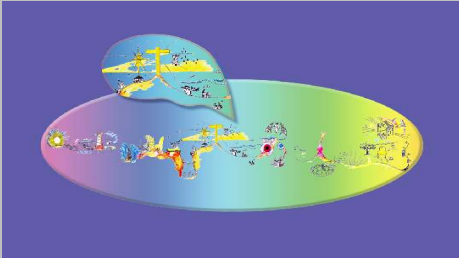


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Eternal Fellowship News Bulletin

We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Hebrew Bible and New Testaments) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

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HULDAHMINISTRY

LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

【 THE TABERNACLE 】

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which 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 had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But 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. The 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 standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He 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, having obtained eternal redemption. The 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. How 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 death, so that we may serve the living God! ...

It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but to the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of

the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence...so that Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. **HEBREWS 9:1~28.**

In previous letters we examined the three (out of five) warnings and “truths concerning the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ” in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Our Lord Jesus Christ as the high priest sits now *‘at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and ...serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord not by man.’* What Christ achieved in becoming a high priest for ever is significantly and precisely in accord with the foreshadowing order of the Levitical priesthood. The Book of Exodus records that the Aaronic priesthood was instituted after the institution of the annual observance of Passover that was to be a lasting ordinance; the Passover lamb was slaughtered as a memorial feast commemorating Israel's redemption by God and appropriating it anew. The Book of Leviticus also records that a high priest could minister in the sanctuary area, Most Holy Place for himself and the nation Israel only after the sacrificial animals were slaughtered for sin and burnt offering and also after he has changed into sacred garments following his own cleansing. Accordingly, exactly like the order of the Aaronic priesthood, though it was only a reflection of what is in heaven from the beginning, Jesus Christ began His priesthood in the true heavenly sanctuary after He offered Himself as sacrifice on the cross. Today Christ's perfect priesthood continues at the right hand of the Father in heaven in three ways; as us, sinners' perfect representative, as our intercessor and as our advocator.

This month we will focus on *‘the tabernacle’* along with the text of Hebrews chapter 9. The author of the Hebrews directs our attention to an *‘earthly sanctuary’* in a tabernacle, whose detailed instructions of how to build had been given to Moses, with God's warning: *“See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”* (Hebrew 8:5). With no mention of the temple (in Jerusalem) as an immovable pattern of tabernacle that was built after David triumphantly settled in Canaan and after he made Jerusalem Israel's capital city, the author of the epistle refers to the earthly tabernacle as a representation of the present times to start his argument about the superiority of Christ's priesthood as the *‘mediator of a new covenant’* in comparison with the institution of *‘the first covenant,’ i.e., the old covenant.* The author might have hinted that the temple in Jerusalem should be set apart for a while because it would prefigure the glorious millennial temple to come under the future millennial reign by the Lord Jesus Christ and not so much relevant for the transition period in the present times. For the time being, the Mosaic portable sanctuary, i.e., the tabernacle would be a good illustration of the imperfect days of our pilgrimages towards perfection.

The Scriptures devote more than fifty complete chapters to the subject of tabernacle, with the total amount of passages dedicated to it being second only to the subject of Christ. The tabernacle is therefore very important to God, and as we examine in this letter, also important to the Jews as a representation of God's presence and important to us, too, as a shadow and pattern of heavenly things. The tabernacle—God's temporary dwelling place— was made up of a linen fence hung over a metal framework so as to be in the shape of a 23m × 46m rectangle, surrounded by white linen curtains 2.3m high. The tabernacle proper was a large tent of 4.6 × 13.7 meters, made up of acacia wood planks, divided into two rooms: an *‘outer room’* (the *‘first room’*) called *‘the Holy Place’* of 4.6 × 9.1 meters and an *‘inner room’* (*‘behind the second curtain’*) called *‘the Most Holy Place,’* or *‘Holy of Holies’* of 4.6 m square. There was only one entrance on the east side. Outside in the courtyard, i.e., inside the outer boundary of the tabernacle area, first stood the brazen altar (the altar of sacrifice) and then, a bronze washing basin (the laver). The sizes of these articles of furniture are not specified. In the first room stood three pieces of furniture; *‘the lampstand’*, a seven-branched lampstand, the so-called *‘menorah,’* and *‘the table and the consecrated bread’*, the so-called *‘table of shewbread’* whose twelve loaves of bread were changed to newly baked ones every Sabbath, and a golden altar, so called *‘the altar of incense.’* Behind the second curtain acting as a partition between the rooms, in the Most Holy Place, stood *‘the gold-covered ark of the covenant’* that contained *‘the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant’* and above the ark was *‘the atonement cover,’* or *‘the mercy seat’* over which the two *‘cherubim of the Glory’* were situated. God would periodically appear over the mercy seat between the cherubim in the form of **the ‘Shekinah Glory.’**

After washing themselves in the laver prior to their priestly duties, the priests regularly entered the tabernacle proper but into the outer room alone. Only once a year the high priest alone could enter the

inner room with blood of the slaughtered animals to atone for his own sins and people's sins committed in ignorance. However, here in the text the author of the epistle significantly refers to ***'the golden altar of incense'*** as if it belonged to the inner room, the Most Holy Place, along with the ark of the covenant. Taking Christ's achievement as a high priest into consideration, the author's use of this illustration seems intentional. In the Scriptures ***"incense"*** is used as a symbol of prayer and intercession. Accordingly, the author's intention might be connected to Christ's finished work of atonement, and in fact, having entered the Most Holy Place, Christ is already interceding for us in the heavenly realms. As the Book of Exodus describes: ***'Place the gold altar of incense in front of the ark of the Testimony and put the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle' (40:5)***, the altar of incense was placed very near to the ark of the covenant as if symbolising its close relationship to the Most Holy Place. It would not be difficult to imagine what happened to the altar of incense by Christ's sacrificial death on the cross along with the description about how Aaron, the high priest administered his duty in the Most Holy Place on ***'the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)'***: ***'Aaron...is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony,...he is to take some of the bull's blood...sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it...'***(Leviticus 16).

As the smoke rising from the altar reminds us of Christ's perpetual intercession, so all other articles of furniture and features in the tabernacle are closely related to Christ, and depict spiritual significance. First, the single entrance access to the courtyard signifies the only way of access to the Father in heaven through Christ. In other words, Christ is **the** gate for the sheep and **the** way to the Father. Secondly, the bronze altar that has horns on the four corners to secure the sacrifices in place reminds us of our desperate need for atonement to approach God. Thus, it symbolises Christ's sacrificial death to save those who believe in Him. Thirdly, the bronze laver full of water situated between the bronze altar and the entrance of the tabernacle proper reminds us of our need of cleansing for our soul's salvation. It symbolises the cleansing process of our pilgrim lives, which John described: ***'If we claim to have fellowship with him (God) yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light...the blood of Jesus, his son, purifies us from all sin...If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.'*** (1John 1:6-9). Fourthly, the golden lampstand, which was placed along the south side of the Holy Place, and which was kept burning with pure olive oil daily supplied by the priests, reminds us of the only light in the darkened room. It symbolises Christ as ***'the light of the world,'*** and the provider of the oil of the Holy Spirit. Fifthly, the table of shewbread which displayed the twelve loaves of bread for the twelve tribes of Israel on the twelve gold plates and also dishes for frankincense, reminds us of ***'thank offering'*** to God. It signifies Christ as ***'the bread of life.'*** Sixthly, the second curtain separating the tabernacle from the other items represented the only access to God. It symbolises Christ Himself as the author of the epistle claims: ***'since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us thorough the curtain, that is his body,...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.'*** (10:19-22). Lastly, the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place, was a reminder to Israel of God's presence in the camp in the wilderness, and it also kept within it three important things signifying God's mercy and perpetual care for her as He promised through the covenant. Accordingly, it symbolises God's presence, forgiveness and mercy. Also, it was Christ's atoning work that achieved a propitiation for God's wrath. Thus, astonishingly, Christ fulfilled all that was represented by each item in the tabernacle.

The author of the epistle explains the absolute superiority of this Christ's salvific work, i.e., ***'the good things that are already here,'*** in a roundabout manner: ***'the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper...When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation...How 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! (9:8-14). As the Epistle of Hebrews was probably written between 60 and 70 C.E. before the destruction of Jerusalem, the author, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was prophetically suggesting in this statement, that it was only after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 C.E. that the way access to the Father in the Most High Place was entirely to be disclosed. The author emphatically explained to Jewish Christians the limited and temporary purpose of the first covenant; that though the old Levitical system ceased to function before God the moment Christ died and the dividing curtain in the temple was torn apart, even so, the traditional rituals and orders, i.e., all the fleshly observances of religion were still being continued because the temple itself still existed.

The author proceeds to show the distinctive consequences of the sacrifice of Christ Himself: Christ secured the following five things. (1) an entrance into the presence of God (2) eternal redemption (3) purification of our conscience from guilt (4) the promised eternal inheritance (5) release from the sins committed under the first covenant, i.e., violations of Mosaic law. In other words, despite His crucifixion being a stumbling-block to Jews, their Messiah had to die so as to institute the new covenant, that is, He had to die for “the better covenant”. Also, He had to die to cleanse His country-men from sinful acts that led to death, that is, for “better moral purification”. It is note-worthy that in the context, the author calls such newly cleansed men’s hearts and consciences (by Christ’s blood), “*the heavenly things themselves*”. If the copies of heavenly things, i.e., the imperfect and impermanent tabernacle erected by Moses should have been purified with animal sacrifices, it was necessary for “*the heavenly things themselves*,” i.e., the heavenly sanctuary including all belongings to it, to be purified with the better sacrifice of Christ Himself.

In Hebrews 10:1-18, the author further argues about this better sacrifice by Christ. He stresses that the former order could never free man’s conscience from condemnation but that man’s sin only called for the need of a new offering repeatedly. However, today those who were redeemed through Christ’s once-for-all-sacrifice would experience of complete freedom from guilty-conscience upon confessing their sins and simply trusting in Christ’s completed atonement on the cross, even if they might be conscious of sin in every aspect of life in this world. The apostle Paul taught; ‘*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*’ (Romans 8:1). In sharp contrast to every priest who ‘*stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins*’ (Hebrews 10:11, Line added), whose work was never finished, our great high priest, Christ completed His work and sits at the right hand of God.

In the last section of Hebrews chapter 9 the author refers to the three fold appearances of Christ —past, present, future: ①He appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sins of many people by His own sacrifice just as man is destined to die once and after that to face judgment. ②Having entered heaven, He appears to intercede for us in God’s presence as the high priest. ③He will appear again a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him. Our present time of tension and also anticipation for the glorious second coming of Christ could be likened to that experienced by the nation Israel who expectantly waited for the appearance of the high priest out of the Most Holy Place who had finished his duty of atonement successfully.

What we have just examined above is only an aspect of the significance of the tabernacle and there is another important aspect worth examining, which will be the topic of the next letter.

**We hope all the blessings and peace of this special Season
Will light up your life with Faith, Hope and Love.
Wherever and Whoever we are,
JESUS CHRIST is God’s Gift for us!**

暗闇から光を切望する時節がまた巡ってきました。
世の光、イエス・キリストは、人類の救いのため手を差し伸べておられます。
主、イエスを受け入れ、信仰、希望、愛が、
皆様の心に灯される時節となりますようお祈りいたします。

