

God's dwelling place

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[0:01] Having distance from people can be a really hard thing. Maybe we have family that live far away,! And it's hard because we don't get to see them very often.

My mum, she's lived over 200 miles away for quite some time now. And it means there's distance between us, the relationship is a little bit different.

During COVID times, we all experienced measure of distance from people. There were those days of dropping things outside doors and running away in case we catch COVID from people.

But then there was the time when restrictions were lifted and we were able to go and see people freely again. And we were reunited. And that's always good when we're separated by distance, by those we love.

And then we get to see them again. Get to have that hug. Get to speak to them face to face again. It's always a good thing.

[1:06] And here, Exodus 19, the people are gathered around Mount Sinai. But there's still distance between them and God.

But God is working to bring his people back to him again. Do we remember what the question is that I've said runs through the Bible?

What is the question? Does anyone remember? It begins with how. This is a test. More or less. More or less. How can humanity dwell with God forever again? That's the question which I think is running throughout the Bible. We started in week one in the Garden of Eden.

Where Adam and Eve enjoyed that close relationship with God. They were God's people living in God's place under his rule.

[2:09] Enjoying the blessing of living with God. But then they were banished from the Garden because of their rebellion against him. And so there's distance.

Necessary distance between a holy God and sinful humanity. And so that's why the question is how can humanity dwell with God forever again? And we're seeing that answer worked out.

We saw that a bit last week in God's promises to Abraham. And we're going to see that. And we're going to see that more this week. And we're particularly going to think about God's dwelling place. His tabernacle or temple. And how that helps to answer this question. How can humanity dwell with God forever again? The psalmist writes of his longing for being in the house of the Lord.

He says, It's the longing that the psalmist has to be able to dwell with God forever in his holy temple.

[3:30] But how is this going to work? How is blessing from God going to be experienced? The blessing of dwelling with God. Well, we need to start where we were reading in Exodus 19 at Mount Sinai.

And at Mount Sinai there were restrictions. Don't get too close. Otherwise you may die. And at Mount Sinai God is bringing to Moses another covenant.

It's kind of the covenant with Abraham renewed. It's after God's people had come out of slavery in Egypt. And now God had been faithful.

God is being faithful. Even to the promises to Abraham. We remember last week if we were here God put Abraham even into that sleep. And said for 400 years your descendants will...

I can't remember what exactly he said. I'm going to turn to it briefly. In Genesis 15 wasn't it? He said...

[4:42] Does anyone remember? Yeah. Be enslaved people. Where is it? Genesis 15. Then the Lord said to him, Know for certain that for 400

years your descendants will be strangers in a country, not their own.

They will be enslaved and ill-treated there. But I will punish the nations they serve as slaves. And afterwards they will come out with great possessions.

And so God had rescued his people from slavery. And was continuing to be faithful to his covenant promises to Abraham.

And now the Lord's people, they're gathered around Sinai. And they're waiting to hear what God says from Moses. Who's God's representative.

The representative between the people and God. And he goes up and down the mountain all throughout this chapter. It kind of reminds me of the Grand Old Duke of York. One, they were up.

[5:48] And then they were down. And then they were only halfway up. Moses is going up and down this mountain. And God says wonderful things.

Verse 3. This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob. And what you are to tell to the people of Israel. You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt.

And how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my commandments. That out of all nations you will be my treasured possession.

Although the whole earth is mine. You will be for me a kingdom of priests. And a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak.

He's reminding them of his rescue from Egypt. He tells them he's brought them out on wings like eagles. It's a beautiful picture of God's rescue of his people.

[6:51] And out of all the nations on earth. They will be his treasured possession. Calls them to serve as a kingdom of priests. And a holy nation. They are to show the world that they.

Out of all the world. They get to have access to God. They are distinct as the chosen people of God. And a difference with these.

With how God communicates with Moses here. As to Abraham. Is that he will dwell with his people. He will make his dwelling with them.

The Lord said to Moses. I'm going to come to you. This is in verse 9. In a dense cloud. So that the people will hear me speaking with you. And will always put their trust in you.

God's going to come down in this thick cloud. God's going to be present among them somehow. And we're going to see that more as we look at the tabernacle.

[7:51] But there were limitations. Necessarily so. Between a sinful people and a holy God. Verse 12. Put limits for the people around the mountain.

Tell them be careful. Do not approach the mountain or the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death. Necessary restrictions. Don't get too close.

Danger of death. But nonetheless. God was coming down. To dwell.

On this mountain. Verse 18. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke. Because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it.

Like smoke from a furnace. The whole mountain trembled violently. Because the holy God was there. Dwelling. With people. And then you get in chapter 20.

[8:53] The ten commandments given. And there's more laws given after that. And then. We'll race through. To chapter 25.

Where God begins. To instruct. Moses and the people. On the tabernacle. Which was to be. Built. The tabernacle being God's dwelling place. His home. With people. The meeting place. Between God. God. And humanity. A way for them to.

Approach. God. What I'd like you to do. In groups. Time to. Have a chat. Look up these passages. These verses in your groups.

And. Two questions. What's also theme. Going on in these verses. And what do they show us. About the tabernacle. People. So.

[9:49] Have a read of them in your groups. Have a chat. And then we'll. Come together. And see what we've got. Ready to come back together.

Yes. That was a quick yes remark. What did people notice. Is there a. A particular theme.

Going through those verses. Glory of the Lord. Any. Any. More to that. You want to say.

God dwelling with his people. God dwelling with his people. The glory of the Lord. God coming to dwell with his people. Absolutely. He's been able to. Go in. But.

last week, the covenant, it depends on him.

And so sacrifices were made in order for their sins to be forgiven. And the greatest one being once a year on the day of atonement.

And I thought we should have a look at this. It's in Leviticus chapter 16. Where we read about the day of atonement. So we're going to have a read of this.

And then we're going to have another little chat in our groups. Would someone be willing to read from the first verse to verse?

Well, probably to the end, really. To get a good sweep of it. Would someone be happy to read? Ray? Thank you.

[22:27] Either where you are in a loud voice. Hmm? Yeah. It would be best to come up to the mic. Is it on? Is it on? Okay.

It might be better. Thank you. Thank you. So, Leviticus 16. The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of two sons of Aaron, who died when they approached the Lord.

The Lord said to Moses, tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the most holy place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die.

Because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover. This is how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area, with a young bull for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.

He is to put on the sacred linen tunic with linen undergarments next to his body. He is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban.

[23:31] These are sacred garments, so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. From the Israelite community, he is to take two male goats for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.

Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering, to make atonement for himself and his household. Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

He is to cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the Lord, and the other for the scapegoat. Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the Lord, and sacrifice it for a sin offering.

But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement, by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat.

Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering, to make atonement for himself and his household. And he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering.

[24:40] He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord, and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense, and take them behind the curtain.

He is to put the incense on the fire before the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the testimony, so that he will not die.

He is to take some of the bull's blood, and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover. Then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover.

He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people, and take its blood behind the curtain, and do with it as he did with the bull's blood. He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover, and in front of it.

In this way, he will make atonement for the most holy place, because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been.

[25:47] He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness. No one is to be in the tent of meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the most holy place, until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household, and the whole community of Israel.

Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the Lord, and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood, and some of the goat's blood, and put it on all the horns of the altar.

He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites. When Aaron has finished making atonement for the most holy place, the tent of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat.

He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites, all their sins, and put them on the goat's head.

He shall send the goat away into the desert, in the care of a man appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place, and the man shall release it in the desert.

[27:11] Then Aaron is to go into the tent of meeting, and take off the linen garments he put on before he entered the most holy place, and he is to leave them there. He shall bathe himself with water in a holy place, and put on his regular garments.

Then he shall come out and sacrifice the burnt offering for himself, and the burnt offering for the people, to make atonement for himself and for the people.

He shall also burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar. The man who releases the goat as a scapegoat must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water.

Afterwards, he may come into the camp. The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the most holy place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp.

Their hides, flesh and offal, are to be burned up. The man who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water. Afterwards, he may come into the camp.

[28:17] This is to be a lasting ordinance for you. On the tenth day of the seventh month, you must deny yourselves and not do any work, whether native-born or an alien living among you, because on this day atonement will be made for you to cleanse you.

Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins. It is a Sabbath of rest, and you must deny yourselves. It is a lasting ordinance.

The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments and make atonement for the most holy place, for the tent of meeting and the altar, and for the priests, and for all the people of the community.

This is to be a lasting ordinance for you. Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.

And it was done as the Lord commanded Moses. Ray, thank you so much. Day of Atonement, a big day.

[29:29] It particularly involves two goats, the goat of purification and the scapegoat. Questions in groups for the next few minutes. We'll see how far we get.

What happens to each goat? What's the effect for the people, and how do we see Jesus in this? Have a chat in your groups. See where you get. Let's come back together.

What happens to each goat? Start with the purification goat. What happens? Slaughtered.

Yeah, killed. Sin offering. Sin offering. Yeah. For the Israelites. For the sin offering for the Israelites. Yeah. Yeah. Sacrifice in their place.

Yeah. Yeah. Where does purification come from? Is that present? That's the name I've given it. The goat of purification. I don't think it is in the text.

[30:35] I think I thought it was a helpful thing to call it. Because it's the goat to purify people's sins. I can't remember why I came up with that word.

It was a word I came up with on Monday. Yes. It's really interesting, isn't it? I think it's Tinder. It came up with the word scapegoat.

When it's translating. Interesting. Yeah. And it just ends up in English language. I think it's in other places as well. Yeah. And in the end, I had to put, you know, because of the work he was doing, I had to put in the country.

Yeah. He did the reward. I had to put it. Mm. Mm. Mm. It's a bank. But, you know, it... He came up with that. He wanted to translate the meaning of the goat.

Yeah. And he essentially coined a new English word that we still use. Yeah. Yeah. And we use it in daily life sometimes, don't we?

[31:46] Yeah. Yeah. Um... What's the scapegoat here? What's this one about? And he has, both hands, they don't have him, and then later the sins and all the uncleanness of Israel come up.

And then they take it out into the wilderness, which in my mind I was wondering whether that was sort of that desert place, and whether there's water or food or anything there.

Did that goat have to then just stop her and sort of die? I wasn't quite sure what the wilderness entailed, whether the goat would just die as the death of salvation and the curse. I wasn't sure. No, it doesn't particularly tell us, does it? It might have been sets free to wonderful life. Or someone in our group was saying about a whole herd of goats every year, one joining every year.

But yeah, there's a very visual picture of our sins and being cast off. Yeah, it's being sent.

[33:07] That's the picture we've got. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

I was thinking of Adam and Eve being cast out of the Garden of Eden. And now here it's kind of a reverse of that.

The sins have been laid on the goat and that's being cast away. How do we see this in Jesus was the other question I had on here.

Maybe one comment on that, just for time's sake. The sins have laid on Jesus and then he is killed. Yeah.

He's sacrificed. Yeah. In our place. Things go together. He's separated from the presence of God, isn't he? Why have you forsaken me? So he's sort of in a sense sent away.

[34:11] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all that.

Just checking ahead. Yeah. Yeah. Great. Not just once a year. Not just once a year. That is a good news. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Once for all time.

No. No. No. Yeah. Yeah.

He gives us access to God. Excellent. Let's move on. So at the end, in Exodus 40, where God comes down to the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

This is Exodus 40, 34. This is kind of the high point of Exodus. I think often people think of the Red Sea crossing and how wonderful that was.

[35:28] It was the great rescue of God's people from slavery in Egypt. But Exodus builds up to this point where God is now dwelling among his people.

Since Genesis 3, humanity had been cut off from God's presence. But then we read this. And this is wonderful. This is really, really very good news.

The glory of the Lord came down and filled the tabernacle. God dwelt among his people again. A glorious thought. But there's still distance. We've read in Leviticus 16, only one man once a year. Humanity, it kind of still feels a long way off of being able to dwell with God in the cool of the day like Adam and Eve did in the garden. But this was gracious.

God was making a way for unfaithful, sinful people to be dwelling with them. And it's like thinking someone invites you to their house, but you can only stand outside the front door unless you're particularly privileged.

[36:44] You can kind of walk into the hallway. But we're getting closer. We're getting closer. But still feels a long way in many ways.

And not even Moses. We had someone said that earlier. Not even Moses could come into the presence of God. Verse 35.

Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled in it and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Not even Moses, the one who was God's representative on the mountain, who heard the law given.

But the great high priest could. But Moses was not that. And the rest of the Old Testament, it shows us.

It shows Solomon building the temple, a more permanent ideal temple. But then false worship enters that temple. And that's destroyed. And then God's people are away in exile.

[37:47] But then they come back and a second temple is built. But there's still a longing for a more permanent, long-lasting solution to fix this relationship between God and humanity.

And I thought we'd have a very quick look and some verses. We're going further on in the Bible now. Isaiah 6. Isaiah 2 even.

1 to 6. We looked at this in the prayer meeting a few weeks ago. Really helpfully. Isaiah 2. 1 to 6. See the mountain of the Lord.

Isaiah writes, In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains. It will be exalted above the hills and all nations will stream to it.

Many peoples will say, Come, come and say. Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. To the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths.

[38:59] The law will go out from Zion. The word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more. This great picture of the mountain of the Lord.

The place to meet with the Lord. Open to the whole world. Nations streaming to it. On mountains you get streams going down.

But this is kind of streaming up to the mountain. Up to the top of the mountain. A supernaturally wonderful stream going upwards of nations coming.

To hear of God and his ways. A peaceful community forming. In Jeremiah 31, we won't look at that.

[39:58] It speaks of days, a day when God will make a new covenant with people. Which will involve inward heart transformation and forgiveness of sins. God was...

The law that God gave to his people. The tabernacle. It shows us that the people are sinful. People are still hard in their hearts. And so it's going to require an inward transformation of people.

And here in Isaiah 2 it says... People say, come let us walk in the light of the Lord.

It's a wonderful picture. People having access to God. And then you get into the New Testament.

We've seen in John over the last months.

Months how John talks about Jesus coming to dwell amongst people. Coming to tabernacle is the word. Jesus says in John 2, 19 that he destroy this temple.

[41:04] And in three days will raise it again. God was dwelling among his creation in the person of Jesus. He was the temple.

The meeting place between God and human beings. And he was going to die like the scapegoat outside the city of Jerusalem. Having our sins laid on him.

But then three days later he rose again. The meeting place with God opened. The mountain of God opened. We're not going to read it now because of time.

But maybe when you go away. Read Hebrews 12, 18 to the end. That will be a really wonderful thing to read.

After the things we've been looking at this evening. Have a read of it. See what you make of it. And of course the New Testament also describes us.

[42:10] As being temples of the living God. The Holy Spirit dwelling in us. So this is the great reunion between God and his people.

Being worked out in Jesus. I've often enjoyed watching long lost families on TV. And the reunions that people have.

Between family members. Maybe they've never even met before. But they've discovered these long lost family members. The reunions are emotional and amazing. And God is working that out in the story of the Bible.

A way for us to dwell with him forever again. And it is amazing. It is really, really amazing. That brings us to an end.

We're not going to do this again until the 27th of November. We've got two more weeks. So that week and the week after. Where we'll look at God's King and new creation.

[43:19] So hopefully we're seeing the Bible fit together some more. If you've got questions. Please do ask. I've been able to chat with people in different ways over the last week.

Be good to keep asking those questions. And maybe next time we'll make a proper space and time for us to be able to ask questions together.

But it would be good to pray together. Anything in particular that needs praying for.

We'll have a short time of prayer. People.