

SUMMER 7 - The Shadow of Glory

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Date: 23 January 2013

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[0 : 00] Oh well friends, let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for your great goodness to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you that you are overwhelmingly rich in mercy and kindness and steadfast love.

Thank you that you are just and yet merciful. Father, we pray tonight that you'd help us as we try and understand your word, particularly this part which in many ways is probably quite foreign to us. And Father, we pray that understanding it, we might understand the richness of your purposes in the Lord Jesus Christ and the richness of your purposes toward us. We thank you for this and pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. I need to warn you before time that tonight we have a lot of, as we've done with Exodus, one of the great sadnesses for me as we've worked through Exodus, is that I haven't had as much time as I'd like to alight and spend time just in the details of particular texts.

But I hope I've given you a big framework for how things hold together. Now I want to start tonight by asking you to do some thinking about church. We have some lovely godly saints here in this church who were baptised as infants 85 years ago or so and who therefore have probably been here for almost half of the life of this part of this building.

[1 : 32] And I think often I've wondered myself, because I find myself asking, having been to church nearly all of my life and I'm in my mid-50s, what do I expect when I come to church?

And I want you to think about that. What do you expect when you come to church? When you come to meet with God's people, what do you think is going to happen? What do you think it is all about? What expectations do you have when you sit down? Do you have any expectations? I suspect lots of us don't.

I suspect lots of us are just coming because we have come all of our lives and we think, well, perhaps we should go again this Sunday because that's the habit. Why do you come to church? What do you expect? Sometimes I think we come because, well, we've got nowhere else to go. Sometimes we come because it's a friendly place to be. But what is it in God's view?

[2 : 33] What is church about? And that's what I want you to keep in your brains as we have a look at the rest of our talk tonight. Now, in one sense, church is not, I need to warn you ahead of time, church is not tabernacle, but it will introduce us to some of the realities that sit behind our own view of church.

So with that in mind, open your Bibles at chapter 25 of Exodus. Now, let's get some perspective on these chapters. Very important to do so. Do you remember what has happened so far in the book of Exodus?

Very good to have these sorts of facts about books of the Bible well and truly ingrained in your mind. Do you remember what happened? We looked at how God heard the cry of his people. That happened in chapter 2. We heard that he rescued his people out of Egypt with great signs and wonders. In these last few weeks, we have looked at how God, once he had settled his people, once his people had gathered around him at the foot of Mount Sinai, he gave them his law. Finally, in Exodus 24, which we looked at the other night, well, last week, he confirmed or ratified his covenant. In other words, God has been in the book of Exodus at a work of rescue, or if you like, a work of redemption.

[3 : 56] He has been at work, not only in redeeming people, but redeeming them for him. That is, he's been establishing a relationship with them, forming a relationship.

The bond between him and his people is now well and truly bedded down. They are bound to each other in formal covenant. They are, in other words, related to each other formally.

However, let me tell you, that relationship's not esoteric. It is expressed concretely, and it is experienced concretely. It involves being with each other.

It includes meeting with each other. And that is where Exodus 25 to 40 comes in. For in these chapters, we get the rules of engagement, if you like, between God and his people.

This is how they are going to meet together. This is what's going to control their meeting together. We're told that God will meet with his people. We're told how he will meet with his people, and the pattern by which they will engage with each other, some of the restrictions on that, some of the positive things about that.

[5 : 02] Here is how God will physically demonstrate the spiritual reality of his presence among them. Here is how they will worship him.

Now, all of this is covered in two very large slabs of scripture. And I'm going to give you a framework for looking at them. Let's see if we can get an overview of them and their content. A few things you need to notice. First, listen to Exodus 25 verse 9. Well, in fact, don't just listen. Look at it yourself. Exodus 25 verse 9 and 25 verse 40.

And there are other similar verses throughout this account. But let's have a look at these ones. These verses talk to us about the design of the tabernacle. 25 verse 9.

Look at what God says to Moses. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you. Flip down to verse 40.

[6 : 05] Look again at what God says to Moses. See that you make them according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain. Now, I wonder if you can see the implications of these verses.

Moses is being told that what he is being given here is a pattern. And this pattern is a heavenly pattern in one sense. I think it means that what Moses is being given is not simply a design plan or a blueprint that he then goes away and, you know, has a look at the blueprint and says, I'll put everything in place.

It has those elements to it. But I think there's much more. I think what is being said is this is what he's about to do is in some sense a copy of what he has been shown on the mountain, a pattern that's been revealed to him on the mountain.

And the writer of Hebrews puts it this way as he reflects upon these verses. So keep your finger in Exodus 25 and or your hand, if you like, and go to Hebrews chapter 8, verse 5.

So Hebrews 8, verse 5. The writer says that the priests of the Old Testament serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven.

[7 : 23] That is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle. See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain. You see what's being said by the writer of Hebrews.

What is happening here? This sanctuary that God is talking about is a copy or a shadow of what is in heaven. Perhaps we might say it's a copy of something that exists in some other spiritual reality. It is a tangible and symbolic representation of something that exists in heaven. Some concept, some idea, some reality.

It's a tangible and symbolic representation of an eternal reality. Pictured here in this tabernacle. That makes what happens here a phenomenal thing, doesn't it?

This, that we are about to read, and which most of us would probably skip over because it gets a bit tedious for us, is actually representing something eternal.

[8 : 25] An eternal reality. Now that's the first thing I want you to notice. Second thing I want you to notice is that these chapters that we're looking at are divided into two great sections. You can see it in the diagram that I've supplied for you.

The first diagram that you see there shows a breakup of these chapters. You can see, can't you, that chapters 25 to 31 deal with God's instructions to Moses as to how he's to build the tabernacle and deal with the various associated items and people.

And I've listed some of the main ones there. Chapters 35 to 40 deal with the actual building of those things. And I've drawn little arrows between them so you can see how they link up with each other. So you've got instructions in part one. You've got descriptions of how it actually was done in part two. There's a correlation between most items in the instructions and the descriptions of the building.

Now, let me just look with you at one pair so we get a feel for what this looks like in practice. Take a look at the lampstand. You see, I've got the verses there for you. Open your Bibles at chapter 25,

31 to 40.

[9:36] Okay, chapter 25, 31 to 40. Now listen to it and then we'll go to the description of it being actually done. 25, 31 to 40.

Make a lampstand of pure gold. Hammer out its base and shaft and make its flower-like cups. Buds that blossom of one piece with them. Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand. Three on one side, three on the other. Of course, that means you've got seven with the one in the middle. Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch. Three on the next branch.

And the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand. And on the lampstand, there are to be four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. One bud shall be under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand.

A second bud under the second pair. A third bud under the third pair. Six branches in all. The buds and the branches shall all be of one piece with the lampstand hammered out of pure gold.

[10:37] Then make it seven lamps and set them up on it so that they might light the space in front of it. Its wick, trimmers and trays are to be of pure gold. A talent of pure gold is to be used for the lampstand and all of these accessories.

See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain. Okay, so there is the description. By the way, there are heaps and heaps of books about all of these details of all of these things.

Which really allegorise them. That is, turn them into something they've got nothing to do with. So all these little buds don't represent anything in particular, let me tell you.

They're just nice decorations for these things as far as I can tell. They make them look beautiful.

Okay, and so with many of the other things that we'll look at or that you can look at as you read through.

So don't make too much out of them. It is probably, much of this is actually an abuse of scripture. It wants to make scripture touch every part of our existence.

[11:41] But in doing so, doesn't let scripture speak for itself. Because it's probably not saying a lot of these things that we think often they are saying. And that comes particularly when you come to the building of the tabernacle.

People go all sorts of ways with it. Now, so that's a description of what Moses is to do. Detailed description from God. Now turn to the passage where we actually see it being made.

That's chapter 37 verses 17 to 24. So 37, 17 to 24.

They made the lampstand of pure gold. They hammered out its base and shaft and made its flower-like cups, buds and blossoms of one piece with them. Six branches extended from the sides of the lampstand.

Three on one side, three on the other. Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms were on one branch. Three on the next branch. And the same for all six branches extending from the lampstand.

[12:42] And on the lampstand were four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms. One bud was under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand. A second bud under the second pair.

A third bud under the third pair. Six branches in all. Can you hear all the echoes of the previous command? And they're following it, aren't they? They're trying to do what God told them to do. It's very important. Because why? Because they represent eternal realities. And so if they represent eternal realities, if this whole thing put together, then you want to even make sure you get the fine detail right, don't you?

So they made its seven lamps as well as its wick trimmers and trays of pure gold. And they made the lampstand and all its accessories from one talent of pure gold.

So you can see it working, can't you? Description beforehand as to what's to be done. Descriptions afterward as to how it was done. Then in between those two sets of descriptions, you have these middle chapters, which we're going to look at on Sunday night.

[13:48] We have a story that we're going to look at. And it is a story of the golden calf, which is a sad story. In fact, a disastrous story about idolatry, rebellion, punishment and forgiveness.

At its core, those middle chapters are an attempt to set up an alternative structure to the one that God sets up in chapters 25 to 31 and then is built in 35 to 40.

So bang in the middle of those, you get a description of humans doing an alternative thing. At its core, you see, it is an attempt, I think, chapters 32 to 34 or chapter 32 in particular is an attempt to set up an alternative structure to the one God sets up in this chapter surrounding it.

In other words, let me just push it home. It's a story of how Israel seeks to be free from God as he has revealed himself. So you've got these two surrounding chapters.

And in the middle, Israel says, we'd like to do it our own way. Thank you. Or we don't like we're not sure where this God has been. So we'll just set up this alternative structure in the meantime.

[15:03] So you can see that in my little summary of these chapters. Can you see that little summary down the bottom chapters 25 to 31 introduce introducing the building or instructions on the building?

Then this idolatry and so on in the middle. And then the building of begun and completed. So that's the first. That's the second thing to notice the way these chapters are structured around true and false worship.

Next thing I want you to notice is the design of the tabernacle. Can you see the design I've put there? I hope your eyesight's good because mine's mine's not good enough to read it now in the shape I've given it to you.

So I hope yours is all right or you brought your glasses with you. Have a look at it. You can see that the tabernacle is an oblong structure made out of three zones.

And I've given you the Bible references so you can look them up. Each zone is in descending order of holiness. So you start from the center there, the holy of holies. Then you work your way out, the holy place and the court.

[16:04] And like most sacred buildings in the ancient Near East, the building is oriented longitudinally with the most sacred area being at the west. I can't answer why that is.

I don't know. But that's how you oriented most building or many of these sort of buildings. The perimeter is divided into two, forming two equal squares. One square makes up the court.

The other square makes up the other two areas. The Ark of the Covenant is located within the holy of holies. It represents God reaching out to his people.

The altar of sacrifice represents the people reaching out to God or at least managing, doing what is necessary in order to approach God. Can you see that? So one is, I think, representative of God reaching out.

The other is of people trying to come to God. Both the Ark of the Covenant and the altar of sacrifice seem to be located at exactly the same point on the intersection of the diagonals.

[17:05] Okay? It's a very interesting structure. The next thing to notice, by the way, you notice I haven't allegorized it. I've just tried to say what I think it might be representing.

It may not be. But at least we know what the altar of sacrifice is for, don't we? It's so that you might, if you read the book of Leviticus and so on, you'll see that that's what it's about.

It's about allowing you to come before a holy God. Next thing to notice is the way chapters 25 to 31 are structured. You will see that the words, the Lord said to Moses or the Lord spoke to Moses are repeated, interestingly enough, seven times.

And I've given you all seven references there. Chapter 25 verse 1, 30 verse 11, verse 17, verse 22, verse 34.

Then chapter 31 verse 1 and chapter 31 verse 12. Now here's some interesting things to note about it. Six of those references are followed by acts involving the Hebrew word for making something.

[18:10] Okay? Six are followed by the Hebrew word for making something. In other words, Moses or the Israelites are to create things.

In the first one, Moses is instructed to make an ark. In the second, an altar is to be made. In the third, a bronze basin is to be made.

In the fourth, some sacred anointing oil is to be made. In the fifth, fragrant incense is to be made. And in the sixth, Bezalel is chosen to make artistic pieces.

But look at the sixth. Open your Bibles. Have a look at it. Verse 31, chapter 31 verse 12. Then the Lord said to Moses, say to the Israelites, you must observe my Sabbath.

This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come so that you may know that I am the Lord who makes you holy. Now, have you seen this pattern before?

[19:11] Six acts of making and then a rest. Okay, it doesn't mention Sabbath in Genesis 2. Nevertheless, Genesis 1 and 2, it's like the pattern you see in God himself, isn't it?

Can you see it? Six demands to create something. A seventh word from God, the demand to keep the Sabbath. And did you notice that they are to keep the Sabbath as a sign of what?

That God has set them aside to be holy. The seventh features a reference to Sabbath specifically grounded in creation. All of those rich echoes of those seven days said about in Genesis, talked about in Genesis 1 and 2.

In other words, whatever else is going on here in these chapters, we see them specifically linked to Genesis 1 and 2. And my view about the book of Exodus is that it has creation imagery all the way through it.

The pattern of six creative words followed by a reference to rest is being followed here as well. There's something else to notice about the reference to Sabbath. I want you to notice that God's instructions about building the tabernacle.

[20 : 24] Have a look at that little list I put in there for you. Where does it end? Instructions about building the... What's the last one? It's Sabbath, isn't it? And what's the first one in the descriptions?

It also begins with the Sabbath. Chapter 35, 1 to 3. And I pointed that out deliberately for you. The idea of Sabbath links the two accounts.

It binds them together. Lastly, I want you to listen to chapter 40, verse 17. Actually, I want you to look it up. Exodus 40, verse 17. So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month of the second year.

That verse indicates that the completed tabernacle is erected on New Year's Day. In other words, with the completion of the tabernacle, we are dealing with a new era in the life of the people of God. See, God has redeemed them. God has forged a covenant with them. He's told them how they can go on living with him. And a new stage in God's history with God's people has begun.

[21 : 36] It's a wonderful thing. Now, notice we haven't allegorized any of this. We've just looked for what the text clearly says in itself. Okay? So there's an overview of these chapters.

What I want to do now is ask us, why exactly do you think these are here? Why are these chapters here? What is going on? What are they about? You see, to our ears and our eyes, these chapters, I think, are somewhat enigmatic.

And I'm sure many of us, if we've tried to read through Exodus, skip them. We might make it through the first set. We've told what to do, and then we skip through them actually doing it again because we think we've read it before.

And we are not sure what arcs, tabernacles, priests, sacrifices, and all the rest of that is about. We don't do it any longer. We're not sure what it's about.

And some of us think the only way we can rescue it for Christian use is to allegorize it. However, let me tell you, the Israelites, I think, had no doubt about what was going on here.

[22 : 39] They knew that what they had here was a copy of a heavenly design. They therefore understood that the tabernacle or the temple that later replaced it represented God dwelling among them.

In other words, once the tabernacle is built, God is imagined as being enthroned in the midst of his people. Enthroned in the midst of his people. There with them.

God is present. If you like, God is imminent with his people. He dwells among his people. Having said that, the tabernacle also demonstrates that while God was with his people, you couldn't just waltz up to him.

You had to go through a proper process of approaching him. Having said that, the structure of the tabernacle, therefore, conveys that God can only be approached with a rigorous system of sacrifices, offerings, great care.

And you'll see that in the book of Leviticus. You go and read on, and you find you've got to do this whole detailed thing, and you've got to make sure. Why? Read the book of Leviticus and ask, why do you have to be so careful?

[23 : 52] Because you are sinful. And because God's people are sinful, if they don't approach God carefully, if they don't deal with their sin as he has ordained for them to deal with it, he will have to vacate the land.

He will have to go, as he does. You see it in the book of Ezekiel. God's, the ark of the, in the first chapters of Ezekiel, you see God enthroned, and then later on you see him vacating Jerusalem. Why? Because of the sin of his people. Now, so, you need to understand what I'm saying. You see, these chapters are not just building, about building strange buildings and carrying them around in

the wilderness.

That's not what this is about. These chapters are fundamentally important. They're about God supplying a little piece of heaven on earth. They occupy a larger part of a book that has plague narratives.

And do you know what? This, this, you think plague narratives are really interesting, but the Israelites spent more time talking about the ark, about the Tabernacle, than they did about the plague narratives.

[25 : 04] They thought this was really interesting, or at least God thought it was really interesting and very, and needed to be followed. So, these chapters are the heart of what is going on in the book of Exodus in some ways.

They're about the God of all the earth, setting up his dwelling among his people. And if God is among his people, then his people know that all his covenant blessings are with them as well. He is there to ensure their enjoyment of the covenant blessings, although, as we'll find out later, as you'll find out as you read on, he's also there to ensure judgment comes when you don't live within covenant.

He is there, though, also to ensure their entrance into the promised land and their rest in the promised land. You see, God is, please understand this, God is not just a God who redeems them from slavery.

He is a God who redeems them for and to something. What does God redeem them for and to? He redeems them for rest in his glorious presence.

[26 : 07] He redeems them to the proper worship of him. He redeems them to the service of him. And we saw hints of that in chapter 15.

Do you remember that song in chapter 15 as they came through the sea and they celebrated on the other side? It ended with these words. You will bring them. This is where God is heading.

After he's gone through that Red Sea, he's going to bring them and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance, the place, Lord, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, Lord, your hand established.

The Lord reigns forever and ever. That's what God is after. He's after bringing them into his presence where they will sit under his reign, in his place.

This is God's goal, dwelling among his people in the place of his choice, reigning over them forever and ever in that place.

[27 : 07] Next thing I want you to notice are all the allusions. Remember, I showed them to you to creation and Sabbath. Please understand what the writer wants us to hear. He wants to tell us something by this.

Let's see if we can work out what he's getting at. I want you to think in your brain just for a moment. The Garden of Eden, imagine it. Go back to what you think the critical elements are in the Garden of Eden.

What was the Garden of Eden all about, do you think? Well, I think it was about living in God's presence with unfettered access to him.

The Garden of Eden is about undisturbed, peaceful rest with ready access to God and all of his good gifts. And that is what is going on here.

God is promising, I want to return you to Eden. I want to assure you of my presence and rest in the land that I promised to give you. He's assuring them of these things, of his goodness and his goodwill.

[28 : 09] That's what he wants for all the world, in fact. That's what he wants, particularly, though, in this situation we're hearing, for his people. Now let's see if we can put this into a larger biblical, theological framework.

We've done a bit of it already, but we've looked back, because we've looked back to Eden, we've seen that God's intention for humanity is God's people living in God's presence in untainted relationship with him, with each other, and with the environment he's placed them in, the land.

And the part of the Bible we've looked at today has told us that God still has a purpose. He's not given up on it. You see, even when his people sin, he does not give up on it.

Mind you, Moses pleads with him not to give up on it, but he's not given up on it. And let me tell you, in now, in his world, God has not given up on that goal.

Human sinfulness has not blunted God's enthusiasm for his goal. It didn't here and it doesn't now.

[29 : 19] God still wants his goal to be reached. He still wants heaven to invade earth. He still wants to dwell in peace with humans. He still wants to convey to them all the covenant blessings.

And that is one reason why the disappearance at the temple at the end of the exile was so devastating. Can you imagine it? Here you are, you've had this temple representing God's presence with you.

Then Ezekiel notices that God vacates the temple and he dreams of a time when God will come back. Why? Because there is nothing more devastating than losing the presence of God.

For many Jews, that event symbolized that one structure symbolized that God was with his people. Without that structure in their midst, they thought the plans and the purposes of God had a big, huge question mark over them.

That's why prophets like Ezekiel looked forward to the future restoration of that temple because they knew that's what they needed. God in their midst, God to be with his people.

[30 : 26] They longed for Eden and the tabernacle to be restored. As Christians, we know something of the fulfillment of these desires. don't we?

As Christians, you see, we read the New Testament and we hear the teaching of Jesus. Now in your Bibles, flip to John 2.19. John 2.19. Now try and remember this.

I think there's a coherence between Eden, tabernacle, temple. They all represent a similar idea.

Okay? Now listen to this. John 2.19. Jesus answered them, destroy this temple and I will raise it up again in three days. I think there's coherence there too.

Continuity. Now, flip back to John 1.14. The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us and we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father full of grace and truth.

[31 : 37] Now our English translations just hide a little bit of what's going on in this verse. The Greek word for dwelt is related to the word that's used in the Greek Old Testament to refer to tabernacles.

In other words, we could read John 1.14 along these lines. And the word became flesh and tabernacled among us. So the New Testament is clear, you see.

Jesus is the new and improved tabernacle or temple. He's the fulfillment of all that Eden represented, all that the tabernacle and the temple represented, but much better.

The glory that was seen in the tabernacle in the wilderness is now seen in Jesus. The glory that resided above the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies has warped the streets of Palestine and is available for all to encounter in the Gospel.

Friends, every now and then I do think of one just little extra thing. It seems to me every time a temple or a tabernacle was built in the Old Testament it was filled with the glory of God. Do you remember that happening?

[32 : 45] Chapter 40 of Exodus. Do you remember happening in 1 Kings chapter 8 when Solomon's praying? He's built this grand temple and the glory of God fills the temple, a cloud.

And do you remember that when they rebuilt the temple it didn't happen? It's a strange thing really or at least if it did happen we're not told about it. My own wonder is whether that is because it has happened in Jesus.

The new place where God makes his dwelling with people. Jesus Christ, you see, is the yes and the amen to all that imagery that is present in the tabernacle and in Eden and in the temple.

Jesus Christ is God's heaven on earth. Now, just to give you a snapshot of what Jesus has done we should remember that Old Testament tabernacle. So think about it.

Take another look at your diagram. Remember what we saw. Remember in that tabernacle there were three zones Holy of Holies, Holy Place, Court. Some could enter into only the court.

[33 : 51] Others could go a little bit further and go into the Holy Place. And only very special people at limited times could go past the Holy Place and only having done lots and lots of stuff could go past the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies.

There were veils, curtains that illustrated that therefore we did not have the access into Eden. We had not yet returned to where God wanted us to go.

By the way, if I, and I'm going to wander free from the mic and those who are getting this tape later on will just have to suffer. Okay? So, I want you to imagine this, I don't like doing this in one way because I don't want you to think that this church is a temple or a tabernacle or anything like that.

Okay? But I need to do this illustration because I think it helps us to understand. I want to take you to Herod's Temple. So, Herod's Temple, imagine this was, you were approaching Herod's Temple and it was up there.

Imagine you were a Gentile. Approaching as a Gentile, you would find there were a whole series of steps and stairs you had to go on. However, when you got really close as a Gentile, you were told anyone who goes past this particular point will have their own death or their own death.

[35 : 08] That's my summary of it. The bad action of those little signs there. What does that say to you? It says, that says to you, you cannot have access to God.

You cannot get up there. Even if you wanted to go to the God of Israel, He is not accessible for you. And that whole series of things, even to Jews, said, there is some limit to your access.

Baals, curtains, everything that illustrated that that access we really desire and know is best for us is restricted to us. Just as angels stood barring humans from entering back into Edom after Adam and Eve's sin, so curtains and veils indicated that human access to God was still restricted.

And it's here that the book of Hebrews in the New Testament helps us. The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was our high priest. Turn with me to Hebrews 9. And we're going to read verses 11 to 14.

Hebrews 9, 11 to 14. And just savour the words as we read them. But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation.

[36 : 39] He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but entered the most holy place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean, sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more then will the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God?

Notice the Trinitarian reference, God's all in this, Father, Son and Spirit, offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our, how much more will it cleanse our conscience from acts that lead to death so that we might serve the living God?

Can you hear what's being said? Jesus entered into the holy of holies as it were in heaven itself. He went carrying his own blood.

That is, he offered a sacrifice for our sins that atones for our sins forever. As God, Jesus did what the Ark of the Covenant represented.

[37 : 45] He was the point at which God reached out to humanity. As a human being, he did what the altar of sacrifice represented. He allowed humans to reach out for untainted relationship with God.

And because of what he has done, those who believe in him can go where no others have gone before. And not embarrassed, not ashamed, not cowering, not doing all the little bits and pieces that you used to have to do, but marching boldly into his presence.

Have a look at Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence or boldness to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened up for us through the curtain, that is his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and the full assurance that faith brings.

Having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water, let us hold unswerving to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

[39 : 09] And let us consider how to spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

You see, friends, when that day comes, there's only one place to find shelter. So encourage each other as that day draws near. Do not let go that confidence you had at first, because if you give up on it, there's nowhere to go.

But if you hold fast to it, there's boldness in the presence of God because of what Jesus has done. Friends, we have what the people of God never had in the tabernacle.

We have what Moses did not have. We have a high priest and a sacrifice that allows us boldly to enter into the presence of God. There are no more curtains, but there's more.

You see, since we have the fulfilment of the tabernacle, since we have that perfect sacrifice and that perfect priest, we no longer need all that ritual and cult.

[40 : 19] We no longer need tabernacles and temples, despite the way that we Christians want to rebuild them all the time. We don't need them. We no longer need sacrifices and blood and cult and mystery.

Please understand what I'm saying. You see, all of that stuff in the Old Testament was an image or a shadow of the reality that was to come. We have received their fulfilment.

We have access to the very presence of God. We have all the privileges that that offers. Christians don't need cultic and ritual things anymore. And even here at Holy Trinity, every now and then I see Christians wanting to hold on to them really tight, all the cultic and ritual things.

No, we don't need them. We have the reality. We don't need shadows if we have reality. And it's at that point, mind you, that I think is what the people in the book of Hebrews, Hebrews, the people to whom the writer of the book of Hebrews is writing, they wanted to go back to something tangible. Because we humans love the tangible, something you can touch and feel and see. We don't like the intangible nature of many elements of our Christian faith.

[41 : 42] Let me then come to my conclusion. You see, the New Testament authors use the word temple in one way that I want to talk about.

Now, the word temple refers a number of times in the New Testament to the people of God. Now, just to show you this, turn with me to 1 Corinthians 3, 16 and 17.

The word for temple is used to refer to you as well, as individuals, but it's also used in the Lord Jesus, but it's also used to refer to the people of God. Look at verses 16 and 17.

Paul reminds God's people of this reality. Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple, I think he means you corporately, and that God's spirit dwells in your midst.

If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. It could have echoes of individuals. For God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. So even if it's the person, the individual, it's also the corporate.

[42 : 47] Does that make sense? Okay, look at Ephesians 2 verse 22. I'll give you a moment to find it. Ephesians 2 verse 22. And in him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit.

Can you see what's being said there? Here, the point is being made that God has some new portable temples or tabernacles. God is no longer restricted to buildings in one part of the world, nor is God only embodied in his son.

By the work of God's spirit and the proclamation of God's word, God's sacred space, if you like, has spread throughout all the world. For wherever God's Christian people meet, their God is accessible. wherever two or three are gathered in Christ's name, there is Christ in their midst. Understand again, when we meet tonight, to talk about and remember and share Jesus Christ with each other, God is with us.

In other words, our meetings, what you do every Sunday when you meet with the people of God, are, if we're doing the right thing in them, are where heaven and earth meet.

[44 : 23] Church is about eternal realities. It's not about programs. It's not where you go because you have nowhere else to go and you've been going every Sunday for all of life. It's where you go, and it's not where you go because you feel guilty if you don't.

It's the place you go, because there, and God's not restricted to there, but because there, in some way that happens nowhere else, God meets with his world.

That's a marvellous event. I mean, do you go to church actually expecting that God is meeting with his people? Because I tell you what, if you did, you'd have different expectations, wouldn't you? We come because we want to meet with God and with his people.

Church is God's ordained manner for entering God's time and God's space in some ways. It's the place where God rules. It's the place where God assures us of his goodness and his goodwill in many ways.

As we hear his word together, as we hear the word from each other of encouragement, and so on, it's a place where he promises us that he's for us and that no one will take us out of his hand.

[45 : 37] Church is the place where, in some sense, where we participate in heaven itself. Hard to believe, isn't it? But it's true. When we are with God's people, worshipping with all that that means, that is, not just singing, but serving each other, serving our God, God, we are demonstrating that

there is a reality that is much more important than anything else.

And that reality is that there is a God, and that he is what makes life meaningful, he is what makes life tick, and that we can find, as we find fellowship with him, we find a corporate fellowship as well with each other, and we share with people of like mind.

church is where heaven and earth meet. This last three days, I've spent three days meeting with friends in the gospel.

It wasn't church, but it was with like-minded friends. We're part of an organisation committed to gospeling the world, and I've known most of the men and women in the room that I was meeting with, I've known most of them for 25, 30 years, and we got together and we were strategising about how we had reached the world for Christ.

Well, actually not the world, mostly just Australia, and mostly the university campus. I tell you what, it was one of the most enjoyable things I've done for a long time.

[47 : 15] Why? Because we shared a common goal. We shared, most importantly, a common God, a common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we wanted to see what difference that faith made to the world of the university campus in Australia.

And we wanted to plan for it. You see, God was with us in our relationships, in our shared beliefs, in our sharing from scripture with each other, in our planning.

God was with us. God was meeting with us. It's a meeting place of those. You see, when we meet with God's people in Christ's name, we've been brought together by this common bond and a common reality.

And we do the same here. There are times when we're meeting together at church on Sundays, when I'm on the edge of tears. Why?

Because there's nothing like meeting with God's people. it is something that is really special. Why? Because that's when, because God is with us as we share our common bond together.

[48 : 34] It's a wonderful thing. So, we've come a long way, haven't we? And you must remember that at the core of this, Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of that tabernacle.

But it then devolves down as well to us as individuals, and as a corporate group of people, with all that that means, that God is with us and in us.

So let us pray. Father, thank you so much for your word. Thank you for the wonders that you put within it.

Thank you for the way that here in the book of Exodus you looked forward to what you were planning to do. thank you that you looked past even the land of Israel, past the decimation of your people in the exile, past the rebuilding of the temple, even to the coming of your son, and even to us as your people.

Father, we thank you for your great plans for your world, for the honour of your son. We thank you for these things in Jesus' name. Amen.