense. Though the writer of Hebrews seems to indicate this item was in the Most Holy Place, the Old Testament describes this as being within the first inner room. (He was perhaps speaking of it being the closest item to the Holy of Holies with its fragrant scents entering through the curtain into the presence of the Ark.)

Throughout scripture, incense is compared to prayer and worship. The greatest act of intercession and submitted worship to God was Christ’s death on the cross. This was the sweet-smelling sacrifice that pleased God. Jesus’s act of pure sacrificial love, done through a weak human body, is something that absolutely delights God. This act applies to all humanity, for he sees all humanity as one body coming from one seed. As our High Priest, he is the true and final authority over humanity. This altar therefore represents Christ.

But just like the lampstand and the bread, this also speaks of the church. We are called to be a house of prayer (Isaiah 56:7). According to Isaiah only two chapters later, true prayer and fasting manifests in sacrificial love (Isaiah 58). As we lay down our lives for others and walk in mercy and peace, we too become a fragrant offering to God. This comes by abiding in him, eating the bread of his word and drinking from the vine of his life.

Intercession and musical worship are also vital parts of the church as we gather (Revelation 5:8).

## **III. The Holy of Holies**

After the Holy Place, through a sacred curtain known as the veil, we come into the Holy of Holies. There was one item in this room, a sacred box contained three other objects.

### ❖ **The Ark of the Covenant**

This was the holiest object in all the Old Testament, known as the very throne of God. It had a “mercy seat” that was surrounded by two mighty angels.

As we'll learn in the remainder of Hebrews, this is what the High Priest splashed with blood. No one other than the High Priest could see this item, and that was only once a year.

Jesus is the One who would come and take his seat on the Mercy Seat of Calvary where the blood of the *kainos* covenant would be manifested. The Ark, therefore, is the heart of the Gospel in the middle of the entire temple. This Ark was not only the throne of God, but the revelation that God reigns through other-giving love.

The Ark contained the following three items. (Note: *In both rooms, there is a message of Trinitarian unity. Three holy objects in one room—or three objects in one box—point to three Persons but one God.*)

### ❖ The Golden Jar of Manna

Inside was a golden jar filled with a piece of the “mystery-manna” collected by the Hebrews in the wilderness (Exodus 16). *Manna* literally means “what-is-it”? It is a mystery. It was a strange food left on the ground each morning for the Israelites to collect while traversing through the desert.

The mystery points to what in the *kainos* covenant is called the “mystery of Christ in you” (Colossians 1:27). Though we are surrounded by a wilderness of sin and a desert of dying human flesh, there is a sacred mystery that sustains humankind. Hidden with the precious “jar” of our being is the hidden reality of Christ, the image and presence of God. Jesus came to reveal and restore this reality.

### ❖ Aaron's Rod

The story of Aaron's rod is in Numbers 17. Twelve rods from each tribe were put into the tabernacle overnight. Each rod had the name of a leader from the tribe. Aaron represented the tribe of Levi. Moses told the people that whichever rod blossomed would be God's chosen representative (the people were complaining about Moses and Aaron the previous day).

Overnight, the rod with the name Aaron on it supernaturally blossomed like the branch of an almond tree. The next morning, it had leaves, flowers, and full-grown almonds. It has since become a symbol of “resurrection.”

This object gives us yet another beautiful facet of the Gospel. Jesus as the true High Priest had his body placed into the darkness of the tomb. After three days, he supernaturally rose from the dead as the first-fruits of a forgiven and resurrected world (like a blossoming almond tree in late winter).

## ❖ Stone Tablets

The two tablets engraved by the hand of God with the ten commandments summarizing the entire Old Covenant law (Exodus 24 & 34).

In the *kainos* covenant, the Holy Spirit awakens the law engraved on the tablets of human heart. From birth, the human heart is imprinted with the hidden image of God (the mystery). The law is now fulfilled and perfectly expressed through love (James 2:8). The Spirit empower us to live according to the image of Love.

### **The Ark & the Word of our Testimony**

Each item in the Ark hearkens back to a story where the Israelites were guilty of sin. The manna came in response to the people's complaints. The rod was a response to their rejection of God's leaders. The tablets were given while they worshipped a golden calf. Each item "testifies" against the Israelites, bringing condemnation and a reminder of their offenses. Thus, they are put into a box that was often called "the Ark of the Testimony" (Exodus 25:22).

However, these items were **covered** by the mercy seat, and it is here the Gospel shines through once again. God has covered over our sins with the merciful love revealed in the life and death of the Messiah! Our offenses are washed away. They are not counted against us.

As our human representative, Jesus now testifies to our righteousness! He is the true manna, the budding branch, and the law hidden within the outer "box" of our being.

## **IV. Reflections for Today**

This survey of seven items mentioned in Hebrews 9:1-5 is only a brief discussion of the glorious revelation of Christ hidden within every detail of the Old Testament. The whole Bible points to him, and by pointing to him, it is also pointing to us as his counterpart.

As we said at the beginning, the Old Testament symbols have been fulfilled in Christ and now we are in the age of the Kingdom. The New Testament teaches, however, that we are still in a transitional "last days" of the old order.

To the Lord, "a day is like a thousand years" (2 Peter 3:8). There are perhaps two or three of God's "days" before this age fully blossoms. We are in the hour of the Awake Tree, the budding of Aaron's rod, heralding the coming of this new era. It is here and it hasn't yet filled the whole world.

In the last few “days” of the old era, there is still a battle with defeated powers. Their doom is sealed, their ultimate power is broken; however, they still deceive. As a result, they dupe people into staying in an Old Covenant understanding of God. This is a key part of the last-days-struggle in which we find ourselves. This involves religious systems with upgraded forms of Judaism including new kinds of priests, temples, and religious sacrifices (“penance”) to appease God.

The book of Hebrews prophesied a great shaking to its generation, declaring the old order was fading away. This shaking came and the whole world was transformed by the message of Christ. Today, we are heading into another shaking which will include religious “Christian” systems that have been set up since.

As such, we are coming into a new dimension of the Kingdom as well as a deeper revelation of the *kainos* covenant. Humanity is being awakened to the mystery of Christ within the temple of the human body.

The human body is made up of parts that correspond to the true temple of heaven. For example, there are 24 ribs surrounding and bowing before the heart (literally, they are *bowed*), which is the throne of a person’s being. A river of life courses from the heart watering the rest of the body. In the same way, the apostle John sees 24 elders surrounding and bowing before the throne of God, where we later see a river of life flowing from it to bring fruitfulness to the rest of the city (Revelation 4:3 & 22:1).

Before the throne was a lampstand (Revelation 4:5) and before the throne of our heart are lungs with actual branches filled with breath. In the same way, the seven branches of the lampstand are lit with the “breath” of God’s Spirit.

There are many other connections, but like the author of Hebrews we will have to say, “*now is not the time to discuss further the significant details of these things.*” Now, we will only reaffirm that a great shaking is upon us. **In its wake will be an apocalyptic unveiling of the mystery of Christ hidden within the temple of human beings.**

### **Follow-up Encounter:**

*As you prepare to take communion, meditate on one of the objects within the temple. Hold it in your mind’s eye as best you can and ask Jesus to speak to you with further understanding and revelation. Take a moment to wait on him and see what he says to you.*

*As different truths settle into your heart, move into communion, thanking God for what he is showing you. Take hold of each truth by faith, taking it as your own.*