

# The Holy of Holies

by Art Katz

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*Art Katz's sermon emphasizes the prophetic role in discerning truth and the significance of the tabernacle as a model for authentic worship and communion with God.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 25:9, John 10:10

**Topics:** "Seeking God's Presence", "Prophetic Ministry"

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## Description

Art Katz emphasizes the role of the prophet as a guardian of truth, calling out the falsehoods and deceptions that lead to spiritual death, which is a life devoid of God's fullness. He highlights the importance of discerning the true reality of God's presence, as exemplified in the design of the tabernacle, where God meets His people in the Holy of Holies. Katz urges believers to move beyond the outer court of basic salvation into deeper communion with God, where true life and understanding are found. He warns against the dangers of superficial worship and encourages a return to the authentic experience of God's presence, which is essential for effective ministry. Ultimately, he calls for a revival of awareness of the sacred space where God dwells, inviting believers to seek a deeper relationship with Him.

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## Transcript

A prophet "blows the whistle" on the things that are unreal, feigned, false, synthetic, compromised, the things that constitute a lie, and if people continue in their deception, it will constitute death for them. It is not death as biological termination but death even while they live. The prophet is totally committed to life. He has an uncanny ability to discern those elements of death that have become so normative in the lives of people. Jesus said: "I have come to bring you life, and that more abundantly."

We need to contend for life and oppose every kind of artificial, stultifying, pharmaceutical thing that even children are now taking to quiet their "disorders". The prophet will cry out, he will intervene and intercede for the fullness of life. Any falling short of the full-orbed life that God has intended for men and women in their humanity in God is a measure of death. Where then does the prophet get his perspective? What is the basis by which he sees? How does he have his sense of things that puts him in such opposition and contradiction to the world?

The prophet is a guardian and spokesman commending to God's people the vision of the true reality given of God in a world that continually contends against that reality. A prophet [or apostle] does not look upon the things that are seen. He avoids allowing the visible things to engage him as if those things constitute true reality. He sees the things that are unseen, that which is both invisible and eternal, the eternal weight

of glory. He is not seduced and taken up with visible things, rewards and titles, prestige and comfort - all the kinds of things with which the world seduces the souls of men to turn them from God to themselves as the gods of this world.

There is a battle for conflicting realities in a world that is at enmity with God. God's condemnation of the false prophets was that they get their words from each other. They say that they had a dream or that the "Lord had said", but God did not say. He was not the author of that thing. They coined their words out of their own humanity. They did not get it from the council of God. They were not in that place with God in which His thought and nature could be given. Where then is that place of council?

In Exodus 25, Moses is given the design of God, the pattern that should be maintained - all of the details of the tabernacle: the dimensions, the building materials, the instructions on how to make the anointing oil. Moses and all Israel were cautioned not to come up with something to substitute the requirements of God. It had got to be the authentic thing according to the prescription of God. It was a remarkable, intricate, detailed statement that makes one suspect that there is a purpose for God in these details that go beyond the immediate issue of what was to be built in the generation of Moses.

Indeed, God is speaking to all generations in symbolic terms that we need to perceive and understand. There is a pattern, a sanctuary for God that He might dwell among His people. According to all that I am going to show you as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it. They shall make an ark of acacia wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof (Exodus 25:9-10).

A cubit is about eighteen inches. I have never understood why the measures are irregular - instead of two feet long, it is a foot and a half, it is a cubit and a half. It is as if God was saying that the corresponding half that was being constructed for Himself on Earth was to be found in Heaven. And the day will come when what is above will come down on below and the two will be joined as one. There is no explanation, only the injunction: "According to this, so shall you build it." In other words, do not be expedient, do not cut any corners.

You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them. The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it (Exodus 25:13-15).

Acacia wood is the lowliest brush wood to be found in the wilderness. It is not your handsome oak. It is twisted and gnarled by hot, dry desert conditions. It is the most common wood, the most available, the most ordinary and the most unattractive building material - and yet, that was the wood in which the ark of God was to be made. Both the outside and the inside of the ark were to be overlaid with gold. Gold is the symbolic metal representing Deity. The wood is never directly touching the things of God, because it is overlaid with gold.

Out of this ordinary material, God constructs an everlastingly beautiful and glorious sanctuary for His presence and dwelling. The poles and the rings are included in the construction so that the priests could carry the ark on their shoulders without directly touching. We know what happened when David, forgetting these injunctions, put the ark on a cart. As it was being moved, it began to jostle about and seemed to threaten to overturn. A well-meaning onlooker put his hand on it to stabilize it and he perished.

God commanded that no man's hand was to touch it. This is an insight into the holiness of God. Though the ark itself is lost to us in modern times, the details pertaining to it and the priesthood, the ordination, and all those things, convey a sense of God's nature. The divine wisdom of what is symbolised by the ark and the tabernacle remains. The only people I know who have retained any sense of the divine pattern and want to see it re-established are orthodox Jews, who are even now making the utensils for a future Temple.

They brood over this inheritance while the church has discarded it. We therefore exhibit very little of a priestly demeanour in what we are about. Jesus is the high priest and the apostle of our confession. Priestliness is the necessary and indispensable condition by which all true ministry follows. One cannot be an apostle without first being a priest. We have many in the church who presume to be apostles, but who do not give the faintest intimation of a sense of the essence of priestliness.

Something has not come into their being that tempers and touches every word they speak and every gesture they make. The tabernacle was made up of three courts. There was an outer court with the brazen laver for washing and a brazen altar for the sacrifice. This is the place of foundational salvation with a great deal of priestly activity. Then there was the second area called the Holy place in which there was much less activity; it was there we find the table of showbread and the menorah of God, the seven-branched candlestick that illuminated the room.

There was one further room, the holiest place of all: the holy of holies. Only one priest could enter it once a year. There was no menorah, no lamp-light because the light of the Holiest place was the Shekinah presence of God Himself, who dwelt there. In that place there was one piece of furniture: You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat.

Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends. The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel (Exodus 25:17-22).

What is the significance of the mercy seat? I believe the two cherubim represent all that is contrary and opposite in the genius of God's creation: male and female, Jew and Gentile, prophet and teacher. Think of any tension, any inherent opposition that comes from the differences that God Himself has created. God is saying: "I will meet with you in the place of tension. I will meet with you in the place where the natural outworking of the differences that I created will be the most viable and forceful reality."

It is there that God meets with us, and there He will commune with us, and there He will speak to us and give us instruction for the sons of Israel. It is there that He gives His word and mind and thought. We do not have to conjure something up or pick up what someone else is saying. If we will meet with Him in that place, He will impart to us His own mind and nature! It is a precious dependency and promise. Only that instruction is viable, only that instruction is life-giving, only that instruction can meet the need of the hour as God alone knows it and His great grace gives it.

In that place God will meet with us. Which of the three courts are we presently occupying? Someone has rightly said that most believers are still in the outer court, still in the place of the elemental things of salvation. Praise God for that place without which one cannot proceed further. But if we remain fixed in that place, we will not reach the riches of illumination that come in the Holy place from the menorah: real bread, real teaching, real learning about the Kingdom of God, the realities of the body of Christ, even the mystery of Israel and the church.

Then there is the ultimate place, the holy of holies, where there is one piece of furniture. It is there that God waits and there that He dwells and will meet with us in intimate communion. How often does the prophetic man come into congregations where they are celebrating and rejoicing and the prophet wonders what he is doing there? While he is waiting to be called on, the Lord is giving him a sense of something from the Holy place, a sense of seeing beyond what those people are able to see.

He gets a sense that their rejoicing is really false, that it is prompted by soulish means to establish a certain kind atmosphere. But the truth of their lives is altogether a contradiction to their ostensible celebration. And the prophet is required to speak that truth. He is required to speak beyond what he sees outwardly in their apparent celebration and address the actual condition of their lives as God Himself sees it. And then the moment comes when he is being called upon.

In that moment, he has a choice either to be prompted by the cue given by the environment that has been created, especially by the worship team that wants to draw him into their mould of celebration and thereby confirm them in that unreality. It is very tempting so to do. But he takes a deep breath, like a man going to the guillotine, and speaks the truth contrary to what men think it is. The prophet dethrones their unreality and "blows the whistle" on its fraudulence in order to bring them back to a true foundation.

We are all invited to meet with God in that Holy place to receive what He will give us. When we speak from that place, it will not be what our mind dictates, or how we have appraised the need of the situation. May the Lord revive the awareness that such a place yet exists, that He waits yet to be found in such a place. It is above the place of mercy, for how shall we relate to each other in our differences except by the mercy of God. How shall we relate to each other significantly except we look through the mercy seat to the tablets of the law within, the righteous requirements of God?

We have an obligation to the righteousness of God. We have got to relate to each other in the context of righteousness rather than the humanly soulish thing, the convenient word, the bear hug, as if those constitute reality. God dwells in His Holy place, and where He dwells there is liberty, grace, wisdom - all that He is in His essential nature. It is there that He waits for us, above the mercy seat, between the wings of the cherubim. In the nexus where the vectors meet, that is where He is: where the opposition is at its greatest, where the tension is most incisive and painful.

It is the place where the blood of His Son has been sprinkled. It is only out of that place, the place of God's dwelling that we have a message for a divided world. May the Lord grant us a fresh heart to press in deeper than what we have known. There is something further than the outer court, the place where we celebrate our salvation as if it is the end rather than the beginning. Let us go beyond our natural knowledge of God to the place where God Himself is the illuminating light.

To come into that place is to come into the rest of the Lord, the place where one ceases from oneself. May the Lord stir our hearts to seek it to find it, to dwell in it, and to speak and serve from that place.

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