

GOD WITH US - ENCOUNTER SERIES

Good morning Life Fellowship. My name is Dan and I am one of the pastors here. I want to ask your patience a little bit this morning as we get started. Many of you know I am a full time pastor and 50 to 60 hours a week is a low week for me, but I do also have a second job and am classified as a full time professor. This is why my marriage is so strong, because if I only had one job my wife would probably be looking for ways to get me out of the house, as I am a little hyper-active. But I do enjoy being a professor as my background, training and doctorate is in education.

Now when we approach the messages each week we know that sometimes we need inspiration, and sometimes we need information, so it is always a balance between inspiration and information. We want to always be practical, because if you just give information with no inspiration then you become intellectually an egghead. If you do inspiration without good information then you can become kind of a 'sloppy agape' is what I call it. And that is where you run around and do stuff, but it may not be Biblically accurate.

So we try to provide the balance, and I love the approach that this church has to Scripture. It has been part of our heritage from the very beginning. But this morning, if you will allow you, this is going to be a little information heavy, as a part of setting us up for more practical application that will inspire you in the coming weeks, because today we want to get down to the nitty gritty of what the tabernacle was all about. What it looked like, how it was furnished, and those kinds of things.

Next week we are going to look at the courtyard and the furniture there, and in the Holy Place. And the week after that we will look at the Holy of Holies which is a very, very special place. So through the month of September we are kind of focusing on the details, and then it is going to get crazy, because we are going to look at some of the spiritual Biblical applications that cross the ends of time and apply to us today.

So for today what I want to start off emphasizing is this: do you understand that from the very beginning God has desired to have a personal relationship with us? Not just an occasional encounter, but a regular presence among us. That is God's best. That is God's desire. That is God's plan. And throughout Scripture we see God's hand. Even back to the Garden of Eden remember that in Chapters 2 and 3 it says that God walked in the Garden with Adam and Eve. This was fellowship that was intimate and personal and regular. And Adam and Eve would encounter God in that way.

Then we see the fall of man and where was God after the fall? He was down in the Garden. He was calling out, '*Where are you? Do you think you can hide from me? I know what is going on.*' And God wanted Adam and Eve to sense the separation, the painful separation that came with sin. And that became part of God's plan as man had

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fallen that there would be an ongoing pursuit. God has this ongoing pursuit to encounter Him, to enjoy our fellowship with Him, to worship with Him, and to be with Him.

Then you go a few steps further and you see the story of Cain and Abel. They were encouraged to offer sacrifices as an encounter with God, but Cain messed it up and ended up murdering Abel. Sin kept getting deeper and deeper, more violent and more heart breaking until finally God had to destroy the world and then start over. And what did He do? He found the righteous family of Noah and He brought them under His protection. And in that He brought them together so they could encounter Him and His provision and His safety for them.

And it continued through the descendants beginning with Abraham and then the forefathers of Isaac and Jacob. In each of their lives God was a very real presence, with Abraham making a covenant, and then renewing the covenant through each generation. And even when they were in bondage and captivity, God didn't forget them. He raised up Moses. Moses was a symbolic leader for God.

From the depths of despair at Moses' birth thinking he was going to be murdered, to the time when God would ordain him to stand before Pharaoh, and say, *'Let me people go,* to the moment when God brought Moses up to Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights and said, *'Here is how the children of Israel will be ruled and governed. And here is the tabernacle and here is what it should look like. And here is what it means.'* And God took 40 days and 40 nights to explain that to Moses.

Then it went from the tabernacle to Solomon's temple. And then later the temple that Herod destroyed. And yet God pursued us, and God desired our presence in His realm. He desired us to meet with Him for repentance and mercy and to escape the judgment that sin brought upon us, the condemnation that now hung over us. And yet we see in the New Testament that Jesus Christ the living tabernacle came. His name literally means 'God with us,' Immanuel.

And so God brought forth His son, the mystery of the Trinity, here among us, again pursuing us, wanting us to encounter Him, and wanting us to have a relationship with Him. Christ lived, died, and rose again. And before He was taken into Heaven He told His disciples: *'Don't worry, I am not leaving you alone. I am not leaving you behind.'* And He sent the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the church so that Christ now lives within us. He is in us. He is in us individually, and He is in us corporally. The Bible says where two or more are gathered together, He is there.

So this morning you understand that this is an encounter with God. We have Him in us if we are the redeemed, if we know Him as our Savior. He is here with us today. And often we fail to appreciate that and all that it can mean. And we also know as Paul explained in Hebrews to the Hebrew Christian that there is a tabernacle in Heaven at

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whose mercy seat the blood of Christ has been applied. And because of that the veil between the Holy of Holies and the rest of the tabernacle was torn asunder forever and now we can come boldly, because the great high priest, Jesus Christ, paid the price for our sins and invites us once again to have an encounter with Him.

Do you see how much God loves you? Do you see how He has held nothing back in His radical pursuit of a relationship with those that He created in His image? When others would have said, *'Let them go; give up on them; Start over again,'* God has consistently extended His love toward us so that while we were sinners we might still have hope to be as we were originally designed and intended. That is the story, folks of the tabernacle.

And we are going to see that played out. I want to help you kind of walk through that journey, but as we do would you begin with me in Hebrews Chapter 9. We are going to read some Scriptures because sometimes people like to discount what happens in the Old Testament. But everything significant in the Old Testament was reaffirmed in the New Testament. And the tabernacle is a great example of that.

May I just say this to you in a very plain unapologetic sentence - beware of those who would say that the Old Testament is of no relevance to the New Testament church. That is heresy. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. And while not all Scripture was written directly to us, make no mistake all Scripture was written for us. And in that we need to be alert to what God was doing in the Old Testament from the earliest days of creation, to the land of Israel, to the coming of the Messiah, and to the fulfilment of the prophecies, may we see the Old Testament being reaffirmed in the New Testament. It was always God's plan, and we ought not dismiss that simply because it wasn't written specifically to us.

And so as we look at Hebrews Chapter 9 we see Paul talking to the Hebrew believers, the Jews, who were confused a little bit because all of this was new stuff to them. So Paul who had been a member of the Sanhedrin, which if you kind of put them into a political sense, they were the big religious mucky mucks. They were the big dogs. There were Pharisees and they were kind of important. There were Sadducees that were even more important. And out of the Sadducees you had the Sanhedrin. These were well educated, articulate masters of the Jewish law which was very complex, very complicated, and very strict.

Paul was of that ilk, he was high in that echelon, he was specifically trained to be able to defend Judaism, and yet he converted because he encountered Christ on the Damascus Road. So Saul the Sanhedrin member, the Sadducee, became the apologist for the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Jews. And we see how he explains it here in Hebrews.

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So read along silently as I begin reading this passage in verse 1 of Chapter 9 where Paul says this: *“Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place.*

Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, having the golden altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which were a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. By this the Holy spirit indicates that the way into the holy place is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age.)

According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

Now I will just say up front that Hebrews is a challenging book. You read that and you may think, ‘*Well, that was interesting, but I don’t have a clue what you just read.*’ And that’s okay because you are going to be getting it through this series. And again, sometimes you have to bear down and comprehend, but remember Paul here is talking to Jews; Jews who understood all this symbolism and all these things that were part of their culture. This is like us saying the Pledge of Alliance and standing when the flag is raised. This is like knowing where the capital of our state is located. These Jews understood the details that Paul is talking about.

And now all of a sudden they hear this radical proposal that everyone has this direct access to God? Hang on just a moment - how can that be? They have always had to go through the priests. The great high priest would go in once a year and take a bowl

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of blood to offer for the sins of the people. He takes some of the blood and places it on a goat and then the goat is released into the wilderness, and that goat symbolizes the fact that our sins are removed. In fact that goat was called a scapegoat, and we still use that term today without even knowing that it came from this.

So when Paul is explaining this to all of the Jews it resonates with them. We want to help you to understand why it resonates, and what we can learn. But more importantly we want you to understand God's wonderful grand design for our redemption. Don't lose sight of that, because in every aspect of the tabernacle, we see messages from God.

I want to take some time this morning and kind of look at the facets and features of how the tabernacle came to be, where it originated, and why it was designed in the way that it was. In doing that, I hope to lay this foundation to set you up to understand even the deeper symbolisms that we are going to be exploring, as we go through the individual areas, and also through the individual pieces of furniture over the next several weeks, because each of these are rife and rich with symbols of how much God wants to have an encounter with us.

Let's begin by considering the architect. Part of my responsibilities here over the years has included getting us into a permanent facility. One of the things I said to Pastor Bobby early on was that one of my goals, one of my reasons that I believe God brought me here to be part of this church was to make sure that we could have our permanent facility, because we had spent twelve years as nomads, so to speak, in the Havana Social Club and in Community School of Davidson.

I was joking with one of the guys last week who used to help us set up and tear down and he said, *'You know, a little bit of me misses being able to do that.'* And I said, *'Really, I think you are insane. You need a medical doctor.'* But he liked doing that and I didn't understand that at all. The fact is that was hard, it was tough.

And one of the steps to being able to get us a permanent building was to find an architect. So we found a couple of guys by the name of Sandy Gibbs and Dave Benham who worked for a firm in Greenville, South Carolina. They built churches so we made a contractual arrangement with them. And they came, they toured, they asked us questions, they visited our services and they began looking at the design. They wanted to create space that would serve our philosophy and style of ministry, and they did a wonderful job of it. We are blessed by that today.

But wow, what a job it was for the architects to be able to design this building. Interestingly, the first week we were in here Sandy Gibbs, who now has his own firm in Greenville, walked in and immediately goes, *'That's wrong.'* He walked right in and said, *'That's wrong. There should be a pillar there right outside the door in the lobby. They missed that pillar.'* And I said, *'Really?'* Sandy gets his phone out and looks up

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documents and the next thing you know he has people on the phone who are to come out here and put that pillar up. Now the pillar was an artificial thing but he said without that pillar it would be out of balance and it would drive him nuts if he don't get it fixed. And I like that kind of thinking, because you aim for OCD in an architect, right? So we got that fixed.

Do you know why Sandy Gibbs noticed that when he first walked in? It was because he was the designer, he was the architect. It had been conceived in his mind. And the architect for the tabernacle was no other than God Himself. I want you to understand that. The architect of the tabernacle, and the symbolism, and all of the elements that we are going to be looking at comes from the mind of God, not the mind of Moses, not the mind of Abraham, not the mind of the priests, not the mind of a conglomeration of religious leaders, but it came from God Himself, to the point that God personally dictated the plans to Moses.

Now, it would be interesting to do, but we can't go through all the Scripture about the tabernacle as this isn't a classroom. But I would encourage you to look at the references this week. And by the way, I hope you do understand that part of what I am hoping we accomplish in this is that you go home and study this deeper, because there is lots of material out there to study. This is just supposed to be the appetizer; we are supposed to make you hungry for more when you go home.

I mean you can look at me and know that I don't eat just once a week. That is very obvious. And we know that no one that is healthy eats only once a week. Now you come to church and you get fed, and maybe you even go to a Bible study here or there, or to a Life Group, but the best nutrition you will ever eat, and the healthiest you will ever be spiritually is when you are daily in the word. So use the services as inspiration to go deeper into the word. And interestingly you will see when God told us how He created the heavens and the earth, when God told us how He made the planet, when God told us how He put all the living things here, when God told us how He created man in His image - do you know how long it took Him to tell us that in Scripture? It was just one chapter.

And we understand that the chapters were not inspired by God; those were put there by men for our convenience. And if you really want to stretch it out a little bit, it might include Chapters 1 and 2 and a little bit of Chapter 3. But really it was just one chapter, just a little section.

By the way do you know how long it took God to give the details for just the tabernacle and the furniture in Scripture? It took six chapters. Go to Exodus Chapter 35 and start reading and you will be there for six full chapters of incredible detail. Do you think the passage we just read was detailed? That was nothing compared to those six

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chapters in Exodus. And when you see all that God gave them in terms of their civil laws, and their religious laws, and all the different details of the priests and the tribes and their functions, that story is much of the Pentateuch. Much of the first five books of the Bible consist of those details of heredity and all of God's plans.

Understand God has in a masterful way designed the path for our redemption. That is His heart. That is His desire. How dare we take that casually. How dare we make that common. How dare we think that is just ritual, that it is just organized religion. No, no, no this comes from the very heart of the one who not only created us but then He redeemed us. He brought us into existence and He has pursued us from that day to this day.

And understand this is just the beginning. This is just the anteroom, the vestibule, the lobby of all eternity, and God's best awaits us apart from our current state. We ought to celebrate that. We ought to be excited about that. (*Applause.*) We ought to anticipate and embrace that. By His spoken word God created the heavens and the earth, and then He has spent the rest of Scripture explaining how we can be restored and united with Him.

Make no mistake the tabernacle was not a man conceived building through human reasoning. Its origin was from heaven and the architect was none other than Jehovah, Yahweh, God Himself, the great I am. He planned how it was positioned to the design of everything from the smallest clasps that were used to attach the different panels of curtains every five feet or so, to every color, every piece of the fabric, and every style of fabric. He planned from the tiniest detail for preparation by the service priest who ministered in the holy place to the tiniest detail for the cleanliness and the ritual for preparation for the high priest.

And once a year this high priest would enter that sacred room called the Holy of Holies, or as Paul referred to it as the Holiest Place, where their annual ritual was given to remind them of their need for redemption. The sacrifice was offered once a year for the sins of priests and for sins even unacknowledged and for which they were unaware. And if the priest messed up in the slightest bit the consequences were fatal. God gave them every single detail from His own mind.

And so from the awesome and fearful Mercy Seat to the place where the animals were slaughtered and bled out and burned, to the last button on the robe of the priests, to the last ritual that they would perform, every single last minute detail was designed and directed by God.

And while it was designed by God, there was an earthly component, and we understand that, because this was made of materials that were gathered from the children of Israel. But I want you to note this, even though God designed how those materials

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would be given, remember these were nomads. They had just escaped hundreds of years of bondage and slavery and they had just fled Egypt. But before they fled God said: *'You are going to get your back pay, folks. You have been slaving out here in this hot Egyptian desert under the hot sun building the empire of the Egyptians. So when you leave you need to get their gold, their silver, their precious fabrics and jewels. And you are to carry it away with you because you have earned it.'*

And that is what they did. And it is from that that the children of Israel gave to the process of building the tabernacle. So it was designed by God but joined by His people. And remember that is part of salvation. God supernaturally does what ONLY God can do, and then He invites His people to do what God has designed for them to do. And in doing so, we fulfil His plan and His grand design.

So if the architect was God now who was the general contractor? The general contractor was Moses. Whenever we got ready to build this building, we had to pick a general contractor, and so we picked Edifice Construction. Edifice Construction has built many of the schools and many of the churches in the area. They are a huge multifaceted conglomerate that involves different things, but they have a division that just builds churches. We worked with a couple of guys that were believers and were wonderful men and they did a great job of following through with us.

We also hired one of our own guys who also is an architect, by the name of Todd Johnson, and he was here in our first service today. He is a great guy except for the fact that he is a Clemson grad. Now I have just lost about two-thirds of my audience so I'm sorry about that. But Todd watched the architect and he served as our project manager on our behalf. And in doing so the general contractor made sure they ordered the materials, and that they followed the plans down to the smallest detail. And before we wrote the final check to them we had an inspection where we checked every little jot and tittle all over this place until it found to be just as it was supposed to be constructed by the designers. And it was then declared complete and the payment was made.

But boy, being that general contractor was a tough job. And Moses had that job to do with the tabernacle. Now Moses was a special man and God anointed him, but understand that he was also a very ordinary guy. We see him from his earliest days as an infant where he was marked for slaughter by the Pharaoh who was trying to reduce the number of male Jews. So he had ordered the murder of the Jewish male babies as soon as they were born. Moses was marked for death, but his mother hid him in a basket in the bulrushes of the river. The Pharaoh's daughter found him there, and he was taken into the palace to be brought up as the son of the Pharaoh.

And understand that God in supernatural ways will pluck you out of whatever condition you may find yourself in so that He can use you in the way that He has

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designed you to be used. Moses grew up in the house of the Pharaoh, but he still seemed bent on messing things up because one day he lost his cool and he killed an Egyptian. He knew that the wrath of the Egyptian government would be brought upon him, so he fled for his life. He went to the back side of the wilderness and he stayed there for 40 years.

Do you think the things that he learned there might have been helpful to the children of Israel when they were fleeing Egypt? You see even in our punishment we can learn things that God can eventually use. And so while Moses was back in the wilderness for 40 years God did a work in his life. And one day through a burning bush He called him into ministry. Moses made every excuse he could think of. *'I can't speak articulately.'* God told him he had his brother for that. *'Well, no one is going to follow me, because I am nothing.'* And God told him to throw down his staff and it turned into a snake.

By the way if that had been me I would have gone screaming across the wilderness like a five year old girl. That would have been the end of it for me because I would have died of a heart attack right there. And God would have had to use someone else. Then God told Moses to pick up the snake. And again if I had been still alive I would have said this, *'God, I can't speak very well, and apparently right now I can't hear very well either, because I thought I heard you tell me to pick that thing up.'*

But Moses picked it up, and it turned right back into the staff, and that became the symbol of God's authority through the person of Moses as he led his people to freedom. He stood before Pharaoh and said, *'Let my people go,'* but Pharaoh hardened his heart time after time after time for a total of ten times. God continued to reveal His authority and His people were finally released after the last plague. That was when all the firstborns were to die, except for those who had placed the blood of the unblemished lamb over their doorposts. The blood was the symbol of God's protection, and the death angel passed over those houses where the blood had been applied. But it didn't pass over Pharaoh's house because he didn't believe. And so Pharaoh's house suffered a tragic loss, and finally Pharaoh threw up his hands because he couldn't fight Moses' God any longer, and he let the people go.

The Israelites left Egypt until they came to the Red Sea when they realized that Pharaoh's army was coming after them to take them back. The people thought they were about to be slaughtered, but Moses once again took the staff and placed it over the Sea and it parted. Later when the people were thirsty Moses struck the rock in disobedience, but the rock still produced water so they could drink. They had manna and quail for food and God protected them.

Moses went up to Mount Sinai for 40 days where God gave him the instructions for the tabernacle and for how the people should be governed. When Moses came down

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he led his people to the next step of their development. Moses was a flawed man, in fact he was so flawed he didn't get to go into the Promised Land himself, because of his own rebellious and sin. But God uses us, not because of what we bring to the table, He uses us in spite of our sin. He uses us whenever we don't want to be used. He uses us wherever we are at His pleasure as we yield. And we have to remember that. God is not limited by what we lack. God is glorified by using us right where we are at if we willingly submit to His plan.

Moses submitted, and he became the general contractor for the dwelling place of God. Now we need to remember this because this is really cool - God revealed Himself to Moses and the children of Israel by a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. Anyone would be able to look around in the encampment and be reminded of God's presence as the pillar stood over the tabernacle. They could see that God was with them. And what an encouragement that must have been for the people. In the midst of 20 - 30 - 35 - 38 - 40 years of being in the wilderness, the one thing they could always be assured of was by just looking up they could be reminded that God was with them.

And ladies and gentlemen, may I say this to you, if you have asked Christ into your heart, if you have repented of your sins and trust in Him and Him alone for eternal life, God is with you. And all you have to do is remember and look in the word of God and know the Holy Spirit lives in you. We can be reminded that God is not finished with us yet, that there is something great for us to perform, that His work is going to be completed in us as we are discipled and as we submit, yield, serve and encounter Him on a daily basis. And that journey on which He has us, that story which He is still writing about us, will be completed by Him as we obey.

There is an old hymn we used to sing when I was growing up called, 'Trust and Obey.' *'Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.'* God has a plan for your life, and He wants to complete it.

So let's look at the measurements of the tabernacle real quickly. Lots of people have asked, *'How big was this thing?'* I think sometimes we have in our minds that it had to be huge, like the Parthenon or the Acropolis or something like that, but it really wasn't. It was about half the size of a football field. I say football field because all red blooded Americans can absolutely relate to that, right? *(No.)* No, well we must have a baseball fan here on the front row, and she needs to get saved I am telling you right now. *(Laughter.)*

Now half of a football field would be about 150 feet long and about 75 feet wide and that was the size of the tabernacle. So in other words it wasn't huge, but we have to remember that this was portable. The other thing is it was surrounded by this big curtain. Maybe you wonder how tall the curtain was, so it was about seven and a half

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feet tall. Now I'm not nearly that tall. I got ripped off because my dad was six feet three inches tall, but my mom was only five feet two inches. And I'm a momma's boy, okay. Brad Schmidt was here earlier and he is about twelve feet tall I think. He had to reach down to show me how high seven and a half feet was.

But if you were six feet tall and you had long arms the curtain would be about to the tip of your fingers. And the reason for that is most people wouldn't be able to look over the curtain. The curtain was for privacy because what was going on inside the curtain was very important. It was for the private worship of the Lord. So the curtain was about seven and a half feet tall.

We read that it was supported by 60 pillars, 20 on each side and 10 on each end. And on the east side there was a gate that was 25 feet wide. So all of it looked the same except for the east side where there was a beautiful ornate gate made of curtains. By the way, there were four layers of coverings of badger and rams skins dyed white and fine linen. So there were all these different layers to kind of protect it from the brutal sun of the desert and there was a beautiful woven curtain on the eastern side.

Maybe you wonder why the gate was on the eastern side because that may seem kind of unusual. But there was a reason. Remember when Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden, what direction did God expel them? It was to the east of Eden. They had to leave the Garden by the east. Anytime we run from God we run east, but when we approach God we enter from the east toward the west. The tabernacle was set up so that the Holy of Holies was on the west side and they had to enter the courtyard through the eastern gate.

By the way if you look at Biblical prophecy, where will the Messiah return into Jerusalem when He comes again? When Christ comes again it will be through the eastern gate. If you have ever been to Israel, and to old Jerusalem, you will see that the eastern gate is completely blocked over. Because Satan thinks that the Lord will be stopped by blocks - that is a serious underestimation going on there.

And then this is even funnier - the Muslims for hundreds of years have buried their dead in front of the eastern gate because no Jewish religious holy man is allowed to walk through a cemetery, so they think they have a double protection. They have blocked up the gate and they are burying their dead there. As if God will be confined by that! I am looking forward to seeing what He does at that cemetery. I don't know whether he is going to just part it or not, but something big is going to happen, because He is returning through that eastern gate according to the prophecy in the word of God. So the eastern significance should not be lost on us.

Let's look at some of the materials very quickly. The materials were collected through offerings. There was one offering that was very particular. It was the offering

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that was used for the bases of each pole that was built, and every pole was to have a silver base. And those bases were built from a special offering, or actually it was a tax. Every person 20 years old and older, both male and female, had to give a half shekel of silver. And that was exactly enough to build these bases. And that half shekel was applied equally to all the people.

And we need to remember how the land at the foot of the cross is equal. Everybody, yes everybody, gets to Christ through the same way, through the blood that He shed. You can be rich, you can be poor, you can be famous, you can be male, you can be female, none of that matters. It is the same for everyone.

But the rest of the materials for the tabernacle were received through an offering. There were several different kinds of offerings. They needed gold so they would have an offering of gold, and they collected 2,800 pounds of gold. By the way gold in Scripture always stands for deity, and that is why it was on the Ark of the Covenant. That was why it was on special parts of the furniture, because it stood for the holiness, the deity, the significance, and the sovereignty of God.

And then there was a silver offering consisting of 9,600 pounds of silver that was given. That is a lot of silver. And by the way silver is always a picture of redemption. It was often used to redeem people. The wealthiest people had gold, the common people had silver. And remember that Jesus was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. And it was part of the redemptive plan, so there is always a picture of redemption in Scripture with silver. Then there was a bronze offering consisting of 6,700 pounds. And bronze is always a picture of judgment which we can see in Daniel and in several other passages of Scripture where bronze was a symbol of judgement.

And there were offerings of different materials. There was blue thread which was a symbol of heaven. The purple thread was a symbol of royalty. The scarlet thread was a symbol of sacrifice, because without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sin. Then there were the fine linens, and fine linens were always bleached very white which was a symbol of purity. It was what was to be worn for sacred moments like marriages and so forth.

And then there was the goats' hair offering, which wasn't pretty. And that was a symbol of the sin offering, because a goat would be slaughtered to be offered once a year as a sacrifice. And then there were rams' skins that were dyed scarlet. The reason for that was to remember Abraham when he was getting ready to offer up his son, Isaac, and they needed a substitution for the sacrifice. And God provided a ram whose blood was shed. Again the ram skins dyed scarlet were a symbol of substitutionary sacrifice.

Badger skins were to be used to be the outer layer because they would protect against the onslaught of the elements. And they were unattractive, but they were

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protective. Remember how in Isaiah Chapter 53 Jesus is described as brutalized and unattractive; but in His brokenness and His defacement He redeemed us. So the badger skins were an important symbol as well. Next they needed acacia wood, and in Scripture the other word for that is shittim wood. Depending on what version of the Bible you are using, it can be either acacia or shittim wood, which was a very, very hard wood that doesn't get eaten by insects. And it does not rot, but can stand for centuries and centuries. Again this is the idea of being incorruptible and indestructible before the Lord.

Oil is the picture of the Holy Spirit. Spices picture the sweet smelling prayers of the believers and also of sacrifices. Stones picture the twelve tribes of Israel. So all of these materials had this rich, rich imagery to them.

And then who were the ministers? Well, the ministers were the priests. And there were two classifications of priests. There was the general classification, which was the regular routine priests, members of the tribe of Levi, and they would perform most of the duties. But then out of them there was a second classification, and that was the high priest. There was only one high priest, and he was the only one who could go into the Holy of Holies, and we will explain more about that later in this series.

There was also the furniture in the tabernacle. And as we look at the furniture we want you to know that each one of the pieces of furniture will be explored later in this series, because we want you to understand that each one has a huge part in the symbolism that was there. There was the Altar of Sacrifice where the lambs, oxen, goats, pigeons and doves were slaughtered. There were five things that could be offered on the Altar of Sacrifice.

There was the Brazen Laver which was where the blood was cleaned from the hands of the priests. This was made from mirrors that ladies of Israel had brought out of Egypt. They didn't have glass then, but it was polished brass that was melted and made into the Brazen Laver. From there you went inside, and there was the Golden Candlestick sometimes called a menorah, but it was really a candlestick. A menorah is a different term. The candlestick had seven candles, and seven symbolized the number of perfection.

Across the way from there was the Table of Shewbread, and on that were twelve loaves of bread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. And the priest would eat this bread. The bread could not have leaven in it because leaven was the picture of sin. Leaven comes from decay and God is not a part of decay because He is eternal. So the twelve loaves were unleavened.

Then there was the Altar of Incense which was right before the Holy of Holies. That was where the beautiful oils and spices were burned to bless the room. Remember on the outside it stunk from the death and blood of the animals as they writhed in pain

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and died. It was not pretty; it was messy. But once they got on the inside the atmosphere changed because the sacrifice had been made. So inside the altar of incense made the air smell like oils and spices.

Finally, further inside was the Ark of the Covenant. And this was a special box that contained three things that represented God's provision, protection and providence in their lives. And that included the Ten Commandment tablets, Aaron's rod that budded, and a bowl of manna that never decayed. Those three things symbolized God's provision and protection, and the people were reminded what was in the Ark of the Covenant. Above that was the Mercy Seat, where the two cherubim's met. And we will explore that later in the series as well, and the symbolism there.

Those were the seven pieces of furniture found in the tabernacle. Now as we look at the offerings we need to remember that there were five offerings. They had the sin offering and the guilt offering. The sin offering and the guilt offering were the reminders that Christ would bear the sins of a broken, guilty world. Then there were three other offerings - a burnt offering, a grain offering and a peace offering. And we will look at those later as well, but they basically remind us of how our relationship with God has been restored and the privilege of our encounter with Him.

So these are the facets of the tabernacle. And what is the purpose again? Well, remember Pastor Ben last week just gave us this wonderful challenge. The tabernacle was a proclamation of the Savior, it was a declaration. It declared who Jesus was, who God was, how much He loves us and how He desires us to know Him, and to be known by Him. The tabernacle was also a place where people could encounter God, and that resulted in transformation. When you have an encounter with the real and living God you will never be the same. And it was a place where people could encounter God, receive forgiveness, and be a part of His family.

The Bible says this in Romans Chapter 12 and verses 1 and 2: ***"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."*** How does that transformation occur? It is with the renewing of our mind. And when does that occur? It is when we present our bodies a living sacrifice.

The tabernacle was also a call to worship, a call to sacrifice. And that was that restorative action that allowed us to be in the presence of God. In the Old Testament it was symbolic, but in the New Testament it was completed when Christ gave His life by shedding His blood for us. And so our relationship with our creator has been restored.

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Finally, the tabernacle was a guide to knowing God's will and plan that gives us a mission that puts us on track. God did not save us to rest on our laurels. God did not save us to be occupants of space. God saved us for the mission that He designed for us before the foundations of the world. When we were in our mother's wombs being knit together God had a plan for each of us. It may not be a Moses' plan, it may be a different plan, but God does have a plan for all of us.

So for us, what are we to consider? First of all let me ask you this - do we embrace the luxurious messiness of the gospel? You see for those who don't take time to learn and study and explore, they can look at this and say, '*That's odd. That's strange. That's bizarre.*' But we need to stop and consider, below the superficial glancing at life that most do, the celebrity worship and the superficial game playing that most of us do, and we need to ask the hard questions like - '*Why am I here? How did I get here? How do I know anything at all? What is truth? How do I know it? Where do I go when I die?*'

Those are the big questions of life, and when you stop and explore those the Scripture unfolds and answers every single question. And I want to say to you who are searching, you are on that journey, hang on, because it is a great, great walk. And at the end you will stand before your Creator and you will be part of His family, redeemed. For us who know Him already, embrace the luxurious wealth, holiness and depth of love of God in the midst of a world that is broken and screaming in pain. Yes, it is luxurious and it is messy, but it is God's plan.

Secondly, do you see yourself as a pilgrim on a journey into eternity with your Creator Redeemer? There is an old song that goes: '*This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.*' That's an old gospel song we used to sing that I have never forgotten. And it is because it has reminded me constantly that while I am proud to be an American, I still like to tell people I am a Missourian, a Floridian and a North Carolinian, having spent a third of my life in each place. And I like to identify this afternoon as a Panthers fan.

I have all these identities, but here is what I really am - I nothing more than a pilgrim who is on his way to the permanence of my eternity with my Lord and Savior. The flag I will always salute first and foremost is the flag of my Savior who loved me enough to die for me. This world is not my home. When you realize that you are not going to want to cling to the things here as much as prepare for the things there. So hold the things of this world lightly, and grasp the things of God firmly, and don't let them be taken from your clutch.

Finally and most importantly, have you ever had that mercy seat life giving encounter? Have you had moment when you realized that Jesus paid it all? His blood was placed in Heaven on that holy altar and we have been pronounced forgiven because

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of the blood of the lamb of God, Jesus Christ. And in that is the hope of our salvation. The tabernacle portrays that. Jesus completed that. And until we have that moment we are incomplete before God, separated from Him. And if you don't know your God, your Creator, if you don't know where you are going when you die, if you are lost and confused and searching for reality, we invite you today to have a mercy seat encounter with God. We invite you to ask the tough questions, and we will open the word of God so you can read it for yourself. And God will do in your life when no man can do. He will illuminate His truth, He will call you to repentance, and He will give you eternal life. We invite you to do that today.

And at that moment everything changes. You are no longer a sinner before Him, you are a son. To us you are a saint, to Him you are a son, and you are no longer a sinner. His interaction with you will be on a completely different plane. We don't need a priest because Jesus is our high priest. When you become part of the family of God it is what we call the priesthood of the believer, because now we can come boldly unto the throne of grace and obtain mercy, because when Jesus died on the cross and paid our price the veil to the Holy of Holies was torn apart. Jesus is our great high priest.

The imagery of the tabernacle is now complete in Heaven as it was in earth. That is our hope. That is our plan. That is why we study this structure. Let it draw us closer to God. Let us encounter He who loved you enough to create you and redeem you. Let's stand as we pray.

Father, we love you and we love your word. We love your complexity. We love your detail. And we are grateful for your plan for us. And now, Father, as we transition to this final part of the service I pray that you will give us a moment where your Holy Spirit is very real to us. Call us to repentance, call us to reconciliation, call us to restoration. And Father, for those who do not know you, call them to the mercy seat that they might find your grace and be part of your family. Help us to step into that next place by trusting Christ as our Savior, asking for the forgiveness of sins, and trusting you and you alone for the eternal life that only you can give. For it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.