

Tabernacle

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[0 : 00] In Matthew chapter 27 and in verse 51 we are told as the cross is being described, the events of the cross is being described, at that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

That is the moment when Jesus cried, it is finished. And he died and the curtain of the temple was ripped in two from top to bottom. Please bear that in mind as we look at this chapter on the tabernacle, which is the forerunner of the temple, which is spoken about there in Matthew.

Please don't switch off thinking this is a dull and boring subject. What is this all about? All these fine architectural and engineering details that are given to us here in chapter 25 of Exodus.

As we have seen, I hope that we have seen over the last few weeks, as we have looked at this section of the Old Testament and God dealing with his people, under the Old Covenant, it is very different from what we enjoy, it is very different from what we know with our New Testament perspective, having seen Jesus Christ and understanding Jesus Christ and knowing about the cross, the death and the resurrection of Jesus and the giving of the Holy Spirit into our hearts and the knowledge of God there.

Here we have the Old Testament people for whom none of these things were known and God spoke to them and God declared to them things extremely visually.

[1 : 33] They are marvelously visual chapters and God was telling them lots of things through vision, through sight, through what they would see every day, what they would experience.

It was for them a very sensual way of understanding their faith in the sense of sensual being used as appealing to their senses.

It appealed to their sense of vision and sight and hearing and smell often also, as they were to understand about God and we have that in this passage.

We have spoken about the external emphasis of the Old Testament and of the Old Testament faith. Here is a section on the Tabernacle. We are not going to look at this far too much to look at it all this morning.

It is only one section in a much wider and much broader section where God is giving intimate details to Moses about the way they are to outwork their religion and their faith in God. Please read it.

[2 : 42] It is great stuff. Particularly of time, read Leviticus 16 which speaks about the day of atonement, wonderful passage, visual passage which speaks about the way God is to be approached, the need for sacrifice, the shedding of blood, the need for a scapegoat, the need for a representative and the reality of who God is and how it all wonderfully dovetails in with Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Here is the beginnings of the instructions that God gives for the furnishing and for the infilling of the Tabernacle, the place where God will dwell in His presence. It is kind of from the inside out that is working.

And really what we have in the Tabernacle is something very significant. In verse 8 of this chapter of chapter 25 God says, in describing why He is going to have a sanctuary, a Tabernacle, a dwelling with the people, He says, then have them make a sanctuary for me and I will dwell among them.

That is the core of what God is teaching His people here. That is what they are learning through this building, through this visual building that is being infilled with different things.

That this is where He will be. He will dwell among them in the Tabernacle. It is a very important biblical principle. It is called the Emmanuel Principle.

[4 : 18] God with us. And it is very core to our understanding. Because it is the beginning of the people's understanding of what God has come to do in Christ to restore fellowship with His people that was lost in the beginning, in the sin of the fall, in Genesis chapter 3.

And from Noah to Abraham to the Tabernacle to the temple to Jesus, it is all about God working to be among you and I again, by dealing with the core of our problem and the separation that sin has caused.

The whole Tabernacle concept, God with His people. John 1 verse 14 says it very importantly, the word God Jesus became flesh and He made His dwelling among us.

And that could be translated, He Tabernacled among us. And that is the important principle that is being taught to this Old Testament people here.

Or Ephesians 2 verse 22, and in Him, you too, that is us as God's people, are being built together to become a Tabernacle, to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.

[5 : 44] And it is pointing forward. Yesterday we had a wedding in the church and I talked about the wedding at the beginning of the Bible and a wedding at the end of the Bible. The importance of symbolically what that speaks about in terms of relationship, both human and spiritual with the church being described as the bride of Christ.

Well also, at the end of the Bible, just at the beginning of the Bible, it talks about Tabernacling, about God being with His people in Revelation 21.3. Now in the new heavens and the new earth, I heard a loud voice from there saying, now is the Tabernacle of God, or the dwelling of God with men, and He will live with them.

So if you go right to Revelation, you've got what God is saying here to the people in clear form. I have come to be with you. I have come to be among you. I have come to live with you.

That's the importance of what God is coming to do. And that's the importance of what God is teaching this Old Testament people in this very visual way. In Exodus 14 verse 34, the Shekinah glory of God comes down onto this Tabernacle.

He very visually dwells with them. They need to know that. He's not in their hearts, in the presence of the Spirit as we have. He's dwelling with His people in this Tabernacle.

[7 : 09] And so we have a very particular design. I'm only going to go through this quickly. A very particular design which speaks about the character and the nature of God.

And we read early on in this passage, particularly from verse 10 to verse 22 about the holy place that would house the ark of the covenant.

And a lot has spoken about that holy place in different parts of the Old Testament, different parts of Exodus. So we had the holy of holies where the ark of the covenant with the atonement cover, all made of pure gold with the laws of God, the tablets of stone inside the ark of the covenant.

That was in the holy of holies. It was to be a separate place. You didn't just walk into the holy of holies. You didn't drift into it.

It wasn't to be a place where people could access. There was separate limited access where the high priest came once a year under very special direction to make atonement for his own sin as the representative of the people, to make atonement for their sin as he represented them before God, and to lay the sins of the people on a scapegoat which would be sent out into the desert.

[8 : 38] Very visual description of what God was doing with their sin and how he couldn't be, their sin needed to be paid for, and their sin was serious.

And the cost of restoration was great. So the blood was sprinkled on the atonement cover. Read Leviticus 16. It is so suggestive and so powerful.

And God is saying through this visual picture, he's saying, Look, I love my people. I've redeemed them. I've brought them out of Egypt. I'm in relationship. I will be with you. He says, I love you.

At the core of revelation of the Bible is relationship. I will be with you. But at the same time he's saying, there's a great cost that I want you to understand, that I am a holy God, and there is a cost to setting you free.

There's a cost to your salvation without the shedding of blood. There's no forgiveness of sins. You can't, you can't idly enter into my presence. Full of sin and full of careless living, said there is a very specific way to enter into my presence.

[10 : 02] And he's saying also to them, look, I am absolutely honest with you. There's no pretence. I am going to be with you. But it is an intricate relationship. I'm a holy God and you are utterly sinful.

You need to be redeemed and you need a redemptive relationship with me. That is at the core of his revelation. Sacrifice, can I say, the sacrifice of Christ is at the core of this chapter.

Because the holy of holies points towards the sacrifice of Jesus, the once for all sacrifice, which when he said it is finished, this great 80-foot curtain that was inches thick, and two from top to bottom, saying this access to God was now made open.

I'll say a little bit more about that. But he is honest with them and sin needed to be confessed and declared. And I think just very briefly here, I think that we need to recognise that.

We need to recognise absolute honesty with God in our relationship. Don't try and pretend with God that we're not as bad as we are. Don't try and hide from Him that we need His forgiveness.

[11 : 27] Don't live a life of spiritual pretence. Be honest with Him. He's honest with us. Recognise that we are more sinful than we ever imagined but more loved than we ever deserve.

And recognise that and confess and when was the last time that we elucidated, listed, discussed, spoke about our sins before God and not just gave the general cover all at the end of our prayers, forgive me for all my sins, amen, which doesn't really mean anything.

But when we recognise the dirt and the uncleanness and the greed and the bitterness and the lust and all these things, and we named them and shamed them before Him because we know He knows and because we know He came.

In an absolutely honest relationship to deal with these things, let us not try and be hypocrites. Let us not try and pull the wool over God's eyes.

We may try it with one another. Ministers may try it with His people. People may try it with one another and with their minister. But let us not try it with God and indeed let us not try it with one another.

[12 : 42] So there is this great atonement seat, there is this great holy of holies which in itself is a massive area. But there was also this table in this section, verses 23 to 30.

I am not going to say much about this table other than it had on it the bread of the presence. And that a visual constant reminder to them again of God's provision of life.

The bread of life is what we often recognise and see and know as a description of God being the giver of these basic realities that we have in life.

They had it in the manner, the physical feeding of God, the provision of God in the manner as they made their way towards the promised land. It would be a land flowing not just with bread but with milk and honey.

It was a great provision he was making for them. And there was this tangible recognition that he is the provider of our satisfaction of our appetites both in nature and also by grace.

[13 : 50] Reflected even in the Lord's prayer, give us this day our daily bread, the bread of His presence, the bread of humble gratitude. And of course we can spiritually apply this provision to Jesus himself, bread of the presence.

Jesus taking upon himself this great claim to be the bread of life in John chapter 6 and verses 32 and 33.

We might just look up that in John chapter 6. In verse 32, I tell you the truth.

It is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who gives life to the world.

Sir, they said, now give us this bread. Then Jesus declared, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry. He who believes me will never thirst.

[15 : 07] So there's so many links even in the life and ministry of Jesus straight back to Moses that you can't just say, actually this is too hard a book, it's too dull a book, it's too disinteresting a book because God in Christ often takes us back to these visual pictures to remind us of spiritual truth and God is the one who is the bread of life, who provides for us the satisfaction that we need and are looking for in our lives.

I wonder if you feel that that is true for you or are you looking for your satisfaction elsewhere.

And then there's the lampstand in Minoah that is described in verses 31 to the end of the chapter in glorious terms.

And this candelabra kind of instrument that was there was to be their light.

The branches of it were to be a reminder to them of fruitfulness and of the fruitfulness of being in God and the divine that He was the core, the center of their lives, their life and their light.

[16 : 31] People could see, very visual people could see the table with the bread on it. They knew about the atonement cover. They had that in their imagination that was behind the curtain.

And now they had this lampstand which talked about His leading just as the light had led them out of Egypt, a cloud in the pillar of fire which was to lead them out of Egypt and Jesus Himself again takes on the same imagery where He says, I am the light of life who follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

And so Jesus takes these things and applies them to Himself and He is our light and He gives us light and He gives us life to the full. And we are to recognize that and see that and seek His Holy Spirit and know that the provision in the New Testament as He comes into our experience is so much greater than these Old Testament believers had.

Greater privilege but again as we sit here today the significance of greater responsibility as we have all been given so much from Jesus Christ.

He is to be our guide. He is to be the one that we look to for direction. He is to be the one who leads us in our lives. Not just that we come to worship Him for an hour on a Sunday but that He is the light of our life.

- [18 : 02] That He is the one that when we are in darkness we put our hands in His to be guided. That He is our Lord and He is our sovereign with whom we communicate, with whom we are in a relationship who is with us and in whom we trust.
- So can I just say three very brief things as we close as we think about the Tabernacle very loosely in the light of the New Testament and in the light of our understanding of God.
- It speaks about, well I'm sure it speaks about a lot more but I'm just going to say it speaks about three things very briefly. It speaks about separation.
- A lot of the Old Testament is expressing the separation of God. He's one, He's God and He's separate because He is holy.
- In a way we haven't even begun to grasp and much of the detail and much of the intricacy of entering into God's presence as it was in the Old Testament was to get across the message that He is holy and that if we treated Him the wrong way, if we ignored His direction, we would die.
- [19 : 27] And so people died when they forgot and didn't recognize His holiness. There was lots of curtains, lots of covers, lots of walls, lots of barriers to His access, physical things that stopped people drifting into His presence because He was holy.
- And a high priest who represented God's people had an elaborate journey once a year into His presence. He was a holy God, holy God. Now Jesus changes that access for us as we've read in Matthew with the curtain being opened.
- He made access free and full. He entered Jesus' presence but God forbid that Jesus is just our cuddly friend that we think we can do anything with and be careless about how we live in His presence because, well, He's paid the price. The access is open. It's not like the God of the Old Testament.
- But remember what it cost Him to say it is finished. Remember that there's this amazing Trinitarian movement from God out of the holy of holies as it were, through the person of Jesus into humanity and then through His Spirit into our hearts.
- But that that is costly and God forbid we stick our fingers heavenward and say, I can live anyway because the price has been paid and sin doesn't matter anymore.
- [21 : 13] And my heart has been cleansed by God so I'm free to live as I wish. The difference is that the motivation for us is delight and gratitude for what Jesus has done.
- And I recognition when the Old Testament is so full of His holiness that He was willing to go to this great extreme to get rid of the dirt and the uncleanness that separates us from Him in Himself.
- If only we could grasp what it was for Christ to be the sin-bearer. Could I be as risky as to say we would never sin again if we could truly understand what it cost Him, how much it cost Him to set us free.
- We I think would certainly never again sin high-handedly, it doesn't matter, we'll go our own way. So this great reality that Jesus Christ, yes, has made the access to God full and free.
- We can enter His presence anytime, we don't need another representative. Jesus is ours. The way is open, He longs to hear us, He loves our prayers, He wants us in relationship, He looks at us and sees someone perfectly holy, covered in the righteousness of Christ.
- [22 : 39] But it doesn't mean we can walk in the gutter, it doesn't mean we can treat sin lightly because He's paid for it. It means we love Him for what He's done and we seek by His grace and by the power of His Spirit to walk holy because He is holy.
- I am holy, therefore be ye holy. So it does speak about separation and yet glorious friendship. I think it also speaks very powerfully of opulence.

The Old Testament is full of gold and acacia wood and marvellous opulent buildings and expensive decoration.

You know, it was far too ornate. What's it all about? It was teaching the people visually about this God, God as king, God as creator, God who is valuable, you see.

They valued gold, well, we saw it quickly, they valued gold. But quickly they made a golden calf, few chapters later, they valued these things. And God wanted them to know how valuable He was.

[23 : 56] Later on in the New Testament, He says, you're spending a lot of money on your panelled houses. And you're making your houses lovely, but my house, He says, is just a wreck.

Now we've moved from that. This isn't the house of God anymore. The temple is our bodies, the temple is the people.

But we recognize and know we have to treat this temple as body well. To remember that the Holy Spirit resides in us. And as a people, we recognize that. And as a church, we recognize that He is worthy.

And the opulence is because He is worthy. He's extravagant. Nothing is too great for Him. Nothing from our pockets, nothing from our gifts, nothing from our characters, nothing from our time. He is worth it. Brunsfield people, He's worth it to start a new church in His name and for His glory.

He's worth the time and the effort it will take. Since He's people, He will be worth the time to evangelize and share the gospel and fill these pews again. He's worth it. He is worthy. He's the most worthy being in the universe.

[25 : 00] And nothing is too great for Him. Nothing we can give is too amazing. God is worthy. We live in a day when God is dragged through the gutter daily. He's a small, tiny, insignificant God. He's a God who's like a puppet.

He's a God who's... people don't care about it. He's God who's open to abuse at every level. He's a God who's in the dock and we mustn't go down that road. We must recognize Him and we must worship Him as worthy and remind ourselves of the spiritual riches that are ours in Christ.

And the last thing, very briefly, is that we can take, and as I say, there's much more, is detail. If you've ever read through Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers, huge amount of detail.

Tiny detail. Given by God. Two Moses. Amazing. These chapters that we read, given by the God of the universe.

Given to Moses. To be followed absolutely, completely and directly.

[26 : 10] A God of detail. Now in Hebrews chapter 9, now we're going to be looking at Hebrews over the next number of weeks. Oh, months even, maybe.

Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 24, we have this. For God did Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one. He entered heaven himself. Now to appear before God's presence.

And he's talking there about the fact that there is a heavenly temple of which the earthly temple is symbolic and has parallels.

It's reflecting something much more real and much better. Hence the detail. And also because he's a God of the detail. This is the living God.

And he's interested in centimeters and inches. He's interested in the tiny little gold ornamentations.

[27 : 16] Why? Well because he's the creator. And why? Because he's not just the broad sweep creator who wound up this world and has left it to run.

And he's not just interested in the big life decisions of your life. He's interested in the minutiae. And he can cope with it. Don't go into God's presence and say, well, I don't know if I can talk to him about that.

I don't know if God's not going to be able to, how can God be interested in these things? So God of the detail. Speak to him about the detail. Speak to him about the small things of your life. Don't think God isn't interested in the small things of your life.

Don't think he only cares about the major issues. He cares about the small things that burden you and that worry you and concern you because he's the God of the details. Remember that. And pray to him on that basis.

And remember that there is a home, a real home that he's preparing for you. Bear that in mind and have that perspective. Don't think life is simply for today. Remember there is a future in him.

[28 : 25] Something better, something real. Something where he will be with us in his presence in a remarkable way where he will tabernacle with us forever.

Good place. Like a wedding. Forever. A place of celebration, of unity, of family, of love, of exploration, of growing, of rejoicing.

There will be no more tears in his presence forever. The Lord's Day reminds us of that perspective. Don't simply live for today, but live with that perspective.

And may God bless what we're trying to do here as we think forward to that day and want others to share in that great day because he is a holy God.

And if people don't come to his peace through Jesus Christ, they will not be there. Your friends and your family and your loved ones and our neighbors in Morningside Road and our neighbors in Newington and neighbors in the workplace and our fellow students and our family members will not be there if they don't come to make their peace with Jesus Christ.

[29 : 43] Because God is a holy God. And unless we are covered in his righteousness, there will be no covering for us. Let's pray. Lord God, we ask and pray that you would bless your word to us.

May days like this be days that equip us, that excite us, that remind us that what seems maybe irrelevant in the Old Testament is hugely significant given to God's people to point forward to the coming of Jesus and also to the nature and character of God.

And remind us that the sacrifice of Jesus is not a theoretical, theological point of interest to be debated but there's a matter of life and death that transforms our day-to-day living and will transform how we rise from our bed tomorrow and will transform how we speak to our neighbor and how we respond to an argument and how we react when people frustrate us and will feed and will engage our prayer life and will grant us the priority of prayer and will remind us of the significance of what we have.

Not some kind of insurance policy that we put at the bottom drawer and only take out once a year when it needs renewed but day-to-day has no significance but is a living, vibrant, sacrificial, grace-filled relationship that is growing each day because of what Jesus has done.

So help us God. Bless the remainder of this day that we have together, a day of rest, a day we can set apart for fellowship and friendship and worship.

[31 : 37] Bless Steve as he comes this evening. We thank you for him. We thank you for his willingness to take time out of his schedule to preach in this little church.

And we pray that he would be blessed as he does so and we would be blessed. And we thank you for the fellowship and friendship that we share with his companions and his friends here today.

So continue with us as we close in worship by singing praise for the glory will be yours.
Amen.