

INTRODUCTION

If you know anything about real estate, you know the three most important things about any piece of property are: location, location, location. I was touring with our Highest Praise Choir in Los Angeles this week and we took a tour up into the Hollywood Hills where the stars live. There are some older basic houses up on Mulholland Drive that probably would sell for \$150,000 in East Texas. But because of where they are, overlooking LA, they sell for \$4 million. Location, location, location.

A real estate agent was selling a house down the road from a pig farm. He told some prospective buyers, "The bad news is that the house is down the road from a pig farm. The good news is you can always tell which way the wind is blowing!"

We're going to talk about God's temple today but not just the temple on earth, but the temple in heaven, because it's all about location, location, location.

When the letter of Hebrews was written, the Jewish Temple was still in Jerusalem. So all the Hebrew Christians who received this letter knew that priestly sacrifices were being made there every single day at the Temple. Old habits are hard to break. These Christians came along preaching that you didn't need a human priest and you didn't need an earthly temple to worship God. They preached that Jesus is our high priest and we don't need to sacrifice animals at a temple to seek forgiveness for our sins.

But some of these Hebrew Christians were wobbling in their faith. So the writer of Hebrews is convincing them Jesus is all they need. They don't need a human priest, and they don't need an earthly temple. Jesus is a better priest ministering in a heavenly sanctuary.

There is NOT a Jewish Temple standing in Jerusalem today. Most of us know that. But did you know there is a Temple in heaven?

Hebrews 8:1-6: "The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man. Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This 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.' But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises."

This is an instructive message, because the more you understand about the tabernacle, the more you will know about Jesus, about yourself, and about salvation. Do you know the difference between the Jewish tabernacle and the Jewish Temple? It's the difference between

an RV and a house. The tabernacle was a portable temple Moses built in the wilderness when the Jews were still on the move toward the Promised Land. When they settled in Canaan, they kept the tabernacle until Solomon built a permanent structure for worship in Jerusalem.

The tabernacle had a much deeper meaning than just a sanctuary where God could meet his people. It was a wonderful illustration of many points of reality. Let's explore this topic.

I. MOSES BUILT THE TABERNACLE USING A HEAVENLY PATTERN

Not long after Moses received the Ten Commandments, God instructed him to build a portable temple where God could meet His people in worship. The age-old question has been: How can sinful man relate to a holy God? The tabernacle was God's elementary revelation of how He could meet His people. But Moses didn't just dream up the design. There already was a sanctuary in heaven and God told him to use the same pattern.

The Bible says, God said to Moses, "Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you." (Exodus 25:8-9) The tabernacle was a prototype of the sanctuary in heaven. The main way that it mirrored the tabernacle in heaven was that it had three parts.

A. Part one was the Outer Court

This was an area roughly the size of one-fourth of a football field. A seven-foot tall fence covered in animal skins surrounded it. This was an area where the Levites and the priests killed and offered animal sacrifices. Inside the outer court there were two pieces of furniture. A laver, where they would wash their hands – it's the same word we use for lavatory. And there was a bronze altar where the animal sacrifices were burned. It would have been like an oversized barbecue grill.

B. Part two was the Holy Place

Then there was a tent with two rooms. The tent was 45 feet wide, 15 feet wide and 15 feet high. That is roughly the size of this platform from door to door. One room was called the Holy Place it was 30 feet long, 15 feet wide and 15 feet tall; that's about the size of just the platform where I'm standing. Inside this room there were three pieces of furniture: A table for the shew bread, a lampstand called a Menorah, and an altar where they burned incense to create a special fragrance and a fog. Only priests could enter this Holy Place.

C. Part three was the Holy of Holies

There was a room that was a perfect cube. It was fifteen feet wide, high, and deep. It would be only half the size of this platform. Inside this room there was the Ark of the Covenant. And yes, it looked just like the one depicted in Indiana Jones' Raiders of the Lost Ark. It was a box containing a bowl of manna, Aaron's staff that bloomed, and the two tablets of the Ten

Commandments. The lid was called the mercy seat and there was a golden sculpture of two cherubim facing each other with their wings almost touching.

This inner sanctum is where the Shekinah glory of God dwelt. Only one man could enter into this room once a year on the Day of Atonement. The Jewish High priest would enter there carrying a bowl containing the blood of a lamb. He would sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat to symbolically seek forgiveness for all the sins of the Israelites.

Now keep this picture of a house of three parts and we'll see how this is a pattern for reality.

II. CREATION REFLECTS THIS HEAVENLY PATTERN

On the first page of the Bible we read that Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (Genesis 1:26)

When God made us in His own image, it doesn't mean we look like God, because God is invisible. It means the pattern of the temple gives us a clue to God's nature, the structure of the universe, and how each of us has been created.

It is all seen in God's affinity for the number three. In the Bible, numbers mean something. Three is the number of God. Of course, we know there is one God but He reveals Himself through His triune nature: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are created in God's image in that we are a tri-unity as well. We are body, soul, and spirit. We are one person, but like the tabernacle pattern, we are comprised of three elements. This triune theme is repeated throughout God's creation.

When I was a teenager, there was a rock group named Three Dog Night. They sang, "One is the loneliest number you'll ever do." The Bible teaches that three is the Holiest number you'll ever know! Let's see how this threefold temple pattern is reflected in all of creation.

A. This TRIUNE pattern is seen in the magnificent world of matter

One of the first things we learn in science classes is that atoms are the basic building blocks of matter. And an atom has three parts: protons, neutrons, and electrons. On a larger scale, height, breadth, and length comprise all solid matter. There are three kingdoms in the physical creation: animal, mineral, and plant.

This is also reflected in the way you are created. We have a body that is a physical essence. It is made up of atoms and molecules. With our bodies we connect with the physical world beneath us. Our five senses operate in this realm.

God's creation is magnificent. I love to look at the pictures of the universe taken by the Hubble Telescope. The Psalmist says, "When I consider the heavens, the work of your hands." (Psalm

8:3) God is an amazing artist. And each of us is a magnificent creation as well. The Bible says we are fearfully and wonderfully made. When you are completing a task and you want it to be perfect, you work it fearfully, afraid that you'll make a mistake. God never made any mistakes, but that's how painstaking He was in His creation. The physical world of nature reflects the beauty of His holiness.

B. This TRIUNE pattern is seen in the mysterious world of the mind

God also created us as soul. This includes our mind, our emotions and our will. The Greek word for soul is psuche, from which we get our world psychology. This is the world in which relationships are sealed. It says in 1 Samuel 18:1 (KJV) that the "soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David." This is the mysterious world of friendship and romance.

It is within this realm that God created such mysterious treasures as love, art, and music. This is a rich world of discovery, invention, and adventure. The quest of man to explore and to achieve is a reflection of the very nature of God. It's all part of His pattern of reality.

C. This TRIUNE pattern is seen in the miraculous world of the spirit

Just as the Holy of Holies was the inner sanctum where God met humanity, your spirit is the inner sanctum where you relate to God. The fact that we have a spirit makes us unique from the rest of God's creation. Plants are living creatures. They have bodies, but no soul, contrary to what some of the tree-huggers claim. Animals are living creatures, and they have bodies and a soul, they have a personality. But contrary to what the PETA folks would say, animals don't have a spirit. They don't have any capacity to relate to God. Have you ever seen a dog fold his paws and give thanks before he eats his dog food? Have you ever seen cats coming to church for catechism classes?

So what is it that makes us different from a toad or a turnip? God breathed into us a spirit.

It is with our spirit that we relate to God who is Spirit.

III. JESUS REDEEMS US ACCORDING TO THIS HEAVENLY PATTERN

When Paul prayed for the believers, He included the entire scope of redemption, body, soul, and spirit. He prayed, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

To understand our salvation, we must remember what happened when humanity lost fellowship with their Creator. God put Adam and Eve in the Garden and said, "Enjoy every tree and every animal. But I reserve one tree to myself. Do not eat of the fruit of this particular tree. The day that you eat of it, you shall surely die." We all know the story. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, but did they die? Well, Adam continued to live on for several hundred more years. So did God tell a lie? Why didn't they die? They did die, but you have to understand God's

temple pattern to understand what happened. When they sinned, they died immediately in their spirit. That inner sanctum of light and life where they met with the Creator to fellowship together was snuffed out. They experienced the guilt of their sin and nakedness. Second, they died progressively in their souls. As they had to live in a fallen world that soon became populated with wicked people, they became less and less like their Creator. It was their son, Cain, who committed the first murder. And then they died ultimately in body. In the Garden, they hadn't aged, but when the fellowship with God was broken, their bodies began to age and they experienced pain until we read in Genesis 5:5 that Adam died after living 930 years.

When Jesus died on the cross, He was the Great High Priest offering His own blood as a sacrifice. And when we place our faith in Jesus, salvation reverses that process.

We talk about "being saved." Salvation is actually in three tenses: past, present, and future. We have been saved. We are being saved. And we will be saved. Let me explain that to you.

A. When we place our faith in Jesus, WE ARE CHANGED IMMEDIATELY IN OUR SPIRIT

The Bible says, "Even when we were dead because of our sins, He made us alive by what Christ did for us. You have been saved from the punishment of sin by His loving-favor. (Ephesians 2:5 NLV) At the moment you exercise faith to receive God's gracious gift of eternal life, your spirit is made alive and God's light is illuminated in your spirit. You are declared forgiven and righteous in the eyes of God. The punishment of our sin is separation from God forever in a place called hell. At the moment of salvation, the penalty of sin is removed and you receive a free Divine Pardon from heaven.

But this is the point that confuses many Christians, including the Apostle Paul. When the blood of Jesus cleanses you, you might make the mistake of thinking you will never sin again, but that's not true. We still retain this selfish, sinful nature and Satan tempts us to stumble into sin. A person who sins after they are saved sometimes thinks, "Am I really saved? Maybe I'm not saved because I have committed this sin."

In Romans 7:15, Paul addressed this frustration. "The good things I WANT to be doing, I find myself NOT doing those things. And the bad things that I DON'T want to do, I find myself doing those things." Can you relate to that? That frustration can be reduced when you understand how God's Temple pattern works in salvation.

B. When we place our faith in Jesus WE ARE CHANGED PROGRESSIVELY IN OUR SOUL

The Bible says, "I am sure that God Who began the good work in you will keep on working in you until the day Jesus Christ comes again." (Philippians 1:6 NLV) When we are first saved, the penalty of sin is removed, but there is still sin in our lives. But in this process, the power of sin over us is gradually reduced.

We're all in the process of being changed. None of us are there yet. That's why we should be patient with each other. But when God looks at you and me He sees not what we are now, but

what we will be when He's finished with us. That's the power of an artist. They can look at an empty canvas and see a picture. The great Michelangelo was asked once how he could take a block of marble and create an angel. He scoffed and said, "I just cut away everything that doesn't look like an angel."

That's what God is doing in us. He is cutting away everything that doesn't look like Jesus. And it's a lifetime process.

This process can be summarized in a song I used to teach kids, "He's still workin' on me. To make me what I oughta' be. It took Him just a week to make the moon and stars; sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars. How loving and patient He must be. 'Cause He's still workin' on me!"

C. When we put our faith in Jesus WE WILL BE CHANGED ULTIMATELY IN OUR BODY

The Bible says, "We are waiting for Him to return. He will change these bodies of ours of the earth and make them new. He will make them like His body of shining-greatness." (Philippians 3:20-21 NLV) So, do you see how the cross reverses the curse? Adam and Eve died immediately in spirit; progressively in their souls; and ultimately in their bodies. When we come to Christ we are saved immediately in our spirit; progressively in our souls, and ultimately in our bodies.

Let me remind you again when a Christian dies and I'll use a real example. Eva Mae McKnight was the oldest member of Green Acres. She died last week at age 105. When she died, her visible body stopped functioning. But her invisible life force, her soul and spirit, left her body and immediately went to be with Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 5:8 the death of a Christian is defined as, "Absent from the body; present with the Lord." Her body was laid to rest along with the bodies of millions of other Christians. But one day when Jesus comes back, the Bible says, "The dead in Christ will rise first." (1 Thessalonians 4:16) The Creator will call together every single molecule of every Christian's former body and change it to be an eternal body like His. The generation of Christians alive when Jesus returns won't experience physical death, we'll just be changed instantly. Paul describes it this way, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

CONCLUSION

We'll be talking more about the meaning of the tabernacle as it relates to salvation in the weeks ahead. But for now it's important to understand how this pattern explains your salvation. As each of us grows older, we need to rejoice that as the outer person is wasting away, our inner person is being renewed day by day.

I came across a poem called "Growing Old," by John E. Roberts that made me smile.
They say that I am growing old;
I've heard them tell it times untold,

In language plain and bold—
But I'm not growing old.

This frail shell in which I dwell
Is growing old, I know full well—
But I am not the shell.

What if my hair is turning gray?
Gray hair is honorable, they say.
What if my eyesight's growing dim?
I still can see to follow Him.

My hearing may not be as keen
As in the past it may have been,
Still, I can hear my Saviour say,
In whispers soft, "This is the way."

This outward shell, do what I can
To lengthen out this life's short span,
Shall perish, and return to dust,
As everything in nature must.

My inward self, the Scriptures say,
Is growing stronger every day.
Then how can I be growing old
When safe within my Saviour's fold?

Before long my soul shall fly away
And leave this tenement of clay;
This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise
To seize the "everlasting prize."
I'll meet you on the streets of gold,
And prove that I'm not growing old!

The tabernacle that Moses built was a reflection of a heavenly pattern seen throughout the universe. That's why we should learn as much as we can about the tabernacle so we can have a fuller understanding of God and ourselves.

OUTLINE

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God said to Moses, "Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you." *Exodus 25:8-9*

- A. Part one was the Outer Court
- B. Part two was the Holy Place
- C. Part three was the Holy of Holies

II. CREATION REFLECTS THIS HEAVENLY PATTERN

"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." *Genesis 1:26*

This TRIUNE pattern is seen in

- A. The magnificent world of matter (body)
- B. The mysterious world of the mind (soul)
- C. The miraculous world of the spirit (spirit)

III. JESUS REDEEMS US ACCORDING TO THIS HEAVENLY PATTERN

"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it." 1 *Thessalonians 5:23*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
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