

## The Tabernacle, Christ, and the Church

### -A study through the second half of the book of Exodus-

#### *Lesson 11-Is there a literal heavenly Tabernacle?*

**Exodus 25:8-9** *“And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.”*

**Hebrews 8:5** *“They serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.’”*

**Hebrews 9:23** *“Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the **heavenly things** themselves with better sacrifices.”*

*“What these things are is not easy to determine.”-John Owen*

While there are some that view the above passages as speaking of a literal heavenly tabernacle (such as the article by R.B. Jamieson in the journal *New Testament Studies* entitled *“Hebrews 9:23: cult inauguration, Yom Kippur and the cleansing of the heavenly tabernacle”*) many do not see a \_\_\_\_\_ tabernacle in heaven as the proper explanation.

#### **John Owen**

First, Owen does not see a physical tabernacle in heaven. So, in Hebrews 8:5 when the phrase “a copy and shadow of the heavenly things” is mentioned he views this as a reference to what was in the \_\_\_\_\_ of God. The gospel was always God’s plan and under the Old Covenant God pictured this gospel in various ways through the physical tabernacle and the worship that took place there. So, there was not a physical structure in heaven that was being copied but rather the blueprint in God’s mind was being copied.

*“This is the order of these things: The heavenly things themselves were designed, framed, and disposed in the mind of God, in all their order, courses, beauty, efficacy, and tendency unto his own eternal glory. This was the whole mystery of the wisdom of God for the redemption and salvation of the church by Jesus Christ. This is that which is declared in the gospel, being before hid in God from the foundation of the world, Eph. 3:8–10. Of these things did God grant a typical resemblance, similitude, and pattern, in the tabernacle and its services. That he would make such a kind of resemblance of those heavenly things, as unto their kind, nature, and use, that he would instruct the church by them, was an act of his mere sovereign will and pleasure.”*

What about the heavenly things being purified?

Owen concludes that just as everything under the Old Covenant that pictured the gospel, in the Tabernacle, had to be purified with blood, what we see in Hebrews 9:23 is a statement declaring that everything under the New Covenant had to be \_\_\_\_\_ with a better sacrifice (the blood of Christ).

*“By ‘heavenly things,’ I understand all the effects of the counsel of God in Christ, in the redemption, worship, salvation, and eternal glory of the church; that is, Christ himself in all his offices, with all the spiritual and eternal effects of them on the souls and consciences of men, with all the worship of God by him according unto the gospel. For of all these things those of the law*

*were the patterns...All spiritual and eternal grace, mercy, blessings, whereof the souls of men are made partakers by the mediation and sacrifice of Christ, are "heavenly things," and are constantly so called, Heb. 3:1; John 3:12; Eph. 1:3, 2:6. 3dly. The church itself and its worship are of the same kind; the things principally to be purified by these sacrifices."*

All of these "heavenly things" had to be purified not because they were necessary sinful but, similarly to the tabernacle, had to first be purified with blood before they could be seen as \_\_\_\_\_ before the Lord. So, before the worship of the church could be acceptable to God it had to be purified.

But that's not all...heaven itself also had to be purified.

*"And heaven itself was in some sense so purified, as the tabernacle was because of the sins of the people among whom it was, Lev. 16:16. Sin had entered into heaven itself, in the apostasy of angels; whence it was not pure in the sight of God, Job 15:15. And upon the sin of man, a state of enmity ensued between the angels above and men below; so that heaven was no meet place for a habitation unto them both, until they were reconciled; which was done only in the sacrifice of Christ, Eph. 1:10. Hence, if the heavenly things were not defiled in themselves, yet in relation unto us they were so; which is now taken away."*

*"The sum is: As the covenant, the book, the people, the tabernacle, were all purified, and dedicated unto their especial ends, by the blood of calves and goats, wherein was laid the foundation of all gracious intercourse between God and the church, under the old covenant; so all things whatever, that in the counsel of God belonged unto the new covenant, the whole mediation of Christ, with all the spiritual and eternal effects of it, were confirmed, dedicated unto God, and made effectual unto the ends of the covenant, by the blood of the sacrifice of Christ, which is the spring from whence efficacy is communicated unto them all. And moreover, the souls and consciences of the elect are purified and sanctified from all defilements."*

**John Calvin-** *"He calls the kingdom of Christ heavenly things, for it is spiritual and possesses a full revelation of the truth. Better sacrifices he mentions instead of 'a better sacrifice,' for it was only one; but he uses the plural number for the sake of the antithesis or contrast."*

**Matthew Henry-** *"These heavenly things are the privileges of the gospel state, begun in grace, perfected in glory. These must be ratified by a suitable sanction or consecration; and this was the blood of Christ."*

**F.F. Bruce-** *"If we envisage the heavenly dwelling-place of God in something like material terms, we shall find ourselves trying to explain the necessity of its cleaning in ways which are far from our author's intention...The book of the New Covenant (the eternal gospel written in heaven), the Christian sanctuary (the heavenly Zion), and the New Israel (the Christian Church, including the company of the redeemed in heaven) have all been consecrated by the blood of Christ. The stamp of the Cross is on them all."*