

“In My Father’s House”

***The Theme of TEMPLE from Genesis to Revelation -
What the Bible is All About From Start to Finish***

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Title: *Near, Yet Far Off*

Text: *Hebrews 12:18-24*

Reading: Exodus 40

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Introduction

The history of God’s redemption of His people in Christ is the history of God setting Himself upon *dwelling with and among them*. That is how it was in Eden before the Fall, and that is how it will be once again in the New Heavens and New Earth. The history and development of the TEMPLE from Genesis to Revelation is the account of God drawing nearer and nearer and nearer to us, until one Day “*we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*” (I John 3:2). The progress of the tabernacle/temple in the Bible is the progress of this very purpose – and that is why you see the dwelling place of God becoming more and more and more intimate with the people of God. So that today, in this era, God’s temple is not a building like the Old Testament temple, but it is God’s own people, indwelt by the Spirit of God Himself. Closer and closer and closer He approaches.

Why does this matter to you and me? Today? When we face all of the things in life that we do? What does this biblical theme of TEMPLE have to do with your life and mine in this world? All of the troubles and issues you face right now? Let me show you that not only does it have

application, but this matter of God dwelling with and among us *is in fact the most important and most relevant truth that you can possibly know. This is the thing we need more than anything else!*

Michael Lewis, to my knowledge, is not a Christian. But he has written a book entitled Shame: The Exposed Self. It is no coincidence that the cover of the book has a painting of Adam and Eve, after the fall, naked and attempting to cover themselves. We have already made the observation that when sin came into the world, this devastating thing called shame came as well.

And, we have also learned that there is true shame and a false shame. Adam and Eve were truly shamed – they had broken God’s Law. They were guilty. The glory they were covered with was gone. Now, notice what they did –

Genesis 3:7-8 ESV

(7) Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. **And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.**

(8) And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:7-8 NBLH

(7) Entonces fueron abiertos los ojos de ambos, y conocieron que estaban desnudos; **y cosieron hojas de higuera y se hicieron delantales.**

(8) Y oyeron al SEÑOR Dios que se paseaba en el huerto al fresco del día. Entonces el hombre y su mujer se escondieron de la presencia del SEÑOR Dios entre los árboles del huerto.

Later, God would fashion coverings for them –

Genesis 3:21 ESV

(21) And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Genesis 3:21 NBLH (21) El SEÑOR Dios hizo vestiduras de piel para Adán y su mujer, y los vistió.

Now, it is not an exaggeration for me to tell you that these are among the most important verses in the entire Bible for us to understand. Why? Because they tell us so much about fallen human nature – about ourselves and about how sin thinks and operates. The psychology of sin is largely a psychology of shame. Notice what shame does –

- Shame hides from God and from truth. Shame alienates.
- Shame manufactures various devices (fig leaf clothing) to hide behind.
- The only true remedy for shame lies in God Himself. The covering for our nakedness must come from Him, not from ourselves.

Let's look at the thing more closely yet. Listen to Lewis –

“I always have a private conversation with each student in my seminar to review their papers. Sol, a first-year graduate student, had come to the university with good recommendations. His undergraduate professors judged him to be bright and conscientious, although one noted that Sol had trouble accepting criticism. His paper was ambitious, and demonstrated considerable effort, but it was marred by some problems I wanted to discuss with Sol so that he could make it better.

Knowing Sol's sensitivity to criticism, I started by saying I had really enjoyed his paper and thought he had done a fine job. He smiled brightly and thanked me. I went on to say that he had covered the literature well, and, in fact, had demonstrated real understanding of the problem. Again, he beamed at me. He seemed happy with himself and very pleased by my comments.

I then brought up what I thought was a logical error in his paper. ‘Sol,’ I said, ‘while I enjoyed the paper, and thought you did a good job, your analysis of sex differences in the socialization of emotion was not well developed.’ Sol's face dropped. He tightened his hands around the arms

of the chair, almost forcing himself to sit upright. 'Professor,' he started to say, 'I don't think you're correct...' He never finished the phrase. He seemed unable to go on with our conversation. I tried again. 'Sol,' I really liked the paper, and I think that overall you have done a fine job.' Again he seemed to brighten. Seeing him relax, I thought I would try again. 'Sol, I think your analysis needs more work. You have not developed the role of sex differences in socialization.' Once again, Sol tensed. This time he turned toward me. He appeared angry and his voice was loud and intense as he said, 'I just did what you told us to do in class.' I thought of arguing with him, but I could see that it would do no good. I handed him the paper and told him that I would like him to make the corrections indicated and then return it to me.

Sol never corrected the paper, and, in fact, he let his B grade stand. Sol was shamed by my disapproval, and did not want to risk more disapproval and further shame by resubmitting his paper to my judgment."

"I had a similar experience with Rita. Her paper appeared hastily done: she had not reviewed the literature, and had not even bothered to proofread her work, which was poorly typed and full of spelling errors. Rita was a good student, so I was surprised by her poor job. When she entered the room and sat down, she appeared tense and worried. 'Rita,' I said, 'this paper is missing references and is poorly typed.' I paused, because I recognized that Rita was going to cry. She turned to me, wiping her eyes, and said, 'Dr. Lewis, why don't you like me?' I responded, 'Rita, I do like you. I am not talking about you, I am talking about one paper that you have done.' She burst into tears, and many minutes passed before she could compose herself enough to leave.

Sol and Rita had both interpreted my negative comments as criticism of them as people, not as criticism of their work. The two were ashamed in my presence because they confused their roles as my students with their identities as individuals."

Shame. In both of these cases, *false shame*. Something lay in the past for both Sol and Rita that evoked shame in them. And, just like Adam and

Eve, they each had tried to deal with that shame by fashioning coverings of “fig leaves” to hide it. But those coverings did not work. They did not remove the shame. Only a covering provided by God in Christ can ever do that.

“Larry, a patient suffering from depression, worked two jobs in order to make enough money to support his wife and two kids. He was quite proud that, through his effort, he was able to earn enough money to provide for his family’s needs, and that he was what he called ‘a good provider.’ Larry’s symptoms of depression appeared after he overheard a conversation between his wife and oldest son, who had come home for the summer and was working to earn money for next year’s college expenses. ‘I heard him ask her for some money to buy new boots. She said that he could use the money he was earning. He said that he needed it to pay for his expenses next year at school. He then asked for the money for the boots again, and my wife said, ‘I just don’t have it. Dad hasn’t been getting the kind of tips he used to and we are short of money.’ Larry went on, ‘I looked at my son’s face, and the disappointment and frustration made me feel terrible.’ Larry began having trouble sleeping. The good provider could not provide.” [Lewis]

Larry’s fig-leaf, self-made garments he had created to cover his shame were simply not working. Somewhere, at some point in his life – probably quite early on – Larry had been shamed. Truly or falsely. And, like every one of us, Larry was faced with a decision regarding how he was going to deal with that shame. Would he look to God in Christ for covering, or would he devise various devices to cover it himself? Larry had chosen the latter, and now he was paying the consequences. He was naked, exposed – his self-made coverings were simply not working.

What are You Ashamed of – and What Coverings Have You Made?

This entire subject of God’s unstoppable plan to create a people for Himself and dwell among them *is the only remedy to guilt and shame that sin has brought into the world.* Christ clothes us with righteousness. HIS righteousness. He makes us brand new creations. In Him, God is bringing

us back to Eden where we will be “naked and not ashamed.” This is, of course, language that tells us we will be in perfect, transparent communion with God and with one another and there will be no need for shame nor hiding ever again.

Therefore, as we are studying this theme of TEMPLE – of God drawing near to us in Christ – it is imperative that you ask yourself and ask the Lord to show you – in what ways are you doing the very same things as Sol and Rita and Larry? *What are you ashamed of, and perhaps more importantly – what coverings, what mechanisms have you created in an attempt to hide that shame? THIS is how sin operates. THIS is how it thinks. Apart from Christ, sin resolves to deal with shame itself – in sinful, Godless manners that can never work, but only enslave.*

“The extreme pathology of prolonged shame produces narcissistic disorders and the disintegration of the self system. Narcissistic disorders generate a wide range of symptoms including –

- *grandiosity*
- *rage*
- *inferiority*
- *overridealization*
- *entitlement*
- *a lack of empathy*

The inability to cope with shame and humiliation underlies these pathological disturbances. Narcissists seek to avoid shame, and, when avoidance fails, engage in emotional behavior that masks their underlying feeling.” [Lewis]

So, another way to pose the question here is – what mask are you wearing? Who are you behind that mask? Why are you ashamed of the person behind that mask? *Do you understand at all that the redemption found only in the Lord Jesus Christ is what enables us to take off those masks and be real – and unashamed?*

Friday at the youth meeting we listened to a message by a pastor named Mark Chandler. He said that in his church (a very large one) he has to deal all the time with *people who will not be real*. Pretenders. Mask-wearers. Fig-leaf clothing makers. Listen to his observation on this matter of not being real (I paraphrase it) –

“If you are not real, if you are pretending to be someone you are not, then when real love is shown to you, you will not be able to receive it.”

Get a firm hold on this. This problem is HUGE – even and perhaps *especially* in the church. False fronts. Pretend saints. Hiding. And what happens when the love of Christ and the intimacy that comes along with that genuine love, is extended toward such a person? When real, genuine relationship draws near? *More covering. Fervent and panicked sewing together of more fig leaves to cover. Hiding. More masks. The levels of grandiosity, rage, entitlement and so on step themselves up to an even more intense level. Real transparency is sabotaged, until a comfortable distance is established once more.* In the shadows – away from the threatening light of God’s truth. This is sin. This is shame and the attempts to hide it without God.

As Pastor Chandler observed, this mechanism of sin is SO enslaving that it sabotages the reception of the love of God. Therefore, this morning – we all have a choice before us. We can continue to hide behind our own self-manufactured fig-leaf coverings – which are no coverings at all – OR, we can come out into the light, acknowledge that we are running and hiding, and learn more about how God in Christ takes away our shame. Until we do, the fundamental truth is that the real One that we are hiding from is God Himself. And that is something that is impossible to do.

The Pharisees were the perfect example of this terrible cycle –

Matthew 23:25-28 ESV

(25) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

(26) You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. (27) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

(28) So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Matthew 23:25-28 NBLH

(25) "¡Ay de ustedes, escribas y Fariseos, hipócritas, que limpian el exterior del vaso y del plato, pero por dentro están llenos de robo y de desenfreno!

(26) "¡Fariseo ciego! Limpia primero lo de adentro del vaso y del plato, para que lo de afuera también quede limpio.

(27) "¡Ay de ustedes, escribas y Fariseos, hipócritas que son semejantes a sepulcros blanqueados! Por fuera lucen hermosos, pero por dentro están llenos de huesos de muertos y de toda inmundicia.

(28) "Así también ustedes, por fuera parecen justos a los hombres, pero por dentro están llenos de hipocresía y de iniquidad.

Not even Christ could help them!

"We figured it out years ago! We have to pretend to be perfect too. What a brilliant solution! What a clever strategy! And what an exhausting charade! Pretending to be perfect guarantees failure, disappointment, and self-shaming. Self-shaming follows attempts to be perfect, because we never make it. We do not have to remain broken however. And if we do, it is us – nor our parents or past – who are responsible for that choice. Those of us raised in poorly functioning families have traits that cause significant personal and interpersonal problems in our lives. These unhealthy characteristics are an interaction of our sin; our brokenness in thinking, feeling, and relating...and our subsequent sinful and self-protective choices. And although we are not responsible for being taught lies as children, we are responsible as adults to enter a lifelong process of recovering [ie., sanctification] from the brokenness that the lies caused.

The alternative? Pass the intergenerational baton of brokenness and shame to our children, just as our parents passed it on from their parents to us. This alternative is the opposite of the transformation process that God plans for us through the renewing of our minds.” [Sandra D. Wilson, Released From Shame].

This process is painful. Shame is painful to face. God’s remedy for sin and shame is *that we must be put to death*. Isaiah found this out in the temple –

Isaiah 6:1-7 ESV

- (1) In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.
- (2) Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.
- (3) And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"
- (4) And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.
- (5) And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"
- (6) Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.
- (7) And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

Isaiah 6:1-7 NBLH

- (1) En el año de la muerte del rey Uzías vi yo al Señor sentado sobre un trono alto y sublime, y la orla de Su manto llenaba el templo.
- (2) Por encima de El había serafines. Cada uno tenía seis alas: con dos cubrían sus rostros, con dos cubrían sus pies y con dos volaban.
- (3) Y el uno al otro daba voces, diciendo: "Santo, Santo, Santo, es el SEÑOR de los ejércitos, Llena está toda la tierra de Su gloria."

(4) Y se estremecieron los cimientos de los umbrales a la voz del que clamaba, y la casa se llenó de humo. (5) Entonces dije: "¡Ay de mí! Porque perdido estoy, Pues soy hombre de labios inmundos Y en medio de un pueblo de labios inmundos habito, Porque mis ojos han visto al Rey, el SEÑOR de los ejércitos." (6) Entonces voló hacia mí uno de los serafines con un carbón encendido en su mano, que había tomado del altar con las tenazas. (7) Con él tocó mi boca, y me dijo: "Esto ha tocado tus labios, y es quitada tu iniquidad y perdonado tu pecado."

God Draws Near – the Tabernacle

We have heard the 40th chapter of Exodus already this morning which summarizes the setting up of the completed tabernacle in the wilderness. We are at the **M** in TEMPLE – the era of the Old Testament history of the nation Israel. God's call of Abraham was the beginning of it as He set out to create a people for Himself. All who are of faith are children of Abraham and citizens of the True Israel of God.

And last time, we saw that during the era of Moses and beyond – down to the time of the restoration of the temple under Ezra and Nehemiah, God's plan of redemption continued. He unceasingly worked to draw near to His people and dwell among them.

T - Trinity (John 17:5, 24)

E - Eden & Eviction– (Genesis 1-3)

M - Moses (the history of Israel)

- ***Abraham (Genesis 12-15)***

- ***Moses, Israel, and the Tabernacle (Exodus)***

P - Poetry & Prophets

L - Lamb

E - Eden Excelled

We cannot take the time here to consider the tabernacle structure and furnishings in detail – that would require many, many weeks. What we

simply take note of here is that the *tabernacle was the dwelling place of God. It was portable because the Jews were on the move in the wilderness, and God would go with them. He dwelt among them.*

Moses understood that the most important thing of all was that God dwell among the people – that He Himself go with them. Listen to it –

Exodus 33:14-20 ESV

(14) And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

(15) And he said to him, "**If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here.**

(16) For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"

(17) And the LORD said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name."

(18) Moses said, "Please show me your glory."

(19) And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

(20) But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

Exodus 33:14-20 NBLH

(14) "Mi presencia irá contigo , y Yo te daré descanso," le contestó el SEÑOR.

(15) Entonces Moisés le dijo: "Si Tu presencia no va con nosotros, no nos hagas salir de aquí.

(16) "¿Pues en qué se conocerá que he hallado gracia ante Tus ojos, yo y Tu pueblo? ¿No es acaso en que Tú vayas con nosotros, para que nosotros, yo y Tu pueblo, nos distingamos de todos los demás pueblos que están sobre la superficie de la tierra?"

(17) Y el SEÑOR respondió a Moisés: "También haré esto que has hablado, por cuanto has hallado gracia ante Mis ojos y te he conocido por tu nombre." (18) Entonces Moisés dijo: "Te ruego que me muestres Tu gloria."

(19) Y el SEÑOR respondió: "Yo haré pasar toda Mi bondad delante de ti, y proclamaré el nombre del SEÑOR delante de ti. Tendré misericordia del que tendré misericordia, y tendré compasión de quien tendré compasión."

(20) Y añadió: "No puedes ver Mi rostro; porque nadie Me puede ver, y vivir."

The ONLY reason the Promised Land was “flowing with milk and honey” would be because God Himself was there. Better to stay in the wilderness in the presence of God than to enter Canaan without Him.

Now, I can only briefly mention a very important theme here. Listen carefully however –

“It is quite probable that the Old Testament tabernacle and temple was a model or microcosm of the entire cosmos – of the entire heavens and earth. The message it declared is that one day, God’s presence would not be limited to the restricted holy of holies in the tabernacle, but His presence would be extended throughout the entire earth and heavens. His temple will one day fill the universe. Israel’s tabernacle/temple was composed of 3 main parts – each of which represented a major part of the cosmos –

- *The outer court represented the habitable world where humanity dwelt*
- *The holy place was the symbol of the visible heavens and its light sources (sun, moon, stars)*
- *The holy of holies symbolized the invisible heaven where God and His heavenly hosts dwell*

G.K. Beale has written an entire book on this thesis entitled The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of

God. This is why God's ultimate, restored dwelling with His people is represented in Revelation 21 as His Temple, which is in fact no localized temple, but is God and the Lamb themselves.

The tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament, in other words – including the garments of the priests and the curtains and bars and all of the many components and artwork in the tabernacle – all were designed to point us toward THIS ultimate theme – *that God would one day once again dwell among His people and His people live in His presence, in His house, in perfect, unashamed fellowship – face to face*. AND IT IS THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THROUGH WHOM GOD EFFECTS THIS RESTORATION AND REDEMPTION OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE. Christ and Christ alone is our covering.

Near, Yet Far Off

Now, one final note. God was near – and yet far off. His tabernacle was among and with His people in the wilderness and ultimately in Jerusalem. And yet –

- The holy of holies was blocked off by a great veil
- Not everyone could enter the Holy Place
- Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and that only once each year with blood.
- Moses went up on the mountain, but the people shuddered in fear and were warned not to even touch it, lest they die.
- The people trembled at the sound of the thunderings of God at Mt. Sinai
- At various times, God's presence departed from the people

Surely, God's plan had not yet come into its fullness. Remarkable as the Old Testament tabernacle experience was, it was still very much less than what it had been in Eden, and what our ultimate face-to-face fellowship with God will be in the New Heavens and New Earth. We will find, as we proceed through the Scriptures that these barriers to dwelling with God will, one by one, come down. The veil will be ripped apart at the Cross.

The Holy Spirit will enter God's people, and while the earthly Temple would be destroyed in 70 AD, the living, growing body of Christ – the Church, would become God's dwelling place. Christ in US. God, drawing nearer and nearer and nearer.

Hebrews 12:18-24 ESV

(18) For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest

(19) and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.

(20) For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."

(21) Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."

(22) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,

(23) and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

(24) and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Hebrews 12:18-24 NBLH

(18) Porque ustedes no se han acercado a un monte que se puede tocar, ni a fuego ardiente, ni a tinieblas, ni a oscuridad, ni a torbellino,

(19) ni a sonido de trompeta, ni a ruido de palabras tal, que los que oyeron rogaron que no se les hablara más.

(20) Porque ellos no podían soportar el mandato: "SI AUN UNA BESTIA TOCA EL MONTE, SERA APEDREADA."

(21) Tan terrible era el espectáculo, que Moisés dijo: "ESTOY ATERRADO Y TEMBLANDO."

(22) Ustedes, en cambio, se han acercado al Monte Sion y a la ciudad del Dios vivo, la Jerusalén celestial, y a miríadas de ángeles,

(23) a la asamblea general e iglesia de los primogénitos que están

inscritos en los cielos, y a Dios, el Juez de todos, y a los espíritus de los justos hechos ya perfectos,
(24) y a Jesús, el mediador del nuevo pacto, y a la sangre rociada que habla mejor que la sangre de Abel.

HERE is God's remedy for our shame.