

The Hope of Heaven: The Tabernacle, A Taste of Heaven (Exodus 25:40; 32-35; Hebrews 8-10)

Just as the writer to the Hebrews indicates, it is true that we now have something better. But it would be wrong for us to think of the tabernacle and the temple(s)¹ as a subject unworthy of our attention. If we are going to benefit from the Old Testament (and we surely should), we need to think of the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the Law of Moses as the ancient Israelites did:

"In fact, what other great nation has a god so near to them like the Lord our God whenever we call on him? 8 And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this whole law that I am about to share with you today?" (Deuteronomy 4:7-8)

I believe that in this message we will not only see that the tabernacle and the temple were prototypes of heaven, but we will also see that these provided a means whereby a Holy God could dwell in the midst of a sinful people.

My Approach in This Lesson

The topic of this series is "Hope and Change, God's Way." Our current focus is on the Christian's hope of heaven. We are considering the hope of heaven in a way that is consistent with the progressive revelation found in the Bible, beginning in Genesis and ending with Revelation. Thus, our last lesson was about "Paradise Lost," a consideration of the Garden of Eden as the first prototype of heaven in the Bible. This lesson will seek to demonstrate how the tabernacle and the temples of Israel foreshadowed heaven. Our next lesson will be titled, "Heaven Came Down," and it will explore the way in which our Lord "tabernacled"³ among men at His incarnation. We will then try to come to terms with heaven as it is described by Paul and the other apostles of our Lord in the New Testament Epistles. For the moment, let us consider what we can learn about heaven from the tabernacle and the temple.

How Can God Dwell in the Midst of Sinful Men?

Exodus 32-35

From the moment Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden, the problem has been that a holy God cannot dwell in the midst of a sinful people. Before Moses and the giving of the law, interaction

with God was achieved by the offering of a sacrifice. The blood of animals was shed so that God could make garments to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve.⁴ But when Israel became a nation, there needed to be some kind of institutional provision for God to dwell among His people. The magnitude of the problem (of God's holiness and Israel's sinfulness) can be seen in Exodus 32-35, so let's take a few moments to ponder this critical portion of God's Word.

Exodus 32

Moses has been at the top of Mount Sinai for many days, communing with God and obtaining the covenant God was making with the nation Israel. The people concluded that Moses had been out of sight for too long, and so they persuaded Aaron to create an image of God that they could see and worship, and who would go before them as they made their way to the Promised Land. Aaron had the people contribute some of their gold jewelry, perhaps some of the jewelry they obtained from the Egyptians.⁵ From this gold, Aaron fashioned a golden calf which the people worshipped, resulting in a drunken orgy.⁶ God told Moses what was going on back in the Israelites' camp and instructed him to get back down to the camp because the Israelites were already practicing idolatry. He threatened to wipe out this stiff-necked people and to create a new nation from Moses, but He did so in a way that left the door open for Moses to object and to plea for mercy for his people.

Moses interceded on behalf of the Israelites. He did not deny that they had acted wickedly, nor did he petition God on the basis that they would do better in the future. He argued on the basis of God's character and His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. He appealed to God for the sake of His glory. The Israelites were God's people, those He had chosen, and just recently had delivered from Egyptian bondage. He had promised to bring this people into the land of Canaan. If God failed to do this, it would reflect badly on His ability to fulfill His promise. God's glory would be diminished in the minds of the surrounding nations. Thus, God should forgive His people and bring them into the Promised Land, just as He had promised He would do.

His appeal did not really change God's mind; in truth, it underscored God's character and His covenant promises. In other words, the outcome of Moses' mediation was that God didn't

change anything; He gave Moses the opportunity to plead Israel's case and to declare the only valid basis for his petition. And then God did just as He had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

When Moses arrived back in the camp, he was appalled by what he saw. He was furious with Aaron and with the people. He made them grind up the golden calf and pour the gold flakes into the water, and then he made the people drink it. (Little chance that gold would be recycled.) A good number of the disobedient Israelites were put to death, both by the command of Moses and by the hand of God. Moses pled with God to forgive their sin, offering to suffer their punishment in their place. God promised that the guilty would be punished and then commanded Moses to lead the people to Canaan, promising to send His angel to lead the way.

Exodus 33

Up until now the question was whether or not the entire nation would be annihilated. Now the question is whether or not God will be present with His people as they make their way to Canaan:

1 The Lord said to Moses, "Go up from here, you and the people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' 2 I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. 3 Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go up among you, for you are a stiff-necked people, and I might destroy you on the way" (Exodus 33:1-3, emphasis mine).

Ever since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, man's sin has been a barrier to his fellowship with God. How can a holy God dwell in the midst of a sinful people? How can sinners draw near to a holy God? Up till now, access to God has been achieved individually by means of a blood sacrifice. But now Israel is a nation of many people. Israel's sin of idolatry in the shadow of the mountain where God was meeting with Moses was a reminder of just how serious the problem was. And now the nation has survived, but they are soon to press on toward Canaan. How can God be among this people without destroying them? That is now the issue before Moses.

The people realize the seriousness of the situation and strip off all their jewelry (Exodus 32:4-6). My best guess is that much of that jewelry had associations with pagan deities and heathen worship.⁸ If it was some of the articles of gold donated by the Egyptians, one can almost be certain of this.

In verses 7-11, we are told about Moses meeting with God at the "tent of meeting":

7 Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, at a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. Anyone seeking the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting that was outside the camp. 8 And when Moses went out to the tent, all the people would get up and stand at the entrance to their tents and watch Moses until he entered the tent. 9 And whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. 10 When all the people would see the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people, each one at the entrance of his own tent, would rise and worship. 11 The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, the way a person speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his servant, Joshua son of Nun, a young man, did not leave the tent (Exodus 33:7-11).

Why would this account of Moses' intimacy with God be included in such detail at this point in time? I believe it is because the author wants us to understand that Israel's only hope is the success of Moses' intercession, based upon His relationship with God. Moses pitched his tent "outside the camp," apart from the people. If they chose to worship, they must also go "outside the camp" to worship at the "tent of meeting." When Moses entered that tent, the Shekinah glory, the visible manifestation of God's glory, descended upon the tent. Inside the tent (where no one but Moses - and perhaps Joshua - entered), God spoke with Moses intimately. This was indeed something unique.⁹ Only someone on such intimate terms with God could successfully intercede on Israel's behalf. Moses was the man of the hour.

Moses petitions God to be present with Israel as they continue on to Canaan, based upon his relationship with God.

12 Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have been saying to me, 'Bring this people up,' but you have not let me know whom you

will send with me. But you said, 'I know you by name, and also you have found favor in my sight.' 13 Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your way, that I may know you, that I may continue to find favor in your sight. And see that this nation is your people." 14 And the Lord said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Exodus 33:12-14).

The first "you" in verse 14 is not in the original text,¹⁰ but is supplied since it is assumed in the context. The second "you" is in the original text, and it is singular, not plural. In other words, God is promising Moses that He will be with him (personally), perhaps something like that which is described in the previous verses (33:7-11). He is not promising to go with Israel corporately.

Moses is assured of God's presence and of God's "rest," but not Israel as a nation. Moses could have used his special relationship with God to further his own interests at Israel's expense.¹¹ Instead, Moses used his relationship with God as the basis for his intercession with God on Israel's behalf:

15 And Moses said to him, "If your presence does not go with us, do not take us up from here. 16 For how will it be known then that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not by your going with us, so that we will be distinguished, I and your people, from all the people who are on the face of the earth?" (Exodus 33:15-16)

The mediation of Moses is based upon his intimate relationship with God. He petitions God to go with the Israelites to Canaan because he has found favor in God's sight. Moses contends that the evidence of his being in good standing with God will be demonstrated by God's presence with Moses and the nation.

In response to Moses' request, God consents to abide in the midst of His people, because of His great regard for Moses:

The Lord said to Moses, "I will do this thing also that you have requested, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name" (Exodus 33:17).

What Moses does next is truly amazing - he requests that God show him His glory.¹² I have long wondered what the relationship was between God granting his request to abide among the

Israelites and his request to behold God's glory. Here is my best understanding of what has happened. As a result of Israel's great sin, the true character of Moses has become more and more apparent. Moses is a man who has God's interest at heart as we can see in verses 11-13 of chapter 32. And the closer Moses draws to God, the more God manifests Himself to Moses - the greater the intimacy of their relationship. When God granted Moses' request, it stirred even greater love for God, and this caused him to desire to know God more intimately. If God would show Moses His glory, that would be the most intimate interaction they have yet had.

Let me put it another way. Israel has sinned greatly. They do not deserve to exist, let alone to have God dwelling in their midst. But due to Moses' intercession, God has shown great mercy and grace toward Israel and great love for Moses. Seeing this prompts Moses to ask to know God even more intimately. The more Moses knows of God, the more he wants to know Him. God's glory is evident in His dealings with Moses and Israel, and this makes Moses want to behold even more of God's glory.¹³

Exodus 34

In response to his petition, God grants Moses' request. Given God's holiness (since Moses is also a sinner), there will have to be certain precautions taken. Moses will not be able to see God in His full glory, but will be able to behold some of it (as described in terms of being shielded by God's hand and the rock, and seeing only the backside of God). In my opinion, it wasn't just what Moses saw that was so exciting for him; it was also what he heard:

6 The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed: "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness, 7 keeping loyal love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But he by no means leaves the guilty unpunished, responding to the transgression of fathers by dealing with children and children's children, to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6-7).¹⁴

What more encouraging words could Moses hear than that God's glory was His gracious and compassionate nature? While God must punish sin, His delight and desire is to show compassion to sinners by forgiving them of their sins. Saving sinners is God's preferred work; judging sinners is His "strange work."¹⁵ Moses seizes upon the words that revealed God's glory to make a bold request:

"If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, let my Lord go among us, for we are a stiff-necked people; pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance" (Exodus 34:9).

Moses' request that God dwell among His people as they make their way to the Promised Land is (based upon the revelation of God's glory in 34:6-7) a manifestation of His glory. Israel's good is God's glory, and thus Moses boldly asks God to abide with His people.

If I understand the rest of chapter 34 correctly, God appears to make a covenant with Israel a second time, as a kind of second chance for this people. It is as though the first covenant had been nullified by Israel's sin with the golden calf, and thus Moses smashed the first stone tablets to bits.¹⁶ Moses thus returns to the mountain top once again, spending yet another 40 days and 40 nights without bread or water.¹⁷ Some of the main points of the law as it was first given in full are reiterated in Exodus 34:10-28.

Now, in the closing verses (29-35) of chapter 34, we read once again of the intimate relationship God had with Moses. When Moses came down from the mountain, his face was aglow and he didn't even know it. The people did! They were even afraid to come near to Moses. Moses called them and spoke to them. When he was finished speaking to them, Moses put a veil over his face, not to conceal his glowing face, but (as Paul informs us) to hide the fading radiance of his face.¹⁸ Whenever Moses "went in before the Lord" (34:34) to speak with Him, he took off his veil, and when he came out of the tent, he put the veil back on.

Exodus 35

This is the second time in two chapters (33 and 34) that the reader has been told about Moses' unique relationship with God, a relationship that no one else in that age ever experienced.¹⁹ I believe the reason will become evident as we continue on to Exodus 35. In this chapter, we see Moses and the Israelites commencing work on the tabernacle and its furnishings. I believe this provides us with the key to understanding how God could dwell in the midst of a sinful people. We have seen that God's character (as revealed in 32:11-14 and 34:6-7) and covenant with Abraham exhibited God's motivation in forgiving the Israelites and

in promising to be present with His people as they made their journey to the Promised Land.

We now see the mechanism by which God was able to dwell in the midst of His people. If God had to shield Moses' face with His hand, place him behind a rock, and display only His back side in order to draw near to Moses, how much more distance and separation was required for God to abide in the midst of this stiff-necked people? So, the mechanism which enabled God to draw near to His people and to dwell among them included these essential elements (all of which we have seen in Exodus 32-35):

1. A mediator to stand between God and Israel (Moses was the key to Israel's survival, but the priests also served a mediatorial role, putting some much needed distance between God and the nation).

2. Barriers to keep some distance between God and the Israelites. Those who sinned greatly were removed (by death?) from Israel.²⁰ Those who were ceremonially unclean were placed outside the camp. Then there was separation within the camp, facilitated by the tabernacle. The priests could enter the holy place, and only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year.

3. A sacrificial system that made it possible to atone for the sin of the nation once a year.

The tabernacle - followed at a later time by Israel's temple(s) - was essential for God's presence among His people. In addition to facilitating God's presence among the Israelites, the tabernacle served as a prototype of heaven. This is evident in God's words to Moses in Exodus, as well as in the New Testament Book of Hebrews:

38 "Its trimmers and its trays are to be of pure gold. 39 About seventy-five pounds of pure gold is to be used for it and for all these utensils. 40 Now be sure to make them according to the pattern you were shown on the mountain" (Exodus 25:38-41, emphasis mine).

1 Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We have such a high priest, one who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a minister in the sanctuary and the true

tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. So this one too had to have something to offer. 4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, since there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. 5 The place where they serve is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary, just as Moses was warned by God as he was about to complete the tabernacle. For he says, "See that you make everything according to the design shown to you on the mountain." 6 But now Jesus has obtained a superior ministry, since the covenant that he mediates is also better and is enacted on better promises (Hebrews 8:1-6, emphasis mine).

11 But now Christ has come as the high priest of the good things to come. He passed through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, 12 and he entered once for all into the most holy place not by the blood of goats and calves but by his own blood, and so he himself secured eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:11-12, emphasis mine).

23 So it was necessary for the sketches of the things in heaven to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves required better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with hands - the representation of the true sanctuary - but into heaven itself, and he appears now in God's presence for us. 25 And he did not enter to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the sanctuary year after year with blood that is not his own, 26 for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the consummation of the ages to put away sin by his sacrifice (Hebrews 9:23-26, emphasis mine).

19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the fresh and living way that he inaugurated for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in the assurance that faith brings, because we have had our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water (Hebrews 10:19-22, emphasis mine).

There is at least one sermon (and perhaps an entire book) to be found in these verses which show the divinely designed

correspondence between the earthly tabernacle, our Lord's body, and the heavenly tabernacle. When Moses was given the design and dimensions for the earthly tabernacle that was to be made, God showed Him the heavenly ideal, after which the earthly tabernacle was to be patterned. The original tabernacle is not the tabernacle which the Israelites took with them in the wilderness; it is the heavenly tabernacle after which the earthly tabernacle was patterned. This becomes a main point of emphasis for the writer to the Hebrews in chapters 8-11.

For the time being, let me point out some of the "heavenly" features of the earthly tabernacle as it functioned in Old Testament times.

1. The tabernacle and the temple were the place where God's presence was revealed by the Shekinah glory which filled them:

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34).

The priests could not carry out their duties because of the cloud; the Lord's glory filled his temple (1 Kings 8:11).

4. 2. The tabernacle and the temple were those places where men could draw near to God by offering sacrifices and come to worship, especially through the mediatorial ministry of the priesthood.

5. 3. The tabernacle was the place where sacrifices were offered, especially the annual Day of Atonement,²¹ when the sins of the nation were set aside for another year, thereby providing temporary relief from the penalty and guilt of their sins.

6. 4. The special times of worship at the tabernacle (and temple) were a time of rest. It is interesting to notice that the three annual celebrations at the temple in Jerusalem were linked to a Sabbath rest.²² Men had to set aside their daily labors so that they could travel to Jerusalem and devote themselves to worship. Thus, temple worship was a time of much-needed rest.

7. 5. Observing the special times of worship in Jerusalem was an act of faith. Only the males were compelled to travel to Jerusalem for these feasts.²³ Some would have to travel a considerable distance to reach Jerusalem. Some - perhaps most - would leave

farms and family members behind when they made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This would leave land and loved ones as an easy target for their enemies. God assured His people that He would protect them by eliminating their enemies' desire to take their land:

23 "At three times in the year all your men must appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. 24 For I will drive out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one will covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year" (Exodus 34:23-24, emphasis mine).

In order for the Israelite men to worship God in Jerusalem, they would have to exercise faith in God to care for all they left behind to do so.

8. 6. The temple was central to the prayer life of the nation Israel because it facilitated the prayers of the Israelites (and others).

7 I will bring them to my holy mountain; I will make them happy in the temple where people pray to me. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my temple will be known as a temple where all nations may pray" (Isaiah 56:7; see 1 Kings 8).

9. 7. The tabernacle and the temple facilitated the joyful worship of God in the company of fellow-Israelites. This is a vitally important point, which we must not fail to grasp. As we look back on the worship of the Old Testament saints, we have visions of a very bloody worship, and compared to what we experience today, it seems sub-standard. But while the New Testament (especially the Book of Hebrews) paints what we have under the New Covenant as "better," that does not make Old Covenant worship "bad."

When one reads the "Psalms of Ascent," you do not get the impression that the saints of old worshipped God with gritted teeth and clenched fists - as though this was something one had to endure - like going to the dentist for a root canal. Listen to the words of the psalmist:

1 A song of ascents, by David.

I was glad because they said to me,

"We will go to the Lord's temple."

2 Our feet are standing inside your gates, O Jerusalem.

3 Jerusalem is a city designed to accommodate an assembly.

4 The tribes go up there, the tribes of the Lord,

where it is required that Israel give thanks to the name of the Lord

(Psalm 122:1-4, emphasis mine).

For many - if not most - Israelites, worship in Jerusalem was something that happened all too seldom (three times a year for some). It wasn't as though they went to the temple (or the tabernacle) daily or even weekly. But when they went, they went with great joy and anticipation. It was a time when they would offer a sacrifice and then share a meal with those they knew and loved. In this sense, going to Jerusalem for worship was something like Thanksgiving. It was a time when a meal was shared in (or near) God's presence, something that was looked upon as a marvelous privilege:

You prepare a feast before me in plain sight of my enemies.

You refresh my head with oil;

my cup is completely full (Psalm 23:5).

No wonder heaven is described in meal table/banquet terms:

10 When Jesus heard this he was amazed and said to those who followed him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found such faith in anyone in Israel! 11 I tell you, many will come from the east and west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 but the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:10-12).

37 Blessed are those slaves whom their master finds alert when he returns! I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, have

them take their place at the table, and will come and wait on them! (Luke 12:37)

28 "You are the ones who have remained with me in my trials. 29 Thus I grant to you a kingdom, just as my Father granted to me, 30 that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30).

So, the tabernacle was patterned after the "original" in heaven. Tabernacle worship (followed later by temple worship) was a foretaste of heaven. Thus, when Ezekiel informs us about heaven, he does so in "temple terms."²⁴ In the New Testament (as we will see in our next message), Jesus was introduced by John as One who "tabernacled" (John 1:14, NASB, marginal note) among men. In chapter 2 of John's Gospel, Jesus spoke of Himself as the temple.²⁵ The church will likewise be spoken of as God's temple,²⁶ as well as believers individually.²⁷

Perhaps most significantly, in one of the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation we find that there is no physical temple in the New Heaven and New Earth, for God the Father and God the Son are the temple:

Now I saw no temple in the city, because the Lord God - the All-Powerful - and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:22).

We shall pursue this further in our next message.

Conclusion

So what are we to gain from our study of worship by means of the tabernacle and the temple? What are we to learn from the fact that the tabernacle was "a little bit of heaven" - a taste of heaven to come?

First, the tabernacle and the temple remind us of the holiness of God and of the sinfulness of men.

Second, we are reminded of the immense barriers to sinful men ever coming into an intimate relationship with a holy God. We saw this in God's words to Moses:

"Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go up among you, for you are a stiff-necked people, and I might destroy you on the way" (Exodus 33:3).

Consider the level of difficulty for men to be in the presence of God after the fall of man (and after Israel's great sin at Mount Sinai). It took the tabernacle and all of the rules, rituals, and sacrifices for men to draw near to God (or for God to draw near to men). This is the measure of man's sinfulness and of God's holiness. We live in times when both realities (man's sin, God's holiness) seem to have been set aside and forgotten. We have forgotten that our freedom and boldness in coming into the presence of the living God is due, not to our goodness, or to a depreciated holiness on God's part, but solely due to the magnitude of the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, the holy and sinless Son of God, took man's sin on Himself. In the words of the Apostle Paul,

God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

My friend, if you think you will ever get to heaven by your own works and righteousness, you are fooling yourself. There is only one way for sinners to ever be granted entrance into God's heaven:

Jesus replied, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

God provided but one way for sinners to enter heaven - Jesus Christ. Jesus took our sin on Himself when He died on the cross of Calvary, thereby paying the penalty for our sin. All those who trust in His work on their behalf will be saved. Their sins are forgiven, and they are destined for eternal joy in heaven. All those who reject the person and work of Jesus and who trust in anyone or anything besides Him are destined for an eternity apart from Him, an eternity of eternal agony (hell). If you have never trusted in Jesus, I urge you to do so today.

I would hope that this message would remind Christians of who they were apart from Christ, and of the wonder of the salvation God wrought for them in Jesus:

1 And although you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you formerly lived according to this world's present path, according to the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the ruler of the spirit that is now energizing the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom all of us also formerly lived out our lives in the cravings of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest... 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, 5 even though we were dead in transgressions, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you are saved! - 6 and he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 to demonstrate in the coming ages the surpassing wealth of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 it is not from works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:1-9).

This should not only humble us; it should make us eternally grateful for the salvation we did not deserve, accomplished by Christ's amazing work of redemption on the cross of Calvary. And it should likewise encourage us to take advantage of all that Christ's work has made available to us:

19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the fresh and living way that he inaugurated for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in the assurance that faith brings, because we have had our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. 23 And let us hold unwaveringly to the hope that we confess, for the one who made the promise is trustworthy. 24 And let us take thought of how to spur one another on to love and good works, 25 not abandoning our own meetings, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and even more so because you see the day drawing near (Hebrews 10:19-25).

I would hope that our study of Israel's worship in the Old Testament by means of the tabernacle and the temple would also keep us from what might be called "worship lite." If we were sinners, unworthy of God's presence, and deserving only of eternal judgment, then we should find ourselves in awe of God and of the salvation He has accomplished for us through Jesus. I see today a

great deal of emphasis on worship made easy and aimed at being entertaining. That was surely not the case in the Old Testament, and neither should it be in the new. We should appreciate the fact that God takes sin in the church very seriously.²⁸ We, the church, are corporately the temple of God, just as we, individually, are temples in which He dwells. Let us not take sin lightly, and let us not seek the kind of worship which is easy, which requires little preparation or sacrifice on our part, and which gives us Sunday to spend on the lake or on the golf course. Having God in our presence is serious business.

Please allow me one final word about ecclesiology - the doctrine of the church. Some seem to think that the Bible gives us all kinds of freedom as to how we "do church." There is a certain measure of freedom, but there are also very clear principles and precepts related to how we operate as a church. If the church is the temple of God, the place where God currently dwells (on earth), and if the church as His temple is a reflection of God Himself, then we better be very careful not to cast aside the commands of our Lord to the church about doing church.

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1 In computer terms, the tabernacle was the "laptop" (portable model) of that day, while the temple was the "desktop" of its time. Both served the same purpose, but the tabernacle was mobile.

2 Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the NET Bible. The NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION, also known as THE NET BIBLE, is a completely new translation of the Bible, not a revision or an update of a previous English version. It was completed by more than twenty biblical scholars who worked directly from the best currently available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. The translation project originally started as an attempt to provide an electronic version of a modern translation for electronic distribution over the Internet and on CD (compact disk). Anyone anywhere in the world with an Internet connection will be able to use and print out the NET Bible without cost for personal study. In addition, anyone who wants to share the Bible with

others can print unlimited copies and give them away free to others. It is available on the Internet at: www.netbible.org.

3 See the footnote in the NASB at John 1:14.

4 Genesis 3:21.

5 Exodus 11:2-3; 12:35-36.

6 Exodus 32:6.

7 This is the inference I believe Moses perceived from God's words ("let Me alone. . .") in verse 10.

8 Joshua 24:14; Amos 5:25-26; 2 Kings 17:40-41.

9 See Numbers 12:1-8.

10 In the NASB, this is indicated by the fact that "with you" is italicized.

11 As he could have done in Exodus 32:10.

12 Exodus 33:18.

13 As an aside, I believe that this foreshadows the believer's joy in heaven. The more we learn of Him, the more we will desire to see more of His glory. God's glory is so vast that we will spend all of eternity exploring its dimensions.

14 Think of the implications of these words in relation to heaven and hell. God's glory is to be seen not only in His saving grace, but also in His condemnation of the wicked.

15 See Isaiah 28:16-22; Lamentations 3:31-33.

16 Exodus 32:19.

17 Exodus 24:18; 34:28.

18 See 2 Corinthians 3:12-18.

19 See Numbers 12:1-15.

20 See Exodus 12:15, 19; 30:33, 38; 31:13-15.

21 See Leviticus 16.

22 See Numbers 28:16-29:40; specifically, see 28:18, 25, 26; 29:1, 7, 12, 35.

23 * Exodus 23:17; 34:23; Deuteronomy 16:16.

24 See Ezekiel 40ff.

25 See John 2:18-22.

26 See 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10.

27 1 Corinthians 6:15-20.

28 See, for example, 1 Corinthians 5; 11:17-34.