

YOUR FIRST DAY IN HEAVEN

Message 2

5839

INTRO: We are in the second message on the title, "Your First Day In Heaven." In the first message I gave some introductory matters. I gave you some reasons why I hesitated to give this message, and then that I had now decided to do at least several messages. I said that a key concept important to understanding our subject was an understanding of the altar in our passage.

We looked at the setting of Revelation 6:9-11. Revelation 1 is an introduction to the book. Chapters 2-3 deal with the Church. Chapters 4-5 take us to heaven and prepare us for the opening of a book that is in heaven. We saw that no one in heaven, on earth or under the earth was found worthy to open this book, and the Apostle John wept much about that. And then one of the elders came to assure him that One had been found who was worthy to open the book, and it was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David had prevailed to open the book.

I mentioned that it is held by some that this is the title deed to the world. If it is that, I do not know, what I know is that it reveals what is contained in the rest of the book of Revelation, which is everything that follows the Church age. In chapters 6-19 we have the tribulation period that we believe not far before us now.

This book had seven seals, of which 6 are opened in chapter 6. Five of those six, numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 show us what happens on earth. Number one shows us how the tribulation begins and number six shows us how it closes. And sandwiched in between 4 and 6 we have seal number 5 which shows us what takes place in heaven and it is this seal we want to look at.

So let us read Revelation 6:9-11 now. It says, *When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a*

little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

It is my view that an understanding of the altar of this passage is crucial to our view of heaven. And so, in the messages before us we want to look at three points: 1 How the believer arrives at the altar; 2 What happens at the altar; and 3 What happens after the altar. As I thought this all over, I thought the first point should be, "The Altar At Which the Believer Arrives." So we will have four points instead of three.

Turn to Revelation 6. Before we look at this altar, we will begin where it all begins, and that is how it is that the believer arrives at this altar in the first place.

I. THE ALTAR AT WHICH THE BELIEVER ARRIVES

A. Proposition # 1

I want to begin by making a proposition to you. It is this: the OT tabernacle, and later the temple, were a picture of heaven. Over the centuries many studies have been done on the tabernacle. If you want some idea of that, check it on the internet. Many books have been written specifically about the tabernacle, and I have numerous books that deal especially with the tabernacle. There is an amazing amount of information available on all of this.

I did not find much support in this thought from others. Although I did not do extensive research on omniscient Google, I did find one writer who insisted that the tabernacle, and the later temple were a prototype of heaven. Personally, I have no question that that is exactly what it is.

B. Proposition # 2

The second proposition I want to make is that the tabernacle which was set up on earth was designed after the pattern of the real tabernacle which is in heaven. Now I have so much support from others I will only give some as we go along. Some of you will remember some of this

because I have covered a little of it in messages I did in the past.

Turn to Exodus 25. I want to show you where the idea of a tabernacle comes from. In Exodus 25 God instructed Moses how the tabernacle was to be built (read 1-9).

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

2 "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.

3 "And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze;

4 "blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair;

5 "ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood;

6 "oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense;

7 "onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate.

8 "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.

9 "According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.

What I want you to notice is that God showed Moses a pattern. Where did this pattern come from? Here we are told of a pattern which Moses was to follow. And our question is, where did this pattern come from? And of course, we know, it came from God. But there is more to it.

Well, turn now to Hebrews 8. The book of Hebrews has much to say about the OT and the tabernacle. We'll read verses 1-5, "1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the

right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man."

So, we need to note that there is a true tabernacle. This is the real thing of which the earthly was but a shadow. It was a copy. But note most carefully that this tabernacle was erected by God. That means it did not always exist. And we ask, when was it erected? All of the tabernacle deals with the separation between God and man which was brought about by sin. And the tabernacle is a complete picture of how man can come back into a relationship with God Almighty. We will see this as we go along. So, if it was made because of sin and shows to man the way of salvation, when was it made? Well, I think it is without doubt, it was built when Adam and Eve sinned.

If that is true, then it should also be true that when sin is finally and fully dealt with, that there should be no more need for the tabernacle. Before we look at that, let me give you the Greek word for the tabernacle. Actually, there are two. There is the *naos*, which refers to the buildings two rooms, the Holy place and the most holy place. Then there was the *skeenee*, which refers to the movable building, not the permanent temple which was constructed in Jerusalem. The temple contained the *naos*, but it was now no longer movable. Where was it? In Jerusalem. Jerusalem is also the final resting place for the city in heaven.

So go now to the book of Revelation, chapter 21 (read verses 1-2), "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." In chapters 21-22 we have reached the final state. This is how it will be for all eternity.

Now look at verse 22, "But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." So, the temple in heaven was built when man sinned, and it will no

longer be needed when sin has been finally and fully dealt with. That happens at the end of Revelation 21.

Let us continue now in verse 3, "3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. 4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

So we notice in verse 5 that the tabernacle on earth was a copy and shadow of heavenly things, and that Moses was divinely instructed to make the tabernacle according to this divine copy.

Now if you have a copy of something, the copy is not the real thing. It is a copy. It was a copy and the earthly tabernacle was a shadow. A shadow is not the real thing either. It is but a shadow of the real thing. And so Moses was to make the tabernacle according to the divine copy.

We might ask, why did God Himself build this temple? It is because only He could provide a way of salvation. Man could have nothing to do with it; not then, and not now. It is all of God. He provided the way. Man now is accountable to come to God on God's terms, and none of those are meritorious. Both repentance and faith are not works, nor meritorious.

We go now to Hebrews 9 for a most important passage on our subject. We begin in verse 1:

1 ¶ Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.

2 For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary;

3 and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All,

4 which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant;

5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

6 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services.

7 But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance;

Now as we go, you will notice all of this has to do with sin and how sin is dealt with. Into the Holy of Holies, only the High Priest entered, and that, only once a year, on the highest and holiest day of Israel, the day of atonement. This day is all about atonement, appeasement, or satisfaction for sin.

By the way, the commentator John Gill says this, "Josephus... when speaking of the most holy place; ... says, that it was inaccessible to the priests, that it might be as heaven to God" (Gill on Heb. 9:24).

We go on in verse 8:

8 ¶ the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.

9 It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience -

10 concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and that only once a year. And here he made atonement for the nation of Israel. This is, to this day, the highest and holiest day of the year for Israel. John Gill, quotes Josephus who says of the Holy of Holies, and I quote, "... that it was inaccessible to the priests, that it might be as heaven to God." He touches on the idea I have presented to you.

But Jesus Christ entered the Most Holy Place in heaven with His own blood, once for all. Oh, the picture is so very perfect!

We go in verse 13:

13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,

14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

15 ¶ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

16 For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

17 *For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.*

18 *Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood.*

19 *For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,*

20 *saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you."*

21 *Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.*

22 *And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.*

23 ¶ *Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*

The earthly copies were purified with blood, but the heavenly was purified by Jesus Christ when He entered the most Holy place in heaven with His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

We go on now in verse 24:

24 *For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;*

And where did Christ appear? In the Holy of Holies, the place where God Himself dwells in the real heaven and in the true temple. Heaven is our topic.

We go on in verse 25:

25 *not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of*

another – 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Christ appeared in heaven with the sacrifice of Himself, once for all. It is now, and in this context that we have this much used verse, verse 27:

27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."

The copies on earth of this true house of God which is in heaven, were sprinkled with blood again and again and again. Blood ran like water here. But the heavenly sanctuary, Jesus' Father's house in heaven, not the copies but the real thing, received a better sacrifice.

What is the conclusion? That the real tabernacle is in heaven. The one on earth was only a copy and a shadow of the real thing.

As I was researching all this I came across a very interesting message done by Dr. C. L. Cagan, and recorded on a large site on the internet. The message was preached September 19, 2015. I want to read an extended portion of that for you because he says things worth listening to. He says:

What was the pattern God gave to Moses? What was this architectural plan? The Tabernacle was built to follow the pattern of the temple in Heaven. Yes, the Bible tells us there is a temple in Heaven. It says, "The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament" (Revelation 11:19). There is a temple in Heaven, with an Ark of the Covenant (the word "testament" means "covenant") inside it. The Tabernacle on earth was built as its copy. The Bible says, "The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened... And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power" (Revelation 15:5, 8). God's presence dwells in the temple in Heaven, just as it dwelled in the Tabernacle on earth.

There is a temple in Heaven. And God told Moses to build the Tabernacle following the "pattern" of that temple. He told Moses, "See...that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Hebrews 8:5).

Someone may say, "How do you know there's a temple in Heaven? I've never seen it." No one here tonight has seen the temple in Heaven. How do we know about it?

That takes us into the subject of epistemology. "Epistemology" is a word in philosophy. It is the subject of how we know things. **How** do we know what we know? How do we know about Heaven? One person says one thing, and another says something else. You see it everywhere. People talk like they're experts, but they don't know much. But people talk about Heaven all the time.

Right now there's a movie showing in theaters called "90 Minutes in Heaven." It's about a man who says he died in a car accident and went up to Heaven. There he met his dead great-grandmother and got to sing in a heavenly choir. After all that he came back to earth. Don't go to see that kind of silly junk! Last year there was a film called "Heaven is For Real." It was about a child who said he went up to Heaven while he was having surgery. There he met his dead great-grandfather, his dead sister, and Jesus. I'm glad I didn't see it!

A few years ago I met a woman who told me that for forty nights Jesus woke her up, took her to Hell, and then brought her back to her bedroom. She told her story in a book called "A Divine Revelation of Hell." A lot of people bought that book. People tell so many stories. People say they saw a light as they were dying and then came back. Some say one thing, and some another. But how do we **know** about Heaven?

Most people go by their feelings and experiences. Others follow their own minds. If they can't understand something, they reject it. They don't care that God said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" (Isaiah 55:8). They don't care that God said, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways,

and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). They forget that God is smarter than any of us. So if they don't understand something, they throw it out! That's what theological liberals do. If they don't understand what the Bible says, or don't want to believe it, they reject it! They trust in their minds and not in God.

Dr. John MacArthur is one of them. Our text says that God told Moses to build the Tabernacle "according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Hebrews 8:5). Dr. MacArthur doesn't understand this, so he rejects it. When he read that verse, he said,

"This does not mean that there are actual buildings in heaven which were copied in the tabernacle, but rather that the heavenly realities were adequately symbolized and represented in the earthly tabernacle model" (**The MacArthur Study Bible**; note on Hebrews 8:5).

Dr. MacArthur says there are no "buildings in heaven," even though the Bible tells us there's a temple there. How does he know? He's never been there. He trusts his own mind. If he doesn't understand something, he rejects it... Just what **does** he believe is in Heaven? Empty space? At least that's something he can understand. But empty space can't wash away sin. It is only the Blood of Jesus that "cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7).

Some people trust their feelings and experiences. Some people trust their minds. But how **can** we know about Heaven? What knowledge can we have?

We **do** have a trustworthy source of knowledge! God has given it to us Himself in the Bible! In the Scriptures we have a "more sure word of prophecy" (II Peter 1:19). The Bible isn't a set of things that people made up a long time ago. The Apostle Peter wrote, "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation [not what someone thought]. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man [not what people made up]: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost [what God moved them to write]" (II Peter 1:20-21).

We **can** know about Heaven - we know what God has revealed to us in the Bible. But we cannot

know **more** about Heaven than what God has told us in the Scriptures. All we know about the heavenly temple is what the Bible tells us about it. And the only way we know the true meaning of the Tabernacle on earth is what the Bible tells us. The Bible answers the question of epistemology -**how** do we know what we know? We know because God tells us in the Scriptures! In the Reformation, this doctrine was called **sola scriptura** - which means "the Scripture alone." We get our knowledge about spiritual things from the Bible - and **only** from the Bible!"

So we can conclude that there is a real, literal, physical tabernacle in heaven, and it served as the pattern for the earthly one. William R. Newell, commenting on the altar in our passage, in his commentary on the book of Revelation begins his comments on this section like this, "To Moses was given a pattern of the things in the heavens (Hebrews 9:23). Therefore, there was an altar in heaven, or rather, there is an altar" (107).

Turn to Revelation 15. We'll read verses 5-6, 5 *After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.*

6 *And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.*

The words, 'the temple of the tabernacle' are most interesting. It is the *naos* of the *skeenee*. I haven't mastered all that yet.

I'm always amazed that people want to know more than what is recorded in Scripture. I believe if we want to know more, we need to study the Scripture more. I had an uncle who said, "There is more to Jesus than is on the written page." There is no doubt that is true, but who can know with certainty what that 'more' is. It is very dangerous to go beyond Scripture. But, as the writer of the long quote I just read said, "We can know about heaven." But he was also right when he said that all we can know is what is recorded in the Bible.

C. Proposition # 3

So I gave you as the first proposition that the tabernacle Moses built on earth was a picture of heaven. The second proposition was that the tabernacle which was set up on earth was designed after the pattern of the real tabernacle which was in heaven. I give you now a third proposition. The picture of what heaven is like, and where we will spend that first day we are talking about is shown to us in the tabernacle that was built on earth. And so to understand our first day in heaven, we must understand some things about this tabernacle. A complete study is far beyond the scope of the purpose of these messages.

When Moses was instructed how to build the tabernacle, God began with the central, most important piece, the Ark of the Covenant, the place where God dwelt. So God worked from Him towards man. That is how salvation must come from God to us. It cannot come from man towards God. But we are going to begin our look from outside and move inward, because that is how we approach God. And then we will make our way in. So to begin from the outside, we begin with the fence that enclosed the tabernacle area.

1. The Fence

A few years ago when we were in Israel, we were traveling through a desert area where Solomon's copper mines had been in Bible times. And in the desert a tabernacle following the measurements of the tabernacle given to Moses has been set up. I want you to see this, as you approach it from a distance.

230068 (#1)

What is the most outstanding feature you see? A white fence. I have proposed to you that there we have an earthly picture of heaven. And that most outstanding feature is the white fence.

Who can tell us what white represents? Righteousness, of course. There is no question about that. And to enter this court, righteousness was required; not righteousness mixed with sin, perfect righteousness. This fence is a picture of the law. If the law has been broken, there is no entrance here. The law is

perfectly righteous. Everything that touches the ground here is of brass, which pictures judgment. That is why Moses put a brass serpent on the pole in the wilderness and there we have John 3:14-15.

Inside is where God dwelt, and outside is where man dwells. It is sin that keeps man from entering the white fence, it is sin that keeps man from entering heaven at death.

Let me show you now some of the details of the fence. 230077 **(#2)** Every part of what you see is symbolical. We will not take time to comment on those as it would take a lot of time. I will just mention that everything that touches the ground is of brass. To seek to enter here in any way other than the one provided by God was certain judgment.

2. The Gate

The next important thing is the gate. Somebody tell me how many gates there were? One! Why one? Who can tell me what the gate represents? We could not get a good picture of the gate as the watchman's tent was set up right in front of it, but here is the picture (230070) **(#3)**.

There is a lot of symbolism in this gate. Let me mention a few. The fence was white only, the gate was white, blue, purple and scarlet. Let me just say this: One must enter by way of the blue, Jesus the heavenly Son of God. One must enter by way of the purple, Jesus the heavenly king. One must enter by way of the scarlet. Jesus the sacrificial Lamb of God. One must enter by way of the white linen thread, Jesus the righteous One.

3. The Brazen Altar

Can someone tell me, when you enter this gate, what is the first thing you come to? It is the brazen altar. Here is a picture from a distance (230118) **(#4)**. It is on this altar that all the sacrifices were made. Most of the blood was poured out at the base of this altar.

I believe this is the altar we have in our passage in Revelation.

4. The Laver

The next item as we make our way in is the brass laver. Here is a picture looking from before the tabernacle towards the gate. You see the laver, then the brazen altar and then the gate beyond that.

(230115) **(#5)**

5 The Holy Place

We now come to the tabernacle itself. You understand we have left out almost all the details. For instance, there were no measurements given for the laver. Why not? Well, I suppose they were so primitive they did not know how to give measurements for round things, right? No, there are good reasons and we may see some of that later.

So here we are before the tabernacle (230079) **(#6)**. Here we enter (230089) **(#7)**. On the left hand side is the seven branch candlestick, the light (230101) **(#8)**. On the right is the table of showbread (230109) **(#9)**. Directly ahead of us, before the next room, the Holy of Holies is the altar of incense (230103) **(#10)**.

Now I want to raise a point here. There are only two altars in the whole structure. So the altar in Revelation 6:9 is either one of these two; which one is it? Well, there is one indicator that it could be this one, so look at 6:9-10. It says, "When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'"

Now that sounds like a prayer, and this altar is the altar of prayer. Here incense was offered picturing the ascension of the sweet smell of prayer to God. Seven times an altar is mentioned in Revelation. The

next one is in 8:3 which says, "Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." The golden altar was this altar. The outside altar was of brass.

Adam Clarke says, "This was a preparation peculiar to the day of expiation. 'On other days it was the custom of the priest to take fire from the great altar in a silver censer, but on the day of expiation the high priest took the fire from the great altar in a golden censer; and when he was come down from the great altar, he took incense from one of the priests, who brought it to him, and went with it to the golden altar; and while he offered the incense the people prayed without in silence, which is the silence in heaven for half an hour.'"

So the prayer in Revelation 6:10 might indicate it was this altar. But the altar in 6:9 is not described by the word golden. I would take it that it would have been, had it been meant. Furthermore, in 6:9 they are gathered under the altar. The altar outside was much larger. In the time Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, it was 16 feet high and 32 feet square on top. In Herod's temple it was 15 feet high and 52 feet square on top.

Furthermore, something takes place at this altar, that I think determines that this is not the altar of Revelation 6:9, and we will see that later.

6. The Most Holy Place

We enter now the Holy of Holies. We must go through the second veil. This is the veil that was torn from top to bottom when Christ died (230104) (#11). The room behind this curtain is as long as it is wide and as high as it is long. There was only one piece of furniture in this room, the ark of the covenant (230106) (#12). And there was a covering over the ark, and on the covering were two Cherubs, and between the

Cherubs above the covering is where God came to dwell when He camped with Israel.

When you draw this out you get the picture of the cross. You go from the gate straight through to the holy of holies, but before you get there, on both sides is one piece of furniture.

CONCL: The most serious question before us, at the conclusion of this message is, if I died today, would I go through the white fence? Would I arrive at the first piece of furniture, the altar? There was only one door, and there is only one other place I could arrive at. That is most sobering. Let me say this, you do not go here because your parents are Christians. You do not go here because you read the Bible. You do not go here because you more good things than bad. You will go here for one reason, and one alone. You have dealt with your sins in the way the Bible says. That means repentance and confession and believing in Christ as the only One through whom your sins can be forgiven.

You see, there comes a time in life when that decision must be made. Maybe for you that is today. And if you do that, let me encourage you to one thing: deal thoroughly with sin. Jesus Christ died for us and took His blood into the Holy of Holies once for all.

And if we are truly Christians, when we die, we pass through the white fence into the place we call heaven.