

The heavenly tabernacle

Part 1

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[00:00:01] The hymn 455.

Lord, we conceive by faith in thee a prospect bright, unfailing. Lord, we conceive by faith in thee a prospect bright, unfailing. Lord, we conceive by faith in thee a prospect bright, unfailing.

Where God shall shine in mighty light, in glory ever failing.

The power of all faith and love draws to thy holy presence.

[00:01:02] Thy saints shall rest in glory there, and shine at thy creation.

Oh, how it was the day to birth, the day of spirit's outpouring, when heaven fell in love's full glow with God's high Christ the Lord.

Oh, how it was the day to birth, the day of spirit's outpouring, [00:02:03] when heaven fell in love's full glow with God's high Christ the Lord.

No more to do than chosen few in selfish life divided.

The drinking fields, the living grave, that gave their hearts united.

Lord, taste the day of love that's great, and close their cry of pain.

[00:03:08] Where God shall shine in mighty light, in glory ever failing.

Tonight I would read to start with some verses from Exodus 25 and from the New Testament.

First, Exodus 25, verse 8.

And they shall make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

[00:04:10] According to all that I shall show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the

utensils, thereof even so shall ye make it. And then let us turn to Hebrews chapter 8, verse 2.

Where we read of the Lord Jesus as minister of the holy places, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not man. [00:05:01] And then from chapter 9, verse 11.

But Christ being come, high priest of the good things to come, by the better and more perfect tabernacle not made with hand, that is, not of this creation, nor by blood of goats and cows, but by his own blood has entered in once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption. And then, verse 23.

It was necessary then, that the figurative representations of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with sacrifices better than these. [00:06:04] Thus far we read from scriptures in the beginning, and I hope to add some more passages during the course of our meeting. My purpose tonight is to speak a little about the true tabernacle, the heavenly tabernacle, and the things which are in heaven. When we, we all, I think and hope that we all have a little idea of the tabernacle in the desert. When we look at this tabernacle of which we have read some verses in Exodus 25, we see that it represents two entirely different and not separated things. Of one we have read, the tabernacle in the desert, the habitation of God in the midst of his people was a representation, a figurative representation of things in heaven. [00:07:06] A visible representation of invisible things.

And that is what occupies us tonight, because in the book of Revelation we have many, many allusions to these realities, spiritual, invisible, immaterial realities in heaven, of which the things in the tabernacle were a figurative representation. That is the one thing, the tabernacle points on high. It shows us something which is invisible. But on the other hand, the tabernacle also pointed forward, in the horizontal direction, if I may so say, and that is, it was also a type of the assembly, which was then a mystery, which is now revealed, which is also, if I may say so, an immaterial thing, a spiritual reality, but at the present time, at that time, Exodus 25, it was still future. [00:08:15] And so the tabernacle, if I may say so, the reality of the tabernacle in the desert, God's dwelling place in the midst of his people, showed upwards towards the eternal dwelling place of God, and pointed forward in the future to the spiritual, earthly, and later on heavenly dwelling place of God in the midst of his assembly. And we are not speaking now of the tabernacle itself, which is styled in Hebrews, always the tabernacle, even there where it is really the temple in view, it is always the tabernacle, to show that everything which is here on earth is a passing thing. [00:09:11] But also, with a view to the heavenly things, it is called the heavenly tabernacle, and that, beloved friends, might point to the fact that behind that tabernacle, which is speaking of the created heavens, there is something more than a tabernacle, the Father's house, which is not in view when we look at the tabernacle or the temple. The Father's house, the eternal dwelling place of God, is not of this creation, whereas the tabernacle speaks of the created heavens, in the midst or in the center of which is the throne of God, the governmental and judgmental throne of God. And that is the center of, or the highest point of creation, where God presides in the government and judgment over his creation, whereas the Father's house, I think, where the Lord speaks about his Father's house, in the house of my Father are many dwelling places. [00:10:23] He speaks of something which he only mentioned once, in this sense, he speaks about the temple once of his Father's house in John 2, but he speaks about, in John 14, he speaks about something where no man has ever been, but where he now is, as the first man, the glorified man, to introduce us there. And that, I think, will never be called a tabernacle, because that is the eternal dwelling place of God and will, once we are there, also be our eternal place of bliss and blessing and glory. [00:11:07] But what we have here in the tabernacle is what is in

God's mind to show us, because otherwise we would not know anything about the heavenly places.

How could invisible things be explained to human beings, if not by these figurative, as John Brother, Mr. Darby has translated it in Hebrews, these figurative representations of heavenly things.

And now we have in the tabernacle, or in connection with the tabernacle, we have the brazen altar, we have this brazen sea, is that so the expression? [00:12:05] Lava, which is later on in the temple, it's called a sea, but the brazen lava, we have it there. And then inside the tabernacle we have the golden altar of incense, we have the table of showbread, and we have the candlestick, the seven armed candlestick. And in the Holy of Holies we have the Ark of the Testimony, the Ark of the Covenant of God.

And these things speak of heavenly realities. Naturally we have not, these are representations, visible material representations of spiritual invisible things. We cannot say that they are only thoughts, because it is more, they are realities, but still not materialized. [00:13:08] They are speaking of principles and of facts, which will, which have, I dare say, eternally played a role in the thoughts and in the mind of God, and will be there for eternity. But it is interesting that not all of the things in the tabernacle we find, at least in the description, neither of Hebrews nor of the Revelation. And that is, first, the seven armed candlestick. Somebody might say, well, we have the seven candlesticks in Revelation 2 and 3, but there we have, I think, an allusion to it. But it is not what we find in the tabernacle, because in the tabernacle the candles, the seven armed candlestick was the light of the sanctuary. [00:14:08] Whereas the seven candles, the seven candlesticks in the midst of which the Lord walks in Revelation 2 and 3, they are not in heaven, but on earth, and they are not the light of the sanctuary, but they are to be the light of this world. So this is only an allusion in these seven candlesticks to the seven armed candlestick in the Old Testament, and what is also not mentioned in the New Testament description of heavenly realities is the table of showbread. The table of showbread, with his twelve loaves of bread upon it, was a reminder under the eyes of God of his people here on earth, twelve loaves, twelve tribes, people of Israel. [00:15:09] There could not be, and there was no representation of the unity of the body in the Old Testament, but it represented the whole people of Israel, the whole people of God. Perhaps one explanation why this is lacking in the heavenly description is because there where the people actually is, there is no representation needed of this people. Here on earth, the people of God, the earthly people and the heavenly people have hardly ever been visible as a whole, as a company. Israel was brought into Babylon and Assyria, and they were scattered all over the world, and what do we see of the heavenly people of God, the assembly now?

[00:16:11] God sees its oneness, and it is there, there is one body, but for the human eye it is impossible to see it, and that is why the representation of this oneness of the people is so important. But once the people will be there, there is no need of any, that is of any representation of something which is already there, that is maybe the explanation, or one explanation. But then what we find in the revelation, if we start from the beginning, from the entrance of the court, this is partly a repetition of what we have already had in our meetings here.

[00:17:05] The first thing the Israelites saw when they came into the court was the brazen altar, the place where all their sacrifices were burned, or the fat was burned, and where for, so to speak, the judgment of God because of sin had taken place.

That was, in the first place, the meaning of the brazen altar in the court of the tabernacle.

And this brazen altar is mentioned, as we have been reminded this afternoon, in Revelation 8, where we read in verse 3, and another angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer. [00:18:08] And much incense was given to him that he might give efficacy to the prayers of all saints at the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of the hand of the angel before God. And the angel took the censer and he filled it from the fire of the altar and cast it on the earth. Now this, in this passage, we have two altars mentioned. We have in verse 3, the first mentioning, came and stood at the altar, and we have in verse 5, and the angel took the censer and filled it from the fire of the altar and cast it on the earth. And then the mentioning of this brazen altar on which the offerings were sacrificed to God, which speaks of the place where the judgment has taken place.

[00:19:18] On earth, it was the place where the Israelites came in the first place. But this place, which is sometimes, this altar which is sometimes styled a type of the cross, and it is true. Which is by scripture itself called the table of the Lord, and it is true. Shows us, if we look into heaven, what does it show us? I think in the first place that the thought of this work of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary. Where he, the innocent, took the judgment on himself for those who were guilty. And where the full, righteous, and true judgment on sinners was fulfilled on him, the guiltless and innocent.

[00:20:26] Was in the heart of God, and had a place in heaven, in his presence since all eternity. That is the altar. But then came the point where this judgment was executed. The altar was on earth, on Calvary, but it stayed also in heaven. This truth, this truth is an eternally standing truth. The judgment of God in righteousness on the cross of Calvary. [00:21:06] As the basis for every real communion and fellowship between God and man. And that is why it has to be represented in heaven forever and ever. On the altar in the Old Testament, I think it is Leviticus 9, when the consecration of the priests had been fulfilled, and the offering, the sacrifice was on the altar, there was fire coming from above, from heaven. Which consumed the sacrifices. And in important instances, Gideon, Manoah, David on the threshing floor of Onan, and Solomon in the consecration of the temple.

[00:22:03] In these critical moments, God always showed his approval by sending fire from heaven. So it was in the beginning until the end.

Which shows that the only measure, the only standard according to which the judgment or the consummation of the consuming of the sacrifice could take place was the holiness of God. Because that is what fire speaks of. The holiness of God which must consume everything which is not in accordance with it. And that is why this fire continued on that altar in the tabernacle. Which makes so clear what was strange fire when the sons of Aaron brought strange fire. It was fire which they had kindled themselves and the point was that it did not find its origin with God. [00:23:15] That was the sin of Nadir Ben Nabil. That they took the measure for bringing their incense was not the holiness of God. You see that is why we find here that the angel in Revelation 8 verse 5 took coals from the fire from that altar. Which speaks of the holiness of God. And which reminds us dear friends that we also have to orient ourselves in everything in our ministry for God only at the holiness of God. [00:24:01] That is the only standard for everything to be done. Whether it be as we see in Revelation in one passage the judgment or whether it be as here the efficacy of the incense whether it is the efficacy of the incense which had to be brought or as we see here in verse 5 in Revelation 8 verse 5 the angel took the censer and filled it from the fire of the altar and cast it on the earth.

This is quite in the beginning of the judgments of God but we see that the fire which kindles the judgment or which characterizes the judgment originates directly at this place where God has already

judged sin in his only begotten and his beloved son. [00:25:22] So the altar which was in the court of the Tabernacle shows us and reminds us of this eternal and unchanging thought and reality that God must judge the sin and has done so in the person of his son on the cross of Calvary. And that this is the basis for all his actions whatever they may be. Then secondly the Israelite when he entered into the or when he went into the court he couldn't go further than the lava. [00:26:05] But we find the lava we have found this lava in chapter 4, Revelation 4. It was called the brazen lava in the connection with the Tabernacle. It was called the brazen sea in the temple of at least in the German translation it is like translated like that in the temple of Solomon. And it is thus we find we meet it in as such in Revelation 4 verse 6.

In Revelation 4 verse 6 where we find there from verse 2 the throne of God and the 24 elders around that throne we read in verse 6 and before the throne as a glass sea like crystal. [00:27:03] And this glass sea is mentioned again in chapter 15 verse 2 there mingled with fire. Now in the Old Testament in the type the lava the brazen lava was filled with water, clear water.

What purpose? The purpose of this lava was that the priest the high priest and the priest who had been washed once from top to bottom at the beginning at their consecration. And just as the Lord says he who has been bathed does not need to have that repeated but he is completely pure. So this bathing complete bathing at the beginning of their ministry of the priest shows us that they were cleansed once and for all and prepared for their ministry. [00:28:08] And we can easily understand when the Lord repeats that in a spiritual sense in John 13 that this alludes to our washing at the point of our new birth when we came to the Lord Jesus with our sins. Then everybody who comes with his sins to the Lord Jesus he will be washed and it is here even the word the water is applied we have the washing in the blood he who has loved us and washed us in his blood cleansed us in his blood but we have also the complete washing with the water. And then every time the high priest and the priests went into the sanctuary they had to pass by this lava and had always reason to wash their hands and cleanse them before entering into the holy presence of God. [00:29:13] And even if the feet washing in John 13 seems to point to a slightly different direction because it is not only priestly service of which the Lord speaks.

He speaks of our general walk and says to his disciples that they had to wash their feet mutually when he was gone after his example which he had left them. Then we can easily understand how important it is dear brothers and sisters that we also be it in our daily life the foot washing the feet washing or in our priestly service this brazen lava that our hands our actions and our feet our walk has always to be examined. [00:30:15] In the pure water of the word of God. The Lord Jesus applies this water even to the whole assembly. Ephesians 5.27 he cleanses and he sanctifies his assembly which he has loved and given himself for her by sanctifying her by the washing with the water of the word. That is one effect of the holy word of God which God the spirit wants to effect on us every time every day in our ministry for our ministry for our service but even in our everyday walk. [00:31:02] And that we can understand the necessity of this lava filled with the pure water of the word to cleanse us as priests in heaven. Do we have to be cleansed there? Do we have to be washed of impurities in that pure presence of the Lord? No. And therefore there is a sea which is not consisting of water and therefore there is a sea which is not consisting of water but it is pure glass.

Looks like water but is not water. It is rigid. It is fixed purity one could say. Glass if it is good glass naturally and it looks like water but it is fixed. [00:32:06] It is the fixed expression of fixed purity eternally true for those who are worthy are deemed worthy to spend the whole eternity in the presence of God. But it reminds us will eternally remind everybody who is there of what is necessary

for the presence of God. Now it is the washing of the water. There it is the glass sea which always will be the reminder of this purity which is necessary. And will then be normal for the presence of God. And then we return to chapter 8 verse 3 where we have and one could naturally I only pick out a few passages but all these things as I said already are mentioned in other passages in the revelation in other contexts. [00:33:20] So one could but I don't go through all the passages where the brazen altar and the lava etc. are mentioned but only pick out one just to show that really the thought of what we found in Exodus that it is figurative representation of heavenly things is true confirmed as well in a general way by Hebrews. Because there we don't find these specific things as we find them here as also in Revelation. And back to Revelation 8 verse 3 the second half where we see the golden altar which was before the flood. [00:34:09] And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints. Now the golden altar in the sanctuary of the tabernacle and of the temple which stood directly in front of the curtain which covered the ark of the covenant is called here the golden altar which was before the flood. Now this means that there is a throne in heaven and if we see the representation in the tabernacle we can only conclude that the ark of the covenant was the throne of God and exactly that was true in type. God in the English translation I think it is said sitteth between the cherubim but in the German translation is he sits on his throne between the cherubim. I don't know exactly now the Hebrew word whether it expresses this in being enthroned but in the German translation it says he is enthroned between the cherubim. [00:35:25] And in the Old Testament but we will leave that for a moment later. This golden altar is the question now what does it express and I think we have no great difficulties in finding especially here from this passage and also from Exodus 30 where the golden altar is mentioned much later than the other things in the sanctuary because first the consecration of the priest had to be mentioned and in that same chapter we find also the mention being made of the incense which was to be brought and sacrificed on this golden altar. [00:36:16] This golden altar is as everything in the tabernacle an expression of the person and the work of the Lord. Whether it is the brazen altar, whether it is the lava, whether it is the candlestick, whether it is the table of showbreads it is always the Lord who supports all these things in the presence of God because everything rests on him. Everything. And so also this incense is brought on the golden altar. The incense speaking of the adoration and the worship of the saints is brought by and through the Lord Jesus. [00:37:04] I think we have only three passages which speak of worship and adoration in the New Testament in a more expressive way and that is John 4 where we find the character that the father is seeking worshipers who worship him in spirit and truth. And then we have Hebrews 13 verse 15 where we read that through him, through him, through the Lord, he is the golden altar. Let us bring, I have to read it, Hebrews 13 verse 15.

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God that is the fruit of the lips confessing his name. By him, he is the altar and on this altar, upon this altar the sacrifice, the incense is brought. [00:38:07] And the same is true in 1 Peter 2 where we have more the priestly service of the spiritual sacrifices but there it says also in 1 Peter 2 verse 5 yourselves also as living stones are being built up the spiritual house, the holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. By him, he is also that altar on which every sacrifice is being offered to God and this will be so eternally. Dear beloved friends, every activity, conferences, gospel preaching, teaching, shepherding, every activity which we, spiritual activity which we are doing, having here on earth will find its end. [00:39:03] But there is one activity which will never end and that is worship. That is so looked at from the other side, the only activity which we as Christians begin here on earth and will continue into all eternity. And that is why there is a golden altar in the heaven because this thought, the idea of the worship was eternally in the father's heart and will eternally be carried through by those redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. And so this golden altar in the tabernacle and in the temple remind us of that principle one could almost say that redeemed sinners will ever will adore

and worship God the Father forevermore. [00:40:05] And then comes the last thing, the altar which was before the throne. The throne of God is mentioned already in chapter 4 but there it is nothing, nothing is said about that throne. And we find it here again and in many other passages in the revelation this throne is mentioned but it is never said how it looked. Or actually we are not speaking about material things, what were its characteristics. But then we have descriptions of the throne of God in heaven, in Ezekiel, in Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1-10 and Isaiah 6. And there we see that this throne of God and also in Zechariah 3 I think a little bit and there we see that this throne in its glorious appearance is surrounded and characterized by angelic beings. [00:41:20] Especially the cherubim as they are described in Ezekiel in the first chapters or as the seraphim as described in Isaiah 6. Of which the word of God never says that they were angels, it does not say that they were angels. We always simply say the cherubim and seraphim are angels, they are beings, created spiritual beings but they are never identified with angels. And I don't know whether it is wrong to identify them but the scripture doesn't do it. It says cherubim and seraphim but not they are angels, living creatures they are called in the New Testament in the revelation. [00:42:09] Because there the living, the four living creatures combine the characteristics of the seraphim in Isaiah 6 and the cherubim in Ezekiel 1-2 and the following chapters. Which show us the characteristics of the governmental throne of God. But these cherubim were also, two cherubim were also on the shrine on that mount of the covenant.

Two cherubim were of gold were covering this, were standing or were being fixed, made in one piece from this covering of the ark of the covenant.

[00:43:02] And their eyes were directed on the blood of that covering. The blood which was there was brought there once a year at the great day of atonement. But the second point is that this throne of God as it is called, can be called from the Old Testament and as it is called here. Was characterized also by the fact that it was the most complex representation of the person and the work of the Lord.

That was the ark of the covenant and God says that is my throne. And in the New Testament if we look at Hebrews 9 for example. Hebrews 9 verse 4.

[00:44:07] The holy of holies having a golden censer and the ark of the covenant covered round in every part with gold. In which were the golden pot that had the manna and the rod of Korah that had sprung it. And the tables of the covenant and above over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat. Concerning which it is not now the time to speak in detail. The mercy seat it is called here which is the covering of the ark of the covenant. And if now if we turn to Romans 3 verse 24.

We read in this chapter where the justification by faith is for the first time presented in scripture. [00:45:10] We read being justified verse 24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Whom God has set forth a mercy seat through faith in his blood.

So we see that God's word itself says that the Lord Jesus by his atoning work of uncovering is the fulfillment of this type of the mercy seat in the Old Testament. And that is now we may say the throne of God.

The basis of his government and his acting towards man. It is the throne of grace as it is called in another sense in Hebrews 4. [00:46:04] Isn't that a wonderful thing beloved brothers and sisters. That we have access to this throne of God by the work of the Lord Jesus. And that we know that this holy and just and righteous God is a God which has mercy and grace for us. Because this is now the principle on which the footing on which every action of him is based at the present time. He is for us

so to speak enthroned on this mercy seat on the Lord Jesus.

He is the throne of grace. Sometimes we ask what is this throne of grace? The Lord Jesus. He is the throne of grace. He is the one who has opened the pathway into the presence of God. [00:47:04] He is the one on whom and I say this with all respect. God is enthroned from whom every action of his divine activities is centered.

Everything rests and pivots only in the Lord Jesus.

And in eternity or in the future God's activities will change. The God of grace will reveal himself as a God of judgment. There is no doubt about it. But still as we have seen the impulse of what he is doing and the measure of what he is doing will always be the Lord Jesus. His work on the cross of Calvary and the fulfillment of all the counsels of God. [00:48:08] And so we can approach in spirit by faith now to this throne of God. But beloved friends soon we will surround that throne. Where our God and Father is enthroned and where we see the Lamb. And there we see now that all these representations are not to be thought in a materialistic way. Because we have seen that the throne actually is what the Lord has done and what he is. But still he is also the Lamb in the midst of the throne. We will be there. And we will see and eternally be reminded of all that what we find in the tabernacle on earth. In these little things of which the depth I can only recommend to every young believer to study them. [00:49:08] To study them because as we have seen they point upwards to heaven. And they also point forwards to the assembly. So we have lots to learn. But the most precious lessons we can learn from them is that they all point there where we soon shall be in the presence of God. Surrounding his throne. Throwing our crowns in his presence. And singing the new song thou art worthy thou alone. Amen. Verse two. The person of the Christ enthroned in heaven's grace, once dead, is now alive again in heaven at the end of verse one hundred and thirty-two. The person of the Christ enthroned in heaven's grace, once dead, is now alive again in heaven at the end of verse one hundred and thirty-two.

[00:50:30] The day of him we see, is we with him again.

Alive is he with Christ in power, with Christ on earth today.

[00:51:06] The heavens are open now, sound his true words abroad.

And divine grace we thank thee Lord, Jesus Christ our Lord.