

March 24, 2019

- Hebrews 9:1-11

- “Examining the Old Tabernacle”

### Introduction:

Vendyl Miller Jones was an American Noahide scholar who conducted eight excavations at the Qumran Caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. Vendyl Jones directed many archaeological searches for biblical artifacts such as the Ark of the Covenant and the ashes of the red heifer. In 1992, Jones opened a hidden chamber in the ‘Cave of the Column’ complex described in the copper scroll. Inside was a silo containing over 600 kilograms of spices used for the temple offerings of incense. He had planned to open the seventh hidden chamber of the cave because according to the copper scroll, this chamber should contain the ashes of the red heifer and the garments of the high priest. In May 2005, it was reported that he had referred with Kabbalists and that he believed he would find the Ark of the Covenant by August 14, 2005. However, he was prevented from proceeding due to lack of funds and permits. Jones died from cancer on December 27, 2010. The Ark and the ashes may lie in the seventh hidden chamber of the cave or perhaps elsewhere.

### I. The Description of the old Tabernacle (9:1-4).

1. After delivering the Jews from Egyptian bondage, God gave the Law to Moses and was gave Moses detailed instructions for building the tabernacle on Mount Sinai. This was a portable building that could be disassembled and reassembled as the Israelites traveled in the wilderness to the Promised Land. The first covenant between God and Israel had ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. As noted earlier (9:1-2a), this tabernacle was only the example and shadow of the one in heaven (8:5). Inside this large tent was a curtain.

2. The first of the two rooms, the Holy Place, contained the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread (9:2b). The entrance to the tabernacle always faced east. As the priest entered the Holy Place, on his left (south) was the candlestick, or menorah. There were no windows in the tabernacle, so its candles burned day and night to provide the only light. The light symbolized Christ. John 8:12 he is the light of the world. Jesus also says those who follow Him will never walk in darkness but will have the light that leads to eternal life.

3. On the priest's right (north) -was the table, (9:2b) which held the showbread. The table was made of shittim wood or Acacia wood and was overlaid with pure gold (Ex 25:23-24). Acacia wood has a long history of use. One variety, red acacia, is believed to have been used to build Egyptian coffins, the Ark of the Covenant, and Noah's Ark. It is impossible to establish with 100% accuracy the species of tree that corresponds to the acacia or the shittim tree. Jewish rabbinic writings assert that acacia trees without any knots or fissures were cut by the patriarch Jacob in Palestine and taken into Egypt.

Every Sabbath day, twelve loaves of bread, similar to large pancakes, were placed on the table to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. At the end of the week, only the priests could eat the bread (Lev. 24:8-9). This bread was symbolic of Christ declare in John 6:5 *he is the bread of life*.

4. Verse # 3&4 states that behind the curtain is a second room called the Holiest of all, with only one piece of furniture, the Ark of the Covenant overlaid with gold. It contained the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was made of shittim wood and overlaid with gold (Ex 25:10-22).

5. In verse five, note the description above the ark were the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat (9:5). The cherubims are God's mighty, guardian angels between whom God was symbolically enthroned (1 Sam. 4:4; Psa. 99:1). God warned Moses to tell the high priest, Aaron, that he could not enter the holy place within the veil any time he chose (Lev. 16:2a-c). What would happen if the high priest ignored this warning is he would die!

## II. The Disappearance of the Ark of the Tabernacle (9:5b).

1. The Ark of the Covenant disappeared off of the pages of history by the time of the Babylonian Captivity. The Ark of the Covenant is now familiar to even the secular world because of the 1981 film "Raiders of the Lost Ark". However the world's interest has to do with the treasure of gold it contains and the mercy seat that was solid gold.

The Babylonians invaded Jerusalem. They destroyed the Temple and carried away many of the vessels and implements to their capital city a thousand miles away. No mention is made in the Scriptures of the Babylonians taking the Ark, the Menorah, or other key Temple items.

2. Nothing in the Bible is said about the Ark in the Old Testament after the return from Babylon, but the Apocrypha states that the Ark could not be found when the Jewish people rebuilt the Temple at the time of Ezra and Zechariah. The explanation in the Apocrypha was that Jeremiah hid the Ark in a cave in Mt. Nebo before the Babylonian invasion, and that its location would not be revealed until God was ready for it to be found.

3. There was nothing in the ark except the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.-- I Kings 8:9. The Ark of the Covenant was not used in the Second Temple. The Second Temple stood for over 500 years without containing an Ark, and it was fully recognized as a valid house of worship for the Lord. Christ Himself declared the Temple to be His Father's House. So it would not be unthinkable to build the Tribulation Temple, even if the Ark is not discovered. If the Ark does still exist God knows exactly where it is.

4. Some traditions place the Ark outside of Israel, such as at Mt. Nebo, Egypt and even far-off Ethiopia. Throughout the centuries, Ethiopian Christians have claimed that the ark rests in a chapel in the small town of Aksum, in their country's northern highlands. But all of these traditions have problems and seem unlikely, since there is a lack of any scriptural evidence for them. A view that has predominated in rabbinic circles is that the Ark was hidden in a cave beneath the Temple Mount in the very heart of Israel. Rabbi Shlomo Goren and Rabbi Yehuda Getz, are convinced that the Ark has been hidden in a cave in the Temple Mount directly under the site of the Holy of Holies, since the time of King Josiah.

5. In 1982 Rabbi Getz, believed he was very close, within 40 feet, to finding the cave in which the Ark resides. He was conducting a search in an old tunnel that had been filled with the debris of centuries, which runs perpendicular to the Western Wall and under the Temple Mount. However, when the Moslems discovered that there were diggings being conducted under the Dome of the Rock, they threatened a general riot and the diggings were stopped.

### III. The Function of the Tabernacle. (9:6-11)

1. When everything was in its place, priests regularly entered the first tabernacle, the Holy Place, accomplishing the service of God (Heb. 9:6). They offered incense daily (Ex 30:7), set out the holy loaves on the Sabbath (Ex 25:30), and trimmed the wicks on the candles to keep them burning (Ex 27:20-21). Only the priest would eat the bread a week later.

2. In verse 7 into the second [the Holy of Holies] went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the sins of the people (9:7). On the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the high priest entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of a bull and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat to cover his own sins (Lev. 16:11-14). Then, he returned with the blood of a goat and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat (Lev. 16:15) to cover the errors of the people. The word translated errors refers to sins committed in ignorance.

3. Under the old covenant, there was no sacrifice for premeditated sins. God tell Moses what must be done to anyone who doeth ought presumptuously, or sins defiantly (**Num. 15:30c**) This is because that person hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment (Num. 15:3 1). This presented a huge dilemma for King David. The old covenant did not provide a sacrifice for his premeditated sins. That's why he writes, **For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it (Psa. 51:16a).**

4. In verse 8 we see the regulations concerning the tabernacle and offerings, the Holy Spirit reveals that entrance into the Holy of Holies is not freely open as long as the first tabernacle is yet standing (Heb. 9:8). The Day of Atonement makes it clear there was no way for anyone except the high priest to come into God's presence.

This is a figure of the present age that the old covenant sacrifices ... could not ... perfect [cleanse] the conscience of the worshiper). At the tabernacle an Israelite could fulfill regulations and laws but still would not have a clear conscience before God. Only a personal relationship with God through Christ will perfect, or purify, our conscience. The ceremonial washings and ordinances applied only until the time of reformation, God's better way (9:10).

As we move to our last verse for this passage it leads into the greater more superior sanctuary. Jesus, as our High Priest, ministers in an exceptional sanctuary - the very throne room of God, a place greater than anything human hands could make.

Conclusion: The way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing: The old had to pass away before God's new way could be revealed. Next week we will examine this principle. The only high priest of the heavenly tabernacle is Jesus Christ.