

Catford Lectures 2007-2008

Part 12

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[00:00:00] Exodus, Chapter 26, and verse 31.

These were the Lord's words to Moses.

And thou shalt make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen of cunning work with cherubims shall it be made. And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold. Their hooks shall be of gold upon the four sockets of silver. And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony. And the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. [00:01:02] And thou shalt set the table without the veil and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south. And thou shalt put the table on the north side. And if we can turn to chapter 30.

We'll break into this passage at the beginning.

It's about the altar of incense.

And we'll start at verse 6.

So speaking about the altar of incense. And thou shalt put it before the veil. That is by the ark of the testimony. Before the mercy seat that is over the testimony where I will meet with thee.

[00:02:04] Then 2 Chronicles chapter 3.

Verse 14.

Now this is speaking about Solomon of course. And the building of the temple. And he made the veil of blue and purple and crimson and fine linen and root cherubims thereon. Then we can just go into the New Testament.

Matthew's Gospel.

Chapter 27.

[00:03:16] Verse 15.

Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice yielded up the ghost.

And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. We'll leave that there. Then we'll move into Mark's Gospel. Chapter 15.

Verse 37.

And Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost. [00:04:02] And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And then in Luke's Gospel chapter 23.

And verse 44.

And it was about the sixth hour and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice he said, Father into thy hands I commend my spirit. And having said thus he gave up the ghost.

Then just two more scriptures both from Hebrews.

[00:05:03] The first one's in Hebrews chapter 6.

Verse 17.

We'll leave out wearing but just start with God. Willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath that by two immutable, unchangeable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, [00:06:01] whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made in high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. And then finally chapter 10.

Verse 19.

Having therefore broken boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

[00:07:02] When I look back to my years in Sunday school, and when I was brought up, I had the privilege of being brought up in a Christian family, one of the most vivid things for me was the thought of the veil.

I suppose it was the account of it being rent in the midst, from top to bottom that we had in the Gospels. But, speaking in more common terms, I think it's true to say that for all of us, particularly when we're children, when we see a curtain hanging up, particularly one against the wall, or perhaps there's a space behind it, as opposed to one on a window, we wonder, why is that curtain there? What's behind it?

There's a thought of mystery.

And of course we want to lift the curtain up and see what's behind it. Well, I would like to speak, as you've no doubt worked out, about the veil to the holiest of all, as it's presented in the Scriptures, [00:08:06] and to try and learn what it signifies, and what it means to us today.

I want to speak about it under three heads. First of all, what we have read about in the Old Testament, about the veil, particularly the veil to the holiest of all in the tabernacle. But you'll notice I did read one verse, the only verse, about the veil in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem. And then secondly, I'd like to speak about the rending of the veil in Herod's temple, when the Lord Jesus died on the cross.

And then thirdly, hopefully I will have left myself enough time, we should speak about those verses in Hebrews, in chapter 6 and chapter 10.

[00:09:01] So first of all, the veil as we have it in the Old Testament. Now there's a lot written about the veil in the tabernacle, but first perhaps we should ask ourselves, why was there a tabernacle in the first place? Well, we can go back to the chapter just before the chapter that we started our readings with, Exodus chapter 25.

And in verse 8 we get a very important verse.

God says to Moses about his earthly people Israel, let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.

And that's really the foundational thought of the tabernacle. Now, because we're used to living in houses of brick and stone, [00:10:01] we rather look down on tents, don't we, in this country. And perhaps, well certainly I remember this was the case when I was younger, I was always more attracted to the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem. That magnificent house, as the scriptures do describe it. Solid, permanent, glorious abode for God among his people.

And truly, the temple is a very important thought in scripture. But really, the tabernacle is a more fundamental thought than the temple.

And I'm going to prove that in a moment from scripture. But right here at the beginning, we understand why it is, because the word tabernacle emphasises the thought of dwelling. And here's the desire of God expressed in this verse. Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. God had redeemed his people from the house of bondage, from Egypt.

[00:11:05] By blood and by power.

They were now on the other side of the Red Sea. And they were free to be occupied with him.

And he wanted to be occupied with them. And the explosion of his heart's desire to be occupied with his people comes out in these words. Let them make me a sanctuary, a holy place, that I may dwell among them.

And you know that thought carries on through scripture. And this is where I think I'm able to prove how fundamental a thought it is. Let's just turn to the last book of the Bible. We had some very helpful hints, didn't we, this afternoon on how to interpret scripture.

But there's a very telling verse in the book of Revelation, [00:12:07] where God shows to us his heart's desire in regard to his people.

In chapter 21, John says, the beginning of that chapter, and I saw a new heaven and a new earth. So we've gone into eternity. We're not even in the world to come, the millennium, the kingdom. We've gone past that, we're into eternity. For the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And here's the important verse. You know it, I know. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle, not the temple, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, [00:13:01] and God himself shall be with them and be their God.

There's more beautiful verses that we could read in that passage, but we haven't got enough time to do so this evening. But there is a thought. God's tabernacle with men, he will dwell with them. And our young brethren here need to get this into their heart. God wants to dwell with his people. He wants to be in relationship with them in a practical, in a close, in an intimate way.

That's what God desires. And you know, it's there, isn't it? Right at the beginning of the Bible. In the call of the day, God came down to commune with Adam. Adam wasn't there.

He had disobeyed God.

He had hidden himself in the trees. He and his wife had made aprons of fig leaves to conceal their nakedness. They were no longer able to have that communion with God that God desired.

[00:14:05] And doesn't this bring home to us that what we're talking about is something that's particularly precious to God? God wants communion with us. But very often we put communion with God.

I'm talking about practical communion. And I speak of myself before I speak of anybody else. We put it so far down our list of priorities, don't we? We're so busy, we've got this to do and that to do, and we hardly spend any time with our God. And yet, as in the Garden of Eden, so today, he desires to have communion with us.

And this is what is expressed in this wonderful verse from Exodus chapter 25.

God wanted to dwell with his people. Another verse to convey it to us is verse 22. And there I will meet with thee.

Perhaps this was something particularly that Moses would enjoy. Moses was able to go into the very

presence of God freely.

[00:15:07] And there I will meet with thee. And I will commune, there's that word again, communion with thee, from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims, which are upon the ark of the testimony of all things, which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel. Of course it was Moses because he would pass on the communications that God gave him to the people of Israel. And yet, you know, there was a time, if we had enough time to look at it, in Exodus chapter 19 where God says that he wanted his earthly people to be a kingdom of priests.

It was really in God's heart that they should all approach to him in this intimate way.

But as we know sorrowfully from their history, this was never accomplished. But this is the heart of God.

And it's God's heart for us today, and this is why it's important for us today. [00:16:01] We can learn from these things today ourselves. In the church, God is looking for communion with his people.

What more precious verse conveys it than a verse like, for instance, Ephesians chapter 5, where we have the thought in this epistle which tells us of all our blessings in Christ.

And the apostle writes, Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks and praise for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But the tabernacle also speaks of order. And our brother Nick was referring to the importance of order, wasn't he? [00:17:01] In what he had to say to us about the tendency today to say, well I'll take that part of the scriptures, but not this part because it says things that I don't really want to observe. And very often there are things to do with the order of the house of God. And doesn't the apostle Paul emphasize the importance of knowing how to behave ourselves in the house of God. 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse 15. That all things, he says, in connection with the edification of the assembly, all things should be done decently and in order. Well this is conveyed to us too by these words about the tabernacle. It was to be God's house. It was to be an advertisement, as it were, for God. And so in verse 9, in Exodus chapter 25, the verse after the verse we looked at just a moment ago, he says, let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them according to all that I show thee after the pattern of the tabernacle [00:18:02] and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

And at the end of the chapter he says, and look that thou make them after their pattern which was shown thee in the mount. So God is a God who desires, indeed expects us to be obedient to him.

And this came out in the construction and in the use of the tabernacle too. But, you know, there's another thought in connection with the tabernacle that I think is very important to emphasize and that comes right at the beginning of that chapter, chapter 25. Speak unto the children of Israel, verse 2. That they bring me an offering of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart, he shall take my offering. It wasn't simply a case of going through a ritual or following a set of rules [00:19:01] or something that was to be routine.

It was something that was to involve heart exercise. And if our God desires communion with us and

expects us to follow his orders, then surely too it's a wonderful thing when we can enter into that with our hearts, when we want to respond to his love, when we want to be obedient to him. And the book which speaks much about the tabernacle that we read from, Hebrews 13, at the end of that book, at the end of that letter, the writer says, Yes, the tabernacle was also to be a place where his people responded to him, where their hearts went out to him, [00:20:02] where they expressed in their sacrifices and in their worship, their pleasure in their God, who had delivered them, who had brought them into an ordinance, who was guiding them through it, who was going to bring them into the promised land. And hasn't that got a lesson to us too? How much are our meetings like that?

Places where our hearts express fully, as fully as we can, with our feebleness and in our weakness, our appreciation of our God, who is not only our God, if I can put it that way, but is also our Father, who has brought us into that nearness, through his Son, the Lord Jesus, who gave himself for us upon the cross of Calvary.

But there is a tension, isn't there, all the time in the tabernacle. There is this desire of God to dwell among his people. Let me just take you, if I can, for a moment, to that tabernacle.

The court may be 150 to 180 feet long, [00:21:06] about 50 to 90 feet wide, I'm not sure, it depends how long a cubit was in those days. White linen curtains around that rectangle, except on the east side, where there was a door, a gate, of a brightly coloured material.

There was the linen, the white linen, but there was also the blue, that we've read about. There was also the purple and the scarlet.

And here was this wide entrance, maybe 30 or 40 feet wide.

A welcome to people to come in, to what was otherwise an enclosure, which seemed to say, this is a holy place, stay outside. And the people of Israel could present themselves at that gate. And if you went through that gate, [00:22:03] and this was as far as most of the people of Israel could go, what would you come across first? The altar of burnt offering, that copper altar, 15 to 20 feet square, a huge altar, which speaks, of course, of our Lord Jesus and his sufferings upon the cross of Calvary, for the glory of God and for our salvation. The only way in which you and I can get into the blessings of God, can respond to God, is first of all to get right with God. And the only way to get right with God is to trust in the works the Lord Jesus has done for us upon the cross of Calvary. And then, if you were to carry on past that altar, say you were one of the priests, you would be able to walk towards the laver.

You don't know the dimensions or the shape of this article that was within the court of the tabernacle? What's a laver, perhaps a young one said? [00:23:02] Well, it was a container of water, something the priests could wash their hands in as they did their work in the tabernacle.

The ground was dusty, they were in contact with it the whole time. In order to be able to present sacrifices to God in an acceptable way, they had to keep washing themselves at the laver. That is a very important lesson for us. Once we trust in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, if we want to live for him, then we've got to keep ourselves clean. Remember what the Lord Jesus said to Peter on the night before he was crucified, when he washed the feet of his disciples? If I wash you not, you can't have part with me. And then, after the laver, you could walk towards that house, that main building within the courts. And there at the beginning of it was a curtain, [00:24:05] a door of curtain, a bit like

the one at the beginning, at the main entrance of the courts, but of the same colour, but of a different dimension, smaller.

And the priests could enter through that and go into what was called the Holy Place. And there on the left-hand side would be the lampstand, the candlestick, the seven-branched candlestick, speaking of the Lord Jesus as the one who is the light. And of course the oil, which was used in order to give that light, speaks of the Holy Spirit. That was the light of that Holy Place. Just as the Lord Jesus is the light of the world, and just as the Lord Jesus is the one who is glorified by the Holy Spirit, the oil lit up those lamps, [00:25:01] and they showed off the beauty of that golden candlestick, or that golden lampstand. And that's the way it is today, isn't it? As Nick has been telling us, it's through the Word of God, not just through our intellectual ability to read and understand the words, but as we let the Holy Spirit teach us, that we see the things God wants to show us from His Word, and He wants to show us the Lord Jesus from His Word.

And on the other side of that Holy Place, a table, a table on which there were twelve loaves, speaking of the twelve tribes of Israel, laid out, called sometimes the Bread of the Presence, because they were in the presence of God.

Kept in order upon that table, there was a gold crown or ring around it, which prevented them falling off the table.

They were kept secure, [00:26:01] speaking of our security in the Lord.

And that bread, it was placed before God, but after a week it could be eaten by the priest. It speaks of the fact that we can have fellowship with God in His precious Son, the Lord Jesus. We're both there for God's pleasure in His presence, but we're also seen in that little symbol as those who can have fellowship with God in His things, and His things centre on the Lord Jesus.

And then if we were to go on through that space, that first compartment, because there were two compartments, because if we were to go straight on, we would come to another object, and that is the Altar of Incense. Now, whereas the Brazen Altar was a great, big altar, speaking about the way in which the Lord Jesus is able to bring salvation to each and every one [00:27:02] who comes to Him, the other altar is a very small altar, just one cubic square, speaking about the fact that it's the privilege of those and those alone who have trusted the Lord Jesus, who can offer up prayers and worship to Him, because the incense speaks of our prayers and our praises.

But, I can't go any further.

All of a sudden I see there's a curtain behind that Altar of Incense, and it's, yes, it's like the colours of the other curtains we've spoken about, the gate at the front of the court, and the door to this main building, but this one, it's blue, it's purple, it's scarlet, and I can see some of the white of the fine linen too, but inscribed upon it there are cherubim, [00:28:03] speaking of God's righteousness, of God's authority, of God's government, and saying to me in effect, dare you go in there.

We've mentioned already from Exodus chapter 19 that it was God's desire, initially, that all His people should be able to be priests before Him and enjoy His presence.

But sin came in and stopped that from being the case, and successively, we haven't got enough time

to read about it, sin kept coming in, even among the priests of God.

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, they offered strange fire before the Lord, and God's judgement came down upon them. And if you look at the beginning of Leviticus 16, you'll see that God says that Aaron was not to enter at all times into the Holy of Holies, but only once a year.

He wasn't to wear his garments of glory and beauty [00:29:03] that God had given him, but holy garments of living alone.

When he went into the presence of God, God was emphasising His utter holiness and righteousness in those words.

And so we see in the veil, this lesson, God wants to have communion with us, but He cannot have communion with us while as yet the matter of our sin is undealt with.

And you know, through all those hundreds of years when the priests in your temple were offering up sacrifices to God, these sacrifices had value in the eye of God because they spoke of the Lord Jesus and the sacrifice that He would offer up on the cross of Calvary. But they weren't the real thing.

They were only shadows. You can read about this in Hebrews. They were only things which looked forward [00:30:01] to that sacrifice the Lord Jesus would give. And until that sacrifice was given, it was impossible for that intimacy that God desired to be realised by His chosen people or by any people at all who desired to come into His presence.

And so we see in this veil, this solemn lesson, that God desires to have fellowship, communion, intimacy with us, but we cannot enjoy what He wants to enjoy with us while as yet we are still in our sins.

And when the people of Israel came into the land and Solomon built that temple, that veil had to be replaced with a new veil [00:31:03] that fitted the dimensions of the temple, much grander structure, needed a bigger veil, but it needed a veil with the same colours, blue and purple and scarlet and that white linen and the cherubim inscribed upon it.

But in the verse that we read at the end of reading the scriptures in Hebrews chapter 10, the writing to the Hebrews, speaking about the veil, says this wonderful thing about it.

He says, Through the veil that is to say His flesh.

And that immediately shows us that the veil is a type, one of those things that Nick was speaking about earlier on, in the Old Testament, which is a picture of the Lord Jesus, an imprint of the Lord Jesus, something which makes us think of the Lord Jesus, which sets forth the Lord Jesus to us. [00:32:03] So let's just think of some of those colours. First of all, the blue. The blue would speak of heaven.

It's linked with the thought of a sapphire. In Exodus, when the elders of Israel went up to see God, they saw heaven, the body of heaven as a sapphire.

And when we have the Lord Jesus presented to us in the New Testament, don't we have Him

presented as the Son of Man who is in heaven? Though He was a real man in this world, He was from heaven, and He was in communion with His Father, and He was called as a result the Son of Man who is in heaven. In 1 Corinthians we're told He's the second man out of heaven. He could say to those who questioned Him, You are from beneath, I am from above.

And He could say to His Father in that wonderful prayer in John chapter 17, [00:33:02] Glorify me among thyself with the glory that I had along with me before the world began. Yes, the Lord Jesus truly is the one from heaven, the man out of heaven. The blue would convey to us the heavenly character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we think of the purple. Well, purple speaks to us of imperial glory.

When you read about purple, you'll see it connected with the power of armies across the world, the nations. I think purple was the color of Midian. I know in Daniel it says that Belshazzar gave garments of scarlet to Daniel when he gave him the prophecy connected with the vision Belshazzar had. But a more correct translation would say it was purple. You'll see the purple figures in the book of Esther, in the ornaments that were in the temple, in the palace of Ahasuerus.

[00:34:06] Purple speaks about the glories of the universe, of the world as a whole, and they belong to the Lord Jesus.

When we think of scarlet, we think about the fact that the Lord Jesus is the king of Israel. Scarlet is the color of royalty in Israel.

You'll remember that when Joshua entered into the land and the two spies told him about the faithfulness of Rahab, she put herself under the care of the protection of the armies of the God of Israel. What color was the thread that she had to tie in the window of her house that was on the wall of Jericho? It was a scarlet thread.

And scarlet is the color of Israel, the color of royalty in Israel. [00:35:01] Saul gave to the women or the daughters of Israel garments of scarlet, David says, in his celebration of Saul's life.

So the Lord Jesus is the king of Israel. He has rights in Israel. He's the Messiah. He's the king.

And then white. What would white speak to us of? Well, white speaks to us of purity. We've already mentioned the prohibition that God put upon the high priest going into the Holy of Holies. As and when he desired to, it only could be one day in the year. And he had to wear linen garments. And if you look in those early verses in Leviticus 16, you'll see how often the word linen comes up. Linen garments, linen mitre, linen girdle. Yes, they were holy vestments and they were linen vestments.

And when we look at the church in a day to come, the marriage supper of the Lamb, [00:36:01] what kind of garment does she wear? She wears fine linen, which is the righteousnesses, John writes, of the saints.

So linen speaks of holiness and righteousness. All these things are filled out beautifully by the Lord Jesus. And if you want just more confirmation of what we're saying, think about Mark. In Mark, he had a purple robe put upon him.

The one who was the servant of all this to be the Lord of all one day. That purple cloak was put upon him in mockery. But one day he will wear the purple. He will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And if you turn to Matthew's Gospel, you'll find that the Gospel writer there speaks of that same cloak as being scarlet. Why does he do that? Because Matthew is the Gospel that presents the Lord Jesus as the King of Israel. When we think of Luke's Gospel, don't we have brought before us the Lord Jesus in his human perfection? [00:37:05] His dependence upon God in every respect.

Doing the will of God as a dependent, trusting man.

How fitting the white is in connection with the presentation of the Lord Jesus in Luke. Yes, God became God.

The Word became flesh.

God was manifest in the flesh. He was seen in a man.

Showing forth all these wonderful glories in regard to both God and man.

And that just leaves the blue, doesn't it? Which Gospel do you think speaks of the blue? Well, I think it is the Gospel of John. We've already mentioned that verse. It says of the Lord Jesus, the Son of Man which is in heaven. I am from above, he could say, as we've already mentioned. All these blessed things come out in our Saviour and Lord. [00:38:01] Yet he was denied the glories attached to these things by man. Why? Because when men saw him, they saw his righteousness, they saw his perfection, and they hated him. They hated him without a cause.

It showed them up for what they were. And this is the sense in which the veil speaks of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus came here as a man, showing the love of God, showing the desire of God towards his creature. And yet, when the Lord Jesus was seen here as a man in this world, he only showed how far off men and women and young people were from God. For here was a man who was perfect, and here were creatures who were completely imperfect, sinful, disobedient, you and me. How could we possibly, as it were, go into the Holy of Holies?

The fact of the Lord's beautiful life here in this world only showed up how much we needed a sacrifice for our sins. [00:39:07] And that's why when we hear people speaking on the radio at so-called Christmas time about how wonderful it was that the Lord Jesus became a man because it brought God to us and us to God, we get a little bit angry, don't we? Because it's a lie.

It's a delusion.

It's an untruth that by being born into this world as a man, the Lord Jesus united God and man. The very reverse was the case. It was the churning on the veil into the holiest of all which showed that we couldn't go there.

In fact, we underscored that ourselves. We crucified the Lord of Glory.

We said, away with him, crucify him. We don't want him.

And that's why the Lord Jesus had to suffer and die.

[00:40:05] The one who was perfect, the one who pleased God in everything, the one who, though men saw no beauty in him, so pleased God. He was that tender sapling growing out of the dry ground, filling out all these glories of which we've been speaking. God was satisfied with him. God delighted to say, this is my well-beloved son. In him I am well pleased.

That's why he had to suffer and die upon the cross. There was none other good enough to pay the price for sin. He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in. Let us in.

And that's why when he yielded up the ghost, when he delivered up that beautiful life on the cross of Calvary, what happened? Well, we read about it in three Gospels. The veil of the temple was rent in the midst from top to bottom.

[00:41:02] They tell me that veil was an exceedingly thick veil in that temple. You couldn't have torn it.

And you certainly couldn't have torn it from the top to the bottom. It was a work of God.

God signified by the fact of the death of his son, the Lord Jesus, that a way was made into his presence.

That which had barred us, our sin, was gone in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

Of course, only if we trust him as our saviour.

In Matthew, Mark's Gospel, we read the words that it was when the Lord Jesus yielded up his spirit, gave up the ghost, expired, are the words given in Scripture. When that life, that beautiful life, was committed to God, went to God, then the temple veil was torn [00:42:01] right in the midst from top to bottom.

Or I should say, rent in twain from top to bottom. In Luke's Gospel, it looks as if he contradicts the other two Gospel writers. It looks as if he says the temple curtain, or veil, was rent before the Lord Jesus gave up his life. But Luke's order is always a different order from Matthew and Mark. And this is one of the things we have to take into consideration when we read God's words. We have to read it carefully, under the Spirit's guidance. Luke always takes a moral order.

And it seems to me, in those verses from Luke chapter 23, that Luke is really setting the scene in these verses. He's setting the scene of such a wonderful man, as the Lord Jesus, being crucified.

As he sets the scene, he doesn't actually say that it happened at the ninth hour. Notice that Matthew and Mark both say that it happened at the ninth hour. [00:43:04] All that Luke says is that from the sixth to the ninth hour, these things happened.

The sun was darkened.

He doesn't say that in Matthew and Mark. Of course, they were darkened.

But the very creation, the very light of creation, was darkened because of what was going to happen.

And in that place where the light of God's testimony should have shone, what happened?

The veil of the temple was wrecked. But it doesn't say in Luke's Gospel from top to bottom. It says it was wrecked in the midst. And one can't help feeling that what Luke is saying is that God had finished with it. God had finished with the system of which that veil spanned. It's God's judgment on such a system that could result in his son being delivered up and crucified.

[00:44:03] But we can be sure that this act of the wrecking of the veil chronologically happened when the Lord Jesus said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

And having said thus, he gave up his ghost.

The Lord Jesus has given himself that life which otherwise witnessed the fact that we could never be at home in the presence of God, could never enjoy intimacy with God. That life was given up so that we might be able to enjoy the presence of God. Now the question is, are we doing that? And that's what brings us on to Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 6.

These words have particular relevance to believers who were Jews, that had trusted the Lord Jesus as their savior. It has particular relevance to the wonderful image of the cities of refuge that we have in the Old Testament, [00:45:02] where someone who committed manslaughter could flee from the wrath of the relatives of the person he had killed by accident. And as we know only too well from Acts chapter 2, when Peter preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost, he was really saying to the people, God's not treating you as murderers. He's treating you as manslaughterers. He's still showing you grace. He's still showing you a way to be saved despite the crucifixion of his son, the Lord Jesus. Flee! And some said, what are we to do? They said to Peter.

And he told them what to do, didn't he? He said that they were to be baptized. They were to show themselves as cutting themselves off from the nation that had crucified his son, the Lord Jesus. And so in verse 18 it says, [00:46:03] Yes, these ones to whom this writer wrote his letter, they had fled for refuge.

They had taken Peter and the other gospel preachers at their word. And they had laid hold not upon an earthly hope, but a heavenly hope.

And the writer to the Hebrews says, which hope?

Which hope?

The hope of salvation, not just from sin, not just from the penalty for sin, or the power of sin, but from the very presence of sin. Our hope in heaven, which hope we have, he says, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, can't be undermined.

It never loses its power. It can be absolutely dependent upon. Do we rest on God's word, as we were encouraged to this afternoon, which enters in that within the vial. [00:47:02] Yes, where the ark of the covenant was.

That was what was behind that curtain, wasn't it? The throne of God, where the cherubim were, where God dwelt, where God would commune with his people.

Yes, our hope, the writer to the Hebrews says, is an anchor of our soul, because it enters right into the presence of God himself, within the vial.

And here we have a thought, don't we? Within the vial, it's no longer a thought of fear, of not being able to go there, dare I go there? Or I could be struck down immediately. Yes, I would be, if I wasn't the high priest, entering in with blood and with incense on that one day of the year. But now I see it as a place where my security is, where my safety is.

I look at it as a place of assurance and blessing. And why?

Because I've got a forerunner. [00:48:01] Somebody's going in before me. Isn't this marvellous? A forerunner is normally someone fairly junior, who just goes in and stakes your claim to a seat or a place somewhere. And then you come in and you take it. How can it possibly be said that the Lord Jesus is my forerunner? But you know, that's what the scriptures say. He takes that place of being our forerunner. He's gone there. He's in the presence of God. And because of that, you and I know that one day we will be there with him in the presence of God as well. Even Jesus made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. It's wonderful to know the Lord Jesus is in heaven today. The high priest could never remain in that holy of holies. He always had to come out. He could never sit down. He had to stand up, do his job, and get out.

It was a holy place.

But our high priest, he's entered in, and he's stayed in.

[00:49:02] And he's sitting there. And one day we're going to be there with him in the very presence of God. So that's a wonderful hope.

It's an anchor for the soul. When we start to get worried, when we start to think that some of these who got this letter were thinking, have I made the right decision? Have I done the right thing? They're still worshipping in that temple at Jerusalem. They patched that veil up. They're still taking the sacrifices in there. Oh, and I can see the high priest. He's going in there. I've done the wrong thing. I've got nothing. I've got nothing. I can't point to anything. I can't point to a temple. I can't point to a priesthood or anything like that. I've got nothing.

But the apostle says, you've got to hope. And this is what Christianity is. Not relying upon the things which can be seen. Not relying upon symbols.

They have their value.

But they have their value in pointing to the things that really count. Pointing to the Lord Jesus. And what he's accomplished for us on the cross of Calvary. [00:50:02] And the fact that he himself, having done that, has been raised out from among the dead by the glory of the Father. He's gone back to heaven. He's seated in heaven at God's right hand. That's of infinite value. And the hope connected with that. That one day we shall be there because there's a man in the glory of heaven. Should be like an anchor. Sure and steadfast.

That keeps us from wavering. Yes, he's in there.

Within the veil. In that place which is no longer a forbidden place. No longer dare we.

No longer do we look with fear at the cherubim. We look at it as a place where our security lies. Where our heavenly home is in the very presence of God. Just briefly, Hebrews chapter 9.

We're encouraged, aren't we, here? Not only to have it as something which is a hope for us. But in this chapter we're encouraged to go in ourselves. [00:51:03] Spiritually, of course, in this verse. Hebrews chapter 10, sorry.

It says, having therefore a breath in boldness. Do you think the high priest was bold when he went into the holy place once a year? I don't think he was.

But we can have boldness to enter into the holiest. The very presence of God. By the blood of Jesus. He went in with the blood of a bullock for himself. And the blood of a goat for the people of Israel. But the blood of bulls and of goats cannot take away sins. This is the one sacrifice of which those sacrifices spoke. And because of that, God has realized, spiritually speaking now, what he always desired, to have communion with those who are his own. With those who are his people. And we are his people. And we have this privilege of entering in by anew.

Yes, the old way has been superseded. [00:52:02] Has been replaced. That's the sense of the word new here. A living way. A living way. A real way for us to enjoy. Not just once a year.

Nor just once a week on the Lord's day. Nor just once a day.

But all through the day. We can approach our Father. We can approach the presence of God. Because the Lord Jesus has consecrated this for us. Through the veil. That is to say, his flesh.

Yes, the Lord Jesus is the one who introduces us into the presence of God. It's a rent veil.

In the sense that without this work of the Lord Jesus upon the cross, we could never have entered into the presence of God. There would have always been that veil preventing us from doing that. But there's another sense here. It's also because the Lord Jesus is a man in the glory of God. He's able to lead us into the presence of God. And perhaps this is particularly the way that the writer to the Hebrews is thinking of here. [00:53:03] The Lord Jesus with all those wonderful glories. Spoken of by the blue.

And the purple. And the scarlet. And the white linen.

The Lord Jesus is fit, able.

Those seem hardly appropriate words. But you know what I say. What I mean. He is able to be the one by whom we go into the presence of God.

And he's there, it says.

A high priest over the house of God. So let's draw near.

The epistle of Hebrews is the epistle of lettuces. Let us draw near with a true heart. In full assurance

of faith. There's every encouragement to do so. Our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. Got no more conscience of sin. Sin was taken away by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus at the cross. And our blood was washed with pure water. We've been made morally right by the Lord Jesus. [00:54:03] We haven't got enough time to go into this. But this is the meaning, isn't it? Why? It says in John's gospel. That when a soldier pierced the Lord's side with a spear. There flowed out blood and water.

The death of the Lord Jesus makes us judicially right before God. But it's also the basis on which we've been made morally right with God. Which happens through new birth. But has to be maintained day by day. Through that cleansing that we spoke of in connection with John chapter 13. But that's not the point here. The point here, the writer is emphasizing our perfect acceptance before God. Judicially and morally. And as a result, he says, let us draw near with a true heart. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. May these things be true of us. May we enter into them more day by day as we wait for the Lord Jesus to come for us. Now, I would like us to sing a hymn that I used to hear on the radio amazingly. [00:55:03] This hymn used to be sung as an introduction to a program of hymn singing on the BBC.

You wouldn't believe it possible today, would you? That they would have such a hymn as 214. How blessed is our portion.

When we look upward within the veil, our life is there. Our names are written in the Lamb's own book. For grace hath made us each with Him an heir. Of all those glories which by right belong to Him.

Whose worthiness is heaven's eternal song.

Perhaps someone would start this for us. 214