

**Hebrews**



**Promises  
Faithfully  
Kept**

# **Hebrews 9.1-10 (CSB)**

## **Preparation for Glory**

I recently watched a youtube video of things most teenagers today don't know about, so they can't appreciate the difference new technology brings.









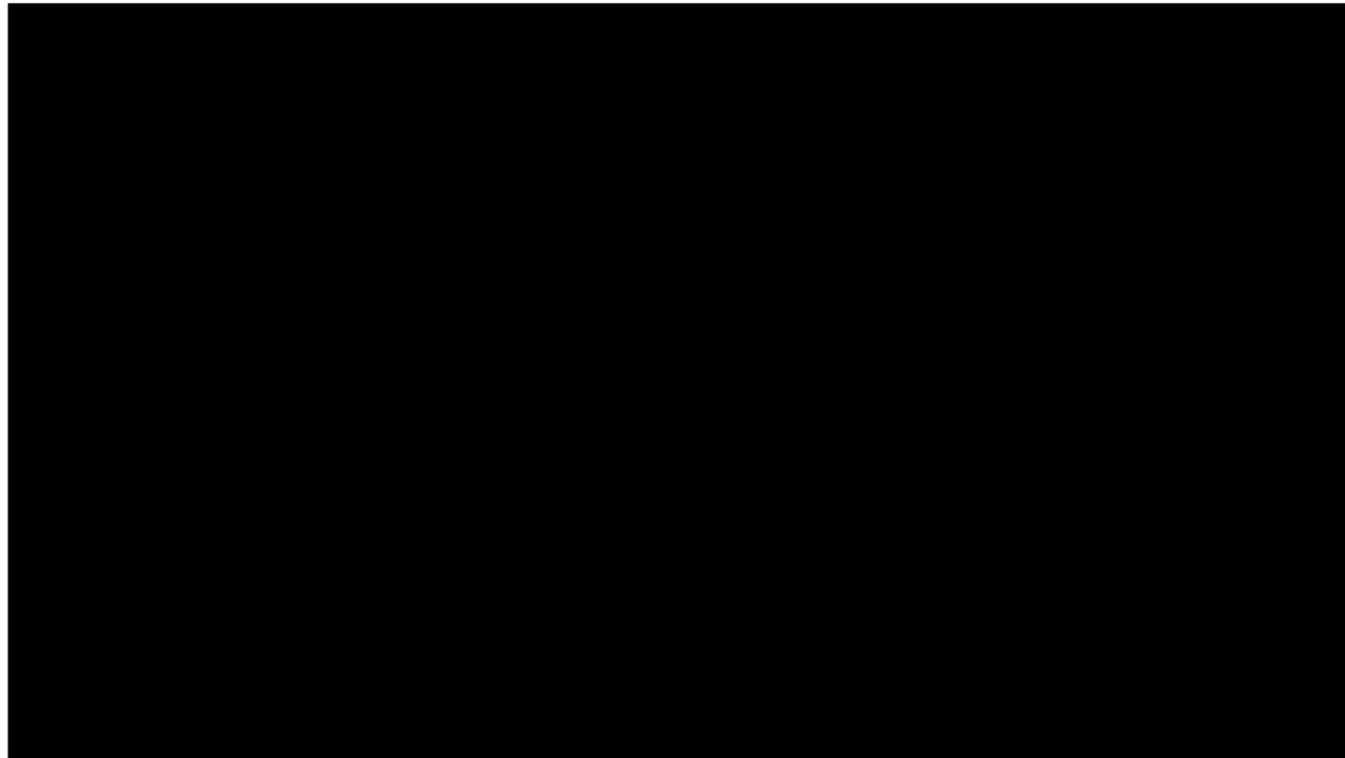
Matt Lee

Plymouth, Michigan

Still original paint and interior furnishings—1927 Model T.

2-speed pedal, 20 horsepower, and a top speed of 35 mph.

It probably would not go so well if you tried to borrow Matt's car for a long distance trip. But if you are a car enthusiast or designer, you should know the form and appreciate the purpose of Henry Ford's design.



What about the worship of God?

Should the old covenant's system of worship still matter to us? If we are clearly in the New Covenant and are not tempted to go back to the old like the original audience, why should we care?

When it comes to worship, any church that is to be faithful must start with the God who has revealed Himself by creation and His Word and who has saved a people for Himself. This mission included His setting up of the Tabernacle system.

The earthly Tabernacle was not the original but was a copy. The prototype is heaven and earth itself. Everything was designed to be oriented to the Holy Creator. Then the earthly Tabernacle was designed to give Israel a specific place in time and space to approach God.

Henry Ford designed the prototypical car, a design upon which all cars after would be based.

God gave designs for the Tabernacle to look back at the original design of God's throneroom and to look forward to Christ. He knew exactly what He would bring about in the future by means of His Son.

The Tabernacle system should matter to us for several reasons, but at the heart of today's passage is that the glorious Tabernacle was designed to prepare us for the greater glory of Christ.

The Temple sacrifices were going on at the writing of this letter, but those sacrifices were hopeless attempts to please God by a means that He said were outdated.

If our worship and purpose is not centered on this gospel by which we are brought into right relationship with God for His glory and our good, then any attempts at worship will be lifeless, even if it seems like it us full of energy or emotion.

We are to respond to Hod with our worship according to His Word as it has been revealed. And the Word, Christ Jesus, has fully revealed the Father and the way to God's very presence.

**9:1 Now the first covenant also had regulations for ministry and an earthly sanctuary.**

**2 For a tabernacle was set up,  
and in the first room, which is  
called the holy place, were the  
lampstand, the table, and the  
presentation loaves.**

**3 Behind the second curtain  
was a tent called the most holy  
place.**

**4 It had the gold altar of incense  
and the ark of the covenant,  
covered with gold on all sides,**

**in which was a gold jar  
containing the manna, Aaron's  
staff that budded, and the  
tablets of the covenant.**

**5 The cherubim of glory were above the ark overshadowing the mercy seat. It is not possible to speak about these things in detail right now.**

**6 With these things prepared like this, the priests enter the first room repeatedly, performing their ministry.**

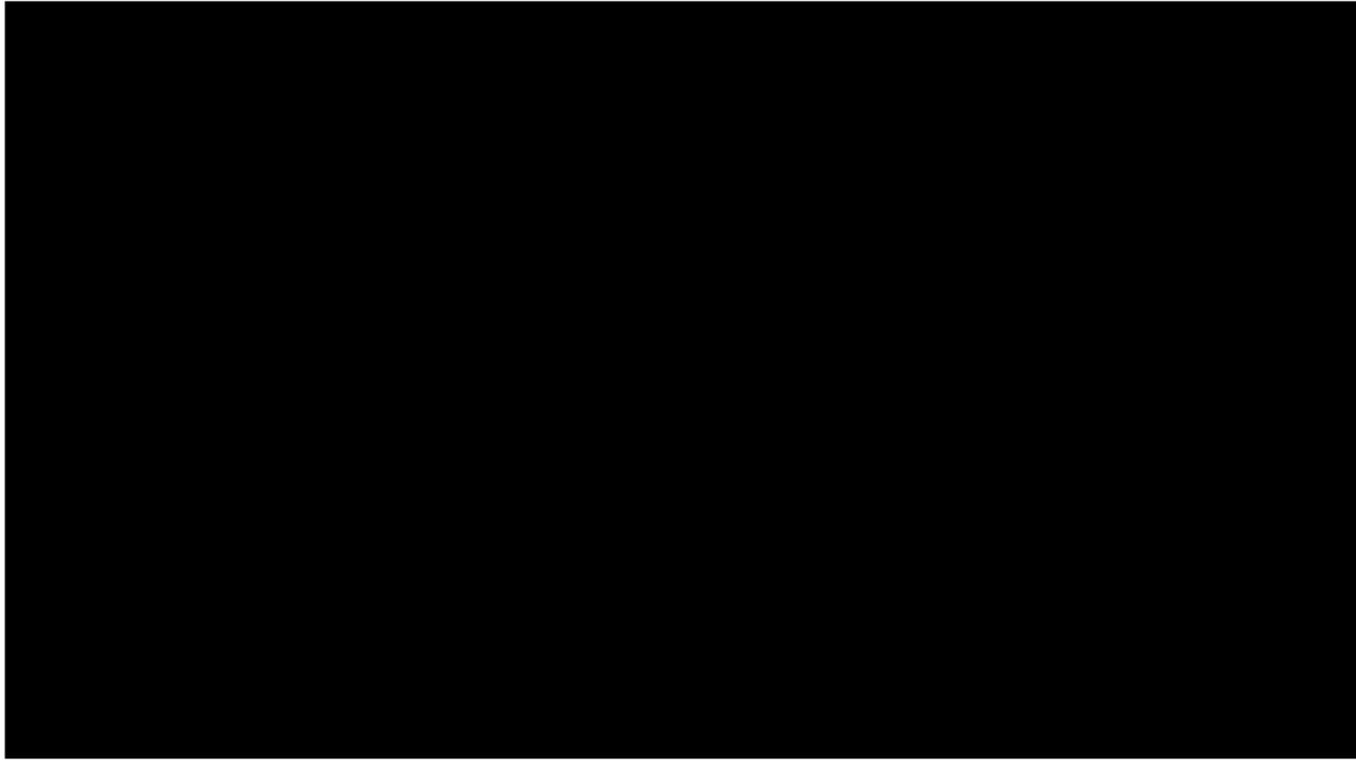
**7 But the high priest alone  
enters the second room, and he  
does that only once a year,**

**and never without blood, which  
he offers for himself and for the  
sins the people had committed  
in ignorance.**

**8 The Holy Spirit was making it clear that the way into the most holy place had not yet been disclosed while the first tabernacle was still standing.**

**9 This is a symbol for the present time, during which gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the worshiper's conscience.**

**10 They are physical regulations  
and only deal with food, drink,  
and various washings imposed  
until the time of the new order.**



Pray

**God alone has the right to  
determine how He is to be  
approached and worshipped.  
(v. 1)**

1. God alone has the right to determine how He is to be approached and worshipped. (v. 1)

Why do we need to talk about the Old Covenant Tabernacle and what was in it? Why should we take our focus off of Christ to consider such details that don't come into our regular worship now? Shouldn't we just focus on the gospel?

Well, that is what this text is actually helping us do. The author brings up the Tabernacles inner rooms in order to highlight the greatness and beauty of the gospel that saves.

In order to appreciate the glory of the gospel, we need to realize some truths about the Tabernacle and its contents.

So Why should the Tabernacle room structures detail matter to us?

First, because God Himself came up with the idea.

It all matters because God cared about every intricate detail of how His people were to worship Him.

Exodus is not just about the way out or escape from Egypt. It is about the One True God who keeps His promise to Abraham to rescue His people from the oppression of Egypt, form them into a nation, and have them worship Him with their entire culture and land centered around the worship of YHWH from which they are to experience His every blessing.

Remember what Moses told Pharaoh. It wasn't just "Let my people go." It was let us go and worship YHWH. The last third of the book is all about the worship of YHWH, with a large amount dedicated to the design of the Tabernacle and the cultic system of sacrifice.

As we gather to worship God, it needs to be according to His self-revelation as He has revealed Himself in time and His Word. We are to structure our services according to the Word, fill them with Scripture, and proclaim God's Word.

For the Hebrew Christians first receiving this letter, they were tempted to think they could turn their back on Christ in order to worship God according to the Old Covenant. But that decision would be going against the very Creator whom they were wanting to worship. He has already revealed the Son by whom alone we are to come to God. God used the Old Covenant Tabernacle to prepare us for the glory of Christ.

**The Tabernacle beautifully  
prepared those entering for  
God's glorious presence.  
(vv. 2–5)**

2. The Tabernacle beautifully prepared those entering for God's glorious presence. (vv. 2–5)

The author focuses on the two most inner rooms of the Tabernacle: the holy place and the most holy place, or the HoH. He lists several items within the Tabernacle's inner rooms but then says that we don't have time to get into the details of these matters. He has a reason for bringing up these details and a reason for then leaving them behind so quickly.

First, we need to consider the general structure of the Tabernacle as the author brings it up.

Have you ever been in a situation in which making your point in great detail actually works against your point?

I decided not to include any pictures of what the Tabernacle would have looked like. I know many good teachers who used this text to instruct church members on the details of the Tabernacle and did a good job. But I have also found that some attempts to do so have missed the mark.

If the point is to show the beautiful, intricate detail that displays God's glory, we should be careful not to diminish that imagery with poor attempts. For example, I found pictures of people who tried to dress up as the high priest but obviously with cheaper representations of the ephod, with felt depicting the precious stones, so that precious took on a diminutive connotation. "How precious" is not what we should be going for.

If I were to try to show you pictures of what the Tabernacle looked like, it would fail in trying to communicate the grandeur and beauty of the place God designed for

people to approach Him.

The point on the screen is why I think the author lists the gold-covered objects and particular contents in the holy inner sanctuary and the Holy of Holies.

As Francis Shaeffer points out in *Art and the Bible*, when God “commanded Moses to fashion a tabernacle, [he commanded him to do so] in a way which would involve almost every form of representational art that men have ever known.” The design and setting of these pieces were part of a total immersion experience designed to make the priests be in awe of the God they were serving, an awe that should make them wonder about that inner room, into which they must not wander.

Growing up I never really heard much said about the Holy of Holies. Then I worked at a Christian summer camp after high school. We had a building on the campus nicknamed the holy of holies. I really don't know why, other than that it was off limits to anyone but the full time staff and the summer staff leaders and whoever they allowed in there. Why? Because that small little gutted building with A/C and furniture and very few pull lights was the place we stored our soda supplies.

It wasn't pretty. But it did make me go look up in Scripture to read about the Tabernacle's holy of holies. As the author points out there was a dividing curtain between the inner sanctuary and the most inner room. God who is holy in character and in being uniquely set apart had determined that His presence would be present in that most inner room.

By mentioning each of the objects in the two most inner rooms, the author is moving us closer to the place where God's presence is supposed to dwell and doing so according to God prerogative. Each of the objects were commanded by God to be in their particular place and how they were to be set there.

Like a King's inner chamber, everything leading up to that point spoke of His greatness and grandeur. All the objects listed were either used within the process of God saving and leading His people through the wilderness or were part of the process of approaching God, or represented God's very presence.

The contents set inside the ark included Aaron's staff. God showed He had chosen Aaron by having it sprout and bud with new life. The manna was the means by which God preserved His people. The stone tablets were symbolic of the Sinai covenant and summarized God's expectations by the 10 commandments.

The mercy seat and ark of the covenant were guarded by golden depictions of cherubim, as cherubim were often shown to guard the holy presence of God and to destroy any unholy person who attempts to approach.

All of these symbols were to be known to the people and were to speak to them of God's holiness and salvation.

The author even refers to the altar of incense as being within the most holy place. He clearly would have known that it was not there but in the holy place, the prior room. It appears he includes it with the contents of the HoH because the incense represented God's presence upon entering the Most Holy Place.

All these contents leading into the HoH were beautiful and amazing within themselves, but they were even more wondrous because they intended to make your interest move from that first room toward that second and most inner room. Who is this great God whom the high priest will enter to meet?

**The Tabernacle was designed  
also to make us realize no one  
other than God's designated  
mediator could enter into His  
holy presence.  
(vv. 6–7a)**

3. The Tabernacle was designed also to make us realize no one other than God's designated mediator could enter into His holy presence. (vv. 6–7a)

We do not need to labor this point long. Kevin spoke to our need of a mediator and high priest last week. But let's just emphasize the intentionality of God's design.

The priests from the tribe of Levi were those allowed to serve within the first room. But only the high priest was allowed into the most inner room. Remember how I put it a few months ago. Our salvation was worked out in a back room meeting that we were not allowed into. We needed a man on the inside.

It has always been God's pattern to have a mediator for His people. Adam was like the first priest, who was to teach the word of God and care for God's people and creation.

In the wilderness God threatens to wipe out His people but Moses intercedes. We know clearly from God's Word that He does not change His mind or have any need to repent. But He tells Moses He is going to wipe the people out and start over with Him. Then Moses intercedes for the people. And God says okay. I've listened. We'll go with what you requested.

God was at work to have Moses mediate and intercede for Israel, preparing us for Christ to be our mediator.

When God did tell Moses how to design the sacrificial system, it had many points on offerings, but the standing of the people with God especially hinged upon one day and one man: the Day of Atonement and the high priest. If he did not handle this situation rightly, including making offering for His own sin, then God's wrath would be poured out on the people. But if the high priest interceded for the people the blood of animals was poured out in their place. God is the one who said we needed an intercessor, a mediator.

But we needed one who was so much greater than the Old Covenant priests.

**Christ Jesus is the only mediator  
who could enter the heavenly  
throne room of God's presence.  
(v. 7b)**

4. Christ Jesus is the only mediator who could enter the heavenly throne room of God's presence. (v. 7b)

You probably know the drill given by every airplane steward and stewardess. In case of emergency, oxygen masks will deploy. Make sure to place yours on your face before assisting others with theirs.

The high priests of the Old Covenant had to make sure to take care of their own sin issue before they could make offering for the people's sins.

Even the high priests of the Old Covenant longed for the day that their jobs would become obsolete.

They longed for a day when they would not have to offer sacrifices anymore, but they were only serving within the earthly Tabernacle. It was just a copy. It was not the original. God's presence may have dwelt there among the people, but God did not reveal the full extent of His glory there.

There is only one High Priest who has ever gone into the very heavenly throne room of God's presence to intercede for God's people. That High Priest is Righteous Jesus Christ. As Daniel envisioned Him in prophecy, He is the Son of Man who steps through the fierce fire-encircled presence of the Ancient of Days.

In the Tabernacle and the later Temple, there was a strong, elaborate curtain dividing the holy of holies from the inner sanctuary.

When Jesus was preparing to give up his life upon the cross, John records that he said, "It is finished [and will remain finished forever]." Matthew says that he cried out in a loud voice and at that "Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split." (27:51)

Jesus Himself was cut and stabbed and had his flesh torn so that the curtain that prevents us from coming into God's presence would be ripped open. He is the One who makes the way for us rightly to enter and approach without fear.

**The old covenant tabernacle was  
designed to prepare us for the  
glorious way to God, the person  
of Christ Jesus.  
(vv. 8-9)**

The old covenant tabernacle was designed to prepare us for the glorious way to God by Christ. (1st->2nd room)

The author uses the pattern of a first room and then a second room. The old covenant with the Tabernacle was intended to prepare us for the more glorious new covenant and Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit was communicating by means of repetition. By having the high priest repeat the offering over and over again, year after year, and for the priests to make the regular daily sacrifices, He was communicating that the people needed a permanent solution. By having the curtain in place in the Tabernacle as He revealed it to Moses, the Holy Spirit was communicating that there was going to be a way made to bring people back into the very presence of God. But until that curtain was torn, there would be no way.

Because of the frustration of the continual presence of sin, people were faced with two options. Either they would stop believing, which is why some people started offering unworthy sacrifices, or they would look beyond their current covenant in hope to a greater one.

We needed more than just externally beautiful displays and external sacrifices that didn't change hearts. We needed a sacrifice that would reach into every aspect of creation and awaken the dawn of new creation with every facet of life. We needed a sacrifice and mediator who would bring us to life.

The gracious and beautiful Tabernacle was preparing the people and us for the greater glory of Christ Jesus.

The ugly and horrific death of Christ on the wooden torture device is so much more glorious than the gold-hammered table for bread or the altar of incense. The empty tomb as witnessed by two angels is of greater glory than even the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat, which was surrounded by the golden statues of cherubim.

No, the message of Jesus and this church he designed seems lackluster to the world. But He brings us into the very presence of God in which there is no more death, no abuse, no isolation, no abandonment, no hatred, no suffering, no more rejection, no more sickness, no more starving, no more lies, no more stealing, no more scheming, no more division. Rather, Christ is all and fills all so that we may dwell with God forever.

By means of Christ we get grace, mercy, forgiveness, eternal life, reconciliation, peace, joy, hope, love, family, home.

Every gift of God for His people is mediated through Christ Jesus. Grace comes to us by means of Christ Jesus. Everything that has ever been created came by Him the Word, and every blessing that is ours comes by means of Christ Jesus. He's not merely the One who died on a cross in the early 30s AD, He is the One who died for your sins and rose again so that you could have eternal life, the risen Lord about whom the apostles and the early church testified, even giving their lives in martyrdom so that the world might know.

The blessings of dwelling with God are ours now, even if the fullness of them is still to come when Christ comes back.

We needed a return to Eden but Christ gives us even more.

**Now that Christ has come, don't  
persist in worship that is lifeless.  
(v. 10)**

6. Now that Christ has come, don't persist in worship that is lifeless.

We are all worshippers. But are we worshipping the One who gives life by the way He assigns?

The author concludes this section by listing several aspects of Old Covenant worship that were lifeless because that Christ had now come. If Jesus has made the way to God and He is the only way, why would we waste our time with worthless practices and regulations.

As George Guthrie puts it, the problems we face when choosing ways of worship that are dead are the "twin issues of sin and submission." "We like neither to admit the former nor to perform the latter." He continues, "We would rather reconfigure our sins and our lack of submission as weakness, mistakes, social outcomes, relational difficulties, or nonissues."

As A. W. Tozer put it, "Much of our difficulty stems from our unwillingness to take God as He is and adjust our lives accordingly. We insist upon trying to modify Him and bring Him nearer to our own image."

Will you approach God today as He is. The cross and empty tomb may not be something the world would expect you to brag about, much less build a whole life upon. But Jesus is the only one who can make your life whole.

Will you approach God today by the only means available? Will you trust in Christ Jesus with your very life today?

