

The Nature of Spiritual Worship

Hebrews 9:1-5

In Hebrews 8:13 the writer of Hebrews had shown that the Old Covenant was ready to vanish away. This prediction would have led the Hebrew Christian reading this letter to ask: *Where then will we worship?* When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well she questioned Him about outward forms of worship. *“We worship on Gerazim and Jews in Jerusalem. Which place ought we to worship?”* Jesus answered her; *“The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship in spirit and in truth”* (Jn 4:24). Spiritual worship is rarely understood. We prefer our temples, our rituals and our places of worship. After the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, the early Christians were known for their spiritual worship.

The Greeks and the Romans were not merely astonished at, but felt irritated by the worship of the Christians, who without image and altar, without priests and vestments, appeared to them as atheists, men and women ‘without gods’ and at times felt threatened by the mysterious power Christians possessed as they rejoiced in suffering and met with calm courage the tortures of death itself.

Adolph Saphir.

Hebrews 9 is a pivotal chapter of Hebrews. It presents Christ as the fulfillment of Old Covenant typology. EVERYTHING in the Old Testament pointed to Christ. Faith in Christ brings the sinner intimacy with God. You won't be able to worship *in spirit* and *in truth* until you see how Christ fulfills the Old Covenant.

I. The Tabernacle of the Jews had two rooms.

These two rooms are called different things in the Bible – the first room and the second room, the outer room and the inner room, or the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The best way to consider these two rooms is to think of a house that has a den (the first room) and a parlor (the second room). People live in the den, but only special guests are hosted in the parlor. So, too, priests daily entered the Holy Place to perform their religious functions, but the Holy of Holies was off-limits to everyone. The High Priest, once a year, entered the Holy of Holies and God would “tabernacle” in that place.

II. Drawing close to God involved a blood sacrifice.

On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies with the blood of a goat. Inside the Holy of Holies was “the Ark of the Covenant.” The blood would be placed on top of the Ark. The lid (top) of the Ark was called “The Mercy Seat.” God dwelt with man as the blood was applied. Inside the Ark were three things: Aaron's rod that budded, a pot of manna and the tablets of stone. The blood applied adopts the believer into God's family, provides for his needs, and rewards him. Christ came and “tabernacled” with man. Everything about His life and ministry is seen in the Temple.

III. Trusting in Christ's death brings a sinner personal intimacy with God.

This is the essence of spiritual worship. It is not doing the rituals or performing the functions. It is definitely not coming and seeing the work of others as they perform on your behalf. Spiritual worship is based on truth and comes from within. The truth is Jesus Christ has accomplished for you what you cannot obtain for yourself. Your sin makes you deserving of being cut off from God. Christ, however, has entered into the heavenly tabernacle, that building not made with human hands and has applied His blood to the mercy seat of God on your behalf. It is for this reason that *“Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near to God through Him”* (Hebrews 7:25).

When you realize the true nature of spiritual worship, you live life to its fullest, treasuring the love of God that is yours without conditions. You serve, give, and live in light of His love for you in Christ.