

Understanding the Old Testament
December 3, 2017, Part 6: "Harmony"

Romans 15:4-6

- For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (5) May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such HARMONY with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, (6) that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Objective:

- I understand Paul's context was for Jews and Gentiles to live in harmony with one another as Christians.
- And he spends a HUGE amount of time on this in Romans, BECAUSE the Old Testament speaks of Messiah as the Lord over all people some day in the future.
 - And that day has arrived – in Christ Jesus!
- To see the harmony between the Old and New Testaments
 - That God is indeed "unchanging" even though his various covenants with mankind have changed.

(next) To illustrate this harmony, let me first handle the words "religion" and "ceremony"

- No doubt, the Old Testament has many religious overtones.
 - The priests, for example, were commanded by God (through Moses in Leviticus and Numbers, primarily) to follow specific ceremonial rules
 - And they were dealt with very strictly if they were lax on those rules.
- But in Christianity, one of our famous sayings is "I'm not in a religion, I'm in a relationship."
 - If that's true, then WHY?
 - **How is there harmony** between a seemingly very ceremonial book (OT) and a very relational book (NT)?
 - Let's address this today.

Most of the religious/ceremonial rituals and practices in Judaism happened within the walls of **the Temple in Jerusalem**.

- And ALL the public animal sacrifices took place in the Temple as well.
- There were not **multiple** Jewish temples – just the one.
 - There aren't multiple Jewish temples TODAY, nor has there ever been more than one.
 - Why is that? ...
 - Because the Temple was understood to literally house the presence of the Lord.
- There are MANY Jewish SYNAGOGUES – houses for worship, prayer and fellowship
 - Many were also used as civic rooms for political discussion among the Jews about their community involvement.
 - NO sacrifices were offered in synagogues – nor are they offered in them today.
 - But there was only ONE Temple.
- The Temple, of course, was destroyed by the Romans 35 years after the Cross, as Jesus said it would be.
 - As we will see, however, that's not just a prophecy for the sake of prophecy, nor is it a sad or unfortunate prophecy.

- It was necessary, and I aim to show you why.

As you may know, the Temple was the more permanent form of **the Tabernacle**.

- *(This is picture of a recent reconstruction)*
- The Tabernacle was constructed first at the base of Mt Sinai while Israel camped there shortly after the Exodus from Egypt.
- God had revealed himself to that generation through the 10 Plagues, Passover, the parting of the Red Sea, destruction of Pharaoh and his army and by his very visible presence on top of the Mountain called Sinai.
- The instructions for how it was to be built and the purposes for each element/station are in Exodus 26-27
- And the instructions for how the priests were to offer sacrifices are found in Leviticus
- It took 10 months to complete the construction of the Tabernacle, which was designed to be moved from place to place as the Lord led Israel back to the land he gave to Abraham, called Canaan, in which Jerusalem sits.

Let's have some fun!

- Everybody stand up.
- Leave your belongings where they are, but if you have babies, bring them with you.
- I'd like you to make a rectangle around this room – backs against the outer walls, facing in.

I'm going to walk you through the dimensions and purpose for **each element of the Tabernacle**:

- 155' long, 75' wide –
 - You – where you're standing – represent almost exactly the tab dimensions.
 - Anybody figure it was bigger? Smaller?
- East gate (30' wide) – it was the ONLY entrance
- The Altar of Burnt Offerings (for the people to bring sacrifices)
- The Bronze Laver (for purifying the priests)
- The Holy Place (east door) – only the priests could enter
- The Table of Shewbread – 12 loaves of unleavened bread
- The Golden Lampstand (Menora) – the light for inside the Holy Place, 7 lamps, oil in the lamps, never went out...
- Altar of Incense – a non-stop pleasing aroma lifted to the Lord... prayers are often cited by David and others to be like incense
- The Veil to the Holy of Holies – only the High Priest was permitted to pass through this veil into the presence of the Lord, and only once a year
- The Ark of the Covenant – in it were the 10 commandments tablets, Aaron's rod, and a portion of manna

OK, have a seat!

All of this is quite ceremonial, ritualistic, religious, etc.

- The purpose for God's rules and regulations for sacrifices and holiness in the OT were very specific.
- When God's chosen people sinned, a blood sacrifice – a death – was required in order for God to continue to be in any sort of relationship with His people.
- We say today, I'm so glad God changed all that in the New Covenant!

- But HOW and WHY God no longer requires it is often lost – even on the more mature Christians.

Let's answer the **HOW and WHY the sacrificial ceremonies are no longer necessary.**

- **Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 9...**
- Many in this room can probably give the Sunday school answer as to WHY: Jesus!
 - You might say, "He fulfilled the sacrificial system by HIS blood." Or "He was innocent – like a blameless lamb..." or "He was God in a body, and only the blood of the Son of God could truly atone for sin forever," and with all answers, you'd be correct.
 - But the specifics may elude most of you.
- Today, I want you to put yourself in the shoes of a Jewish person at the time of Christ.
 - I've just walked through how you would have been in "right relationship" with God – living under the Mosaic Covenant – by offering sacrifices to atone for your sin, so that you could remain in covenant with God.
 - You and your ancestors made these sacrifices in
 - the tabernacle for 500 years during and after the wandering,
 - or in the permanent temple Solomon built around 950 BC, which stood for 400+ years before the Babylonian captivity,
 - or in the second temple which Nehemiah restored in 470 BC, lasting just a little over 500 years, through the time of Christ Jesus, before Rome destroyed it in AD 67.
 - YOU brought your lambs, goats, rams, bulls, calves, doves... and watched as the priest meditated for you, slitting the animal's throat, draining its blood in the basin, sprinkling it on you and your family, then some on himself, then disposing of the carcass, then purifying himself in the Bronze laver, and doing it all over again with the family in line behind you.
- That all seems REALLY FOREIGN to you, doesn't it?
 - And yet, the same God commanded it in the previous covenant.
 - That blood shed on the Altar and sprinkled on you and your family was NECESSARY to cleanse you of sin and make you blameless for the purpose of being in the presence of Jehovah God.
 - It wasn't weird. It was necessary.
 - Like
- With that vision and mindset, listen as I read Hebrews 9, and SEE the HARMONY between the Testaments as I do...

From the New Living Translation:

Heb 9:1 That (Mosaic) covenant between God and Israel had regulations for worship and a place of worship here on earth. (2) There were two rooms in that Tabernacle. In the first room were a lampstand, a table, and sacred loaves of bread on the table. This room was called the Holy Place. (3) Then there was a curtain (the veil), and behind the curtain was the second room called the Most Holy Place. (4) In that room were a gold incense altar and a wooden chest called the Ark of the Covenant, which was covered with gold on all sides. Inside the Ark were a gold jar containing manna, Aaron's staff that sprouted leaves, and the stone tablets of the covenant.

(6) The priests regularly entered the first room as they performed their religious duties. (7) But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for His own sins and for the sins the people had committed... (8) By these

regulations the Holy Spirit revealed that the entrance to the Most Holy Place was not freely open as long as the Tabernacle and the system it represented were still in use.

(9) This is an illustration pointing to the present time. For the gifts and sacrifices that the priests offer are not able to cleanse the consciences of the people who bring them. (10) For that old system deals only with food and drink and various cleansing ceremonies—physical regulations that were in effect only until a better system could be established.

(11) So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. (12) With His own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—He entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.

(13) Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity. (14) Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered Himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. (15) That is why He is the One who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that covenant... (and upon his last breath, the gospels tell us the veil in the temple leading into the holy of holies – where only the high priest could enter on our behalf – was violently ripped in two!)

(16) Now, the previous covenant was put into effect with the blood of an animal... (19) For after Moses had read each of God's commandments to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, and sprinkled both the book of God's law and all the people... (20) Then he said, "This blood confirms the covenant God has made with you..." For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. (23) That is why the Tabernacle and everything in it, which were copies of things in heaven, had to be purified by the blood of animals. But the real things in heaven had to be purified with far better sacrifices than the blood of animals.

(25) For Christ did not enter heaven to offer Himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal. (26) If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, He has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by His own death as a sacrifice.

What amazing HARMONY!

- **Christ, our High Priest and Eternal Sacrifice!!!**

Please notice:

The instructions for worship haven't changed from Old to New Covenants.

- Sing, clap your hands, shout to the Lord, dance, raised hands, kneeling or laying on the floor... both corporately in our gatherings and privately in your own homes – God has not changed how He desires to be WORSHIPED.

The instructions for prayer haven't changed.

- Jesus' answer to "how should we pray" asked by his disciples was a summary of OT prayers to the Father.

- Acknowledging God as holy, seeking His kingdom to come to earth, asking forgiveness and for the ability to forgive others, for deliverance from Satan
- Both Testaments call for prayers of repentance, heart change, God's Spirit to MOVE...

MOST instructions for modeling godly behavior haven't changed.

- The Ten Commandments are reiterated in the NT
- The "may I be like you" prayers from Psalm 51 and others are reiterated in the Epistles.
- The call to represent God to the nations in the OT and the call to represent Christ in the NT...

The HARMONY between God's old covenants and his NEW Covenant are plainly seen, IF YOU STUDY THEM.

The major CHANGE between the Old and New Testaments is Messiah's permanent and perfect sacrifice – the once for all sacrifice never to be repeated again.

- The destruction of the temple 35 years after Christ's death was intentional on God's part.
- He did not desire for the sacrificial system to continue.
- Notice the hundreds of synagogues at that time were left standing?
- Remember the difference between a synagogue and the temple:
 - The places for God's people to gather for worship and fellowship remained
- God intends for fellowship, gatherings, worship, and community involvement – OBVIOUSLY.
 - But He did not intend for his people to continue to sacrifice what has already been sufficiently offered up in the sacrifice and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Homework:

- **1) Read the book of Hebrews in its entirety!**
- And pray for me as I seek God's will for the next sermon series.
 - I'm praying for wisdom in either one of the gospels, or the book of Hebrews.
 - You've heard me use the expression "pre-cross teachings of Christ" – and a journey through one of the gospels would help me address that well.
 - But a follow-up series to "understanding the OT" by way of Hebrews would fit well, too.
- As you read Hebrews this week, join me in praying for God's answer to the next series, starting in January.
- **2) Teach what I just taught you to someone not here.**
 - Parents – you have an easy answer as to your audience: your kids!
 - Others – seek out friends and family who may be interested in this, and teach them!

PRAY