

(Deeper Waters) Session 3 - the Habitation of God

by David Ravenhill

God longs to dwell with His people and wants to take the church from visitation to habitation, but He is particular about His house and requires us to create an environment that is conducive to His presence.

Duration: 1:21:22

Scripture: Genesis 8:13, Exodus 25:8, Isaiah 6:3, Malachi 3:6, 2 Corinthians 6:14, Ephesians 1:17, Revelation 4:1

Topics: "Heavenly Worship", "Gods Nature"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by describing his arrival at a new home and how he can immediately discern certain characteristics about the people living there. He then moves on to discuss the book of Revelation, specifically focusing on chapter 4. He explains that John, the author of Revelation, was in the Spirit on the Lord's day on the island of Patmos when he heard a voice like a trumpet calling him to come up to heaven. The speaker emphasizes the unchanging nature of God and highlights the continuous worship of the heavenly beings who proclaim the holiness of God day and night.

Transcript

Well, praise the Lord. Am I on? Okay. Let's just pray again, shall we? Father, we ask that You would continue to sanctify this time.

Father, take Your Word and inspire it all over again tonight. Lord, even as it was God-breathed 2,000 years ago, we pray it would be God-breathed tonight. Lord, it would not be the letter that kills, but the Spirit that gives life.

So Lord, open the eyes of our understanding. Grant us, Lord, a spirit of wisdom and revelation. Father, take us into deeper realms, deeper waters, Lord.

Father, there's waters to the ankles and waters to the knees, to the loins, waters to swim in. And Lord, we long for all that You have for us. And so Father, we ask that You just anoint this Word tonight.

Give us ears to hear. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

I want to speak to you tonight on the habitation of God, the dwelling place of God. And the first part of this, for 10, 15 minutes, I'll be somewhat lighthearted because I want to lay a little bit of a foundation and then

we'll look into the Word. I want to use a number of words interchangeably, the word atmosphere, the word environment, the word habitation, the word culture.

We have an atmosphere in this room created because of the praise and worship that we've experienced, but we could change the atmosphere. We could open the doors, let in the cold. We could brighten the lights, I guess, a little bit more.

We could bring somebody up onto the drums and we could create a very militant atmosphere where we feel roused, we feel patriotic, we feel like marching. On the other hand, we could dim the lights, light a few candles, bring somebody up on the violin, and create a very romantic atmosphere. God dwells in a certain atmosphere.

He's looking for a certain atmosphere, and I believe there is an atmosphere that causes, if you like, God to thrive in our midst, both individually and corporately. Akin to that is the word environment. The environmentalists these days are alive and well.

Anybody studying environmental stuff here? Good. Okay. My wife and I passed it up in the Seattle area, one of the most beautiful parts of America, at least in my estimation, and there are millions upon millions of trees and an equal number of environmentalists.

And even though it rains every day in Seattle, just about, if you spit, they declare it a national wetlands. They are fanatics about preserving the environment. And, you know, if you want to do anything, you've got to jump through all these environmental hoops because they are out to protect some particular species, and they will tell you that certain elements need to be in place, certain components, if you like, need to be in place in order for that bug or butterfly or bird or whatever it is to survive.

And if you take away some of those elements, then that particular species will go into extinction. God, again, is looking for a certain environment. In other words, there are certain components, certain elements that are necessary for God to, again, thrive and survive, if you like, in our lives, again, individually and corporately.

Then there's the word culture. The word culture is the way in which we're raised, the values that we have. I am not a Native American or Texan, as you can tell.

I was born in England, raised in Ireland, and then came to America when I was 14. But I have lived in various cultures. We raised our family for 15 years in New Zealand.

We lived in New Guinea. I've lived all over America and so on. And I've come to appreciate various cultures.

How many of you are born outside of America here? Anybody else other than myself? Okay. Two of us, at least. I first became aware of the difference in culture when my parents moved, again, from Ireland to America.

My father settled in a Bible school that was known for its holiness message, sanctification message. And it wasn't too long, a matter of days, before I found some friends my own age that were staff kids. We began, you know, playing around together.

And I was horrified to find out these kids were swearing, you know, swear words that I would never dream of uttering. And certainly if I did, I would get a good thrashing for it. And here I was thinking my father's made a terrible mistake bringing us from Ireland to this so-called holiness school where all the kids are swearing to beat the band, so to speak.

Then they were horrified to find out that Leonard Ravenhill's son was swearing. And we realized that swear words in England are not necessarily swear words in America and vice versa. And I'm not about now to differentiate between which right and wrong because I've forgotten and this is going to be on tape and I still have a few miles left of tread on me, I think.

But there is a difference in culture. What is valued in one culture is despised in another culture. In some cultures, it's appropriate in the middle of your meal to belch.

The louder the belch, the longer the belch, the more you are signifying to your hosts that you are enjoying the meal. It's basically your stomach saying, you know, I love this, you've done a great job. Some of you are looking at your wife and saying, see, I was born in the wrong culture.

Now, in our culture, of course, that is a no-no. You know, if you do it, dad kicks you under the table, brother nudges you, mother looks at you across the table, reminds you that you've got company, and please let's not destroy the family's reputation. My wife and I, as I mentioned, pastored, or at least, well, we pastored, but we were missionaries in New Guinea.

We had a friend that was working with Wycliffe or Wycliffe. If you know anything about New Guinea, one of the most primitive countries in the world, three million people, 700 languages, not dialects, languages, and Wycliffe had their largest base there translating the Scriptures. You can have a little group of people, maybe less than a thousand on one side of a mountain, on the other side of the mountain another little village, and they can't even communicate because two totally different languages.

And this gentleman was translating the Scriptures in one of these remote areas, and he was working with one of the nationals trying to get the best word to use in that particular language, and every time he went to blow his nose, he took out this handkerchief, proceeded to blow his nose, and put it back in his pocket. Well, the national had never seen a handkerchief before. Pretty soon, curiosity got the best of him, and he said to the missionary, he said, why'd you save that stuff, and what'd you do with it? Now, that's a legitimate question if you've never seen a handkerchief before, because, you know, like the farmer, they didn't need handkerchiefs.

I won't demonstrate. And so here was this man taking out this immaculate piece of cloth, this nice white cloth, and harvesting this particular crop, folding it up, putting it in his pocket, and so being a budding entrepreneur, I guess, he wanted to know why'd you save that stuff, and what'd you do with it? Now, from the moment we're born, somebody's grabbing a tissue and wiping our nose with it, and we don't think anything of it, but again, you know, what is acceptable in one culture may not be in another culture. When my wife and I lived in New Zealand, our oldest daughter, who's now in China, was in college at the time, and I drove down to the city where she was from where we lived, the city of Christchurch, down to the city of Dunedin, which is an old Scottish establishment, and she was in the University of Otago there, and I was taking some meetings for the weekend, so I was down to sort of visit her and do some ministry, and waiting for my breakfast, one morning, I picked up the newspaper, and on the front page of the newspaper, there was an article about a museum exhibit from the Inca civilization that was going through all the major centers in New Zealand, all the major cities, and it talked about all the various exhibits that

were on display.

They had weavings and, you know, jewelry, agricultural implements that they'd unearthed, everything going back, you know, five or seven hundred years, but the pride and joy of this particular exhibit was the mummified remains of an Inca person, and here was this beautifully preserved mummy, but the article said nowhere in New Zealand were they displaying this particular mummy, and then it cited the reason. It said because it would upset the Maori people. The Maoris are the equivalent of our Native Americans.

They're the original inhabitants of the island there of New Zealand. They're very superstitious, I guess, when it comes to death, and so the New Zealand government was sensitive to their culture, knew that it would be offensive, and chose not to put that mummy on display, and so nowhere in New Zealand was that particular mummy being displayed. I could go on and on about culture.

It's interesting. My daughter, like I mentioned, is in China. She came back a few years ago with some photographs.

She was down in the marketplace taking pictures. Here are all these fruits and vegetables and so on, but this particular picture was of her standing in front of the meat market. The meat market happened to be dogs, all gutted, all, you know, nicely trimmed out and ready to go in the crock pot, and you could buy yourself a dog.

Now, you know, something within us sort of recoils, especially if you've got a little Fido at home. You know, you just can't think of that poor thing ending up in somebody's stomach. Also, in the area where she lives, there's a lot of minority groups, and one of those minority groups in particular, they've all got long fingernails, and the long fingernails are not a fashion statement.

They're simply used to pick your nose, and it is not wrong in that culture to sit around and to work away at whatever bothers you in your home group or church and so on, because they don't think anything of it. We do it in private. Why not, you know, why be hypocritical? And so we'll do it in public.

Now, again, something within us, again, recoils, because in our culture, that's a no-no. Isn't that right? And on and on you can go. I have a friend who was in Thailand a number of years ago speaking at a missionary conference, and if you know anything about the Thai culture, you would appreciate this.

He was quite an animated guy, an evangelist. In fact, we worked together for many, many years on a team, and he used to sort of run the aisle, swing on the chandelier sort of guy. He was very demonstrative, but he was talking about David and Goliath, and he needed some sort of projectile, you know, to sort of bring down this imaginary Goliath, and so he takes off his shoe, and he throws that shoe, you know, over the head of everybody to bring down this Goliath, and of course, if you know, again, anything about the Thai culture to sit and do what our brother is doing here and point the sole of your feet at somebody is highly insulting.

The lower you get in the body, the more despised that part of the body is, and to sort of sit and point your foot at somebody is terrible, let alone to be under the sole of a foot that flies over the air, so to speak. And I was there at that same conference a year later speaking to some of the missionaries, and they were asking me, since they knew I was from New Zealand at the time, do you know so-and-so? Mentioned his name, and of course I thought, yeah, you know, I know him well, I work with him, yeah, sure I know him, and they were still getting over that sort of cultural, you know, faux pas that he had made. Now I say all

that to say this, if you take the word culture and spiritualize it, you have the word ways.

Teach me your ways, oh God. God said to the children of Israel, my culture is not your culture, and your culture is not my culture. Oh, I'm paraphrasing, obviously, my ways are not your ways, and your ways are not my ways.

In other words, what you esteem, I despise, and what you despise, I esteem. And the Bible says two cannot walk together unless they're in agreement. What fellowship does light have with darkness? In other words, God is not going to change His culture, so we better learn the ways of God.

Isn't that right? And so I want to have you turn tonight to Exodus, and we'll jump into the New Testament in a moment, but Exodus chapter 25, this scripture begins by the Lord coming to Moses with an appeal, if you like, and He says to Moses in verse 8, I want you to construct a sanctuary for me that I may dwell among you. Verse 8, we have God's desire or God's request. I believe this is an eternal request on the part of God.

He longs to dwell with His people. Notice He does not say to Moses, book me a hotel, I'm passing through. You know, I thought I'd drop in.

It's been a while since I've seen you kids, my family, and boy, you've grown since, boy, you've put on weight. You mean you're married now? No, God says, I want to dwell with you. You see, I'm convinced God is wanting to take the church from visitation to habitation.

Thank God for the visitations we've had, whether you agree with them or not, there's been some wonderful moves of God, Brownsville and different places, but I still believe there's something greater than visitation, and that's habitation, and there is a difference, I believe, between visitation and habitation. I travel just about every weekend somewhere, and normally I'm staying in a hotel, not down the road here. This is a five-star one, but those are the ones you can see through the ceiling.

No, but I'm staying in a hotel, and I am a visitor, so I have no rights to rearrange that hotel. I don't move the bed around and the furniture. I don't paint the walls and rehang new pictures and so on.

On the other hand, if they said to me, we want you to come and make your abode here, and we are going to section off this part of the hotel for you and your family, and that is going to be yours now, I would make some changes. I would make it more conducive to my particular makeup, my particular personality, and so on. I'd rearrange the furniture, change the color scheme, and so on and so forth, because I am no longer a visitor.

This is where I'm going to dwell, and I believe there is a price to pay to move from visitation to habitation, and God says here to Moses, I want you to build me a house, basically construct a sanctuary for me that I may dwell among you, not just visit you. I want to reside. God is a father, the ultimate father, and like any father, he wants to be with his family.

One of the great tragedies today is the divorce situation that is just as rampant now in the church as it is in the world, and as I travel, especially in the summer months, I will get on a plane, and here are a couple of kids, maybe more than a couple, with a dog tag of some sort like this, and mom will be putting them on the plane, and two hours later in Chicago or wherever it is, Seattle or somewhere, they will get off and father will be there waiting to pick them up, and dad has got visitation rights. Dad gets to see those kids every summer for a month or whatever, every other Christmas, you know, every other Thanksgiving, and those

kids are sort of shuttled back and forth across America and happens every year by the tens of thousands. God doesn't want visitation rights, he wants habitation rights, and so again, construct a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.

God's desire or God's request. I believe that is the eternal longing on the part of God because I am the Lord and I change not. With God, there's no variableness.

He's the same yesterday, today, and forever, but then we go to verse 9, and he says, according to all that I'm going to show you as to the pattern of the house of the tabernacle, the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it. So verse 8 is God's desire. Verse 9 is God's demands.

Verse 8 is God's request. Verse 9 is God's requirements. We're learning something about God, and to use a good Irish word, God is finicky.

He's fussy. He is particular. He will not dwell anywhere.

So he says, build me a house, but hold on, Moses, build it according to this blueprint, and make sure you make it exactly according to my standards. Now, we know that God called Moses up the mountain. A cloud came down over that mountain.

The children of Israel, of course, could not see him. The days went by. The weeks went by.

I personally believe that on the other side of that cloud, if you like, another cloud parted, and God took Moses into the eternal dwelling place of God and basically said, Moses, I want you to imbibe of the atmosphere, the environment, the culture, if you like, that you are in right now, and what I want you to do, I want you to replicate that on earth. I want the same conditions that you are in here to be duplicated or replicated on earth. Now, it may not have happened exactly that way, but we know, according to Hebrews, that the tabernacle on earth was a copy of the true tabernacle which is in heaven, and it would seem to me that that was what God did, that he said, this is my eternal dwelling place, and I want the same conditions on earth as I do in heaven, so make sure, Moses, you make it exactly like this, and so God gives Moses something like 64 chapters, I believe it is, if I can recall that somewhere in that vicinity.

We have like two dealing with creation, something like 60 plus dealing with the tabernacle, and God goes into every single minute detail as to how he wants his house to be built, the type of material, some things are overlaid with silver, some things are made of gold, some things are made of bronze, and so on, and then he says, I want you to arrange the furniture in a particular order. In other words, there is no liberty given to Moses whatsoever. Moses can't get together with his sort of planning committee and say, you know, I think God's a little behind times, you know, these bright purples and blues, and those sort of went out in the 60s, we're into more muted colors now, and so I think we should change it and make it a little more mellow, and so on, and you know, I think this room is a little too small, I think if we enlarge that a little bit, and you know, no, God emphatically declared to Moses, make it exactly according to the pattern.

Now keep in mind that from the Old Testament to the New Testament, there is a change in God's house, but there is no change when it comes to the requirements. The house now is this house. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, whose house we are, it says in Hebrews.

But even though the house has changed, if you like, the elements that God is looking for, the environment, the atmosphere is to be just the same. Now you can tell a lot about a person by visiting their home. There's been times when I've been picked up at the airport by either a pastor or one of his staff and driven

to a home, and they've said, you know, you're going to be staying with one of our board members this weekend.

They've invited, they've asked if they could host you, they've got a beautiful home, and maybe we drive into some sort of gated community or something, and drives in, takes the key out, and he says, they're not home right now, they're both working, but they've told me to get you settled, they're going to be home in about an hour or so, they plan on taking you for a meal, and we'll see you about seven o'clock, and after getting me settled in the house, show me the bedroom where I'm going to be staying, he drives off, and here I am home alone. I've never been in this home before, I've never met these people before, but I can tell you a tremendous amount about them. I can tell you if they're rich or poor, I can tell you if they're clean or unclean, I can tell you if they're neat or sloppy, I can tell you their likes and dislikes, all I've got to do is look at the home, the atmosphere that I'm in, and I can tell you a tremendous amount about those people.

Maybe we come through the garage, and there's some jet skis, and some outdoor equipment, and I think these people are really into sports. Maybe I go into the den, and I would never go into a private room, like a bedroom or something, but maybe I go into the den, and here's some heads of animals or something, mounted or some fish, and I think this guy's into hunting, he's into fishing. Maybe as I walk down the hallway, I glance in one room, and there's a baby crib, and I think, well, they've got a baby or a grandchild.

Maybe I pass another room, there's posters everywhere, and I think they've got teenagers, and I look around, the type of art they've got, maybe it's modern art or fine art, real art. I look at the type of furniture, maybe it's antique, or maybe it's contemporary, and all of that reflects on the person that's there. Maybe I look in the bookcase, and I see books about law, and I think, well, this is a home of a lawyer.

Maybe the books are all about medicine, I think this is a home of a doctor. Maybe there's a whole bunch of cookbooks, and I think this is going to be a great weekend. But all I've got to do is look at the environment that I'm in, and it tells me about the person that lives there.

Now, having said that, let's turn to the book of Revelation, because we are now going to go into the true tabernacle, the dwelling place of God, and we're going to gain, I trust, some understanding of the ways of God and what God is looking for, the components that are absolutely essential. These are non-negotiables, they can't be changed, because God is an unchanging God. But in verse 1 of chapter 4, it says, after these things I looked, and behold, a door was standing open in heaven.

So God has a door on his house, like all of us, obviously figurative, I'm sure, and a voice which I heard, John says, like the sound of a trumpet speaking to me, and said, come up here, and I will show you what will take place after these things. So John is here in the spirit on the Lord's day, he's on the island of Patmos, he's been banished because of the testimony of the Lord. He has this glorious revelation, and part of this revelation now, the door of heaven opens, and there is a voice from inside that says, John, welcome, basically, come on in.

And immediately John said, I was in the spirit, and the moment I stepped through that door, he says, verse 2, immediately, I was in the behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and one sitting on the throne. So before John tells us anything else about the house of God, the very first thing that overwhelms him as he steps through that doorway is the throne of God. And guess what? The throne is occupied.

Now what is the throne? The throne obviously is the seat of power, authority, government. It speaks of a king, it speaks of a kingdom, it speaks of the reign of the king, the rule of the king, the supremacy of the

king, the lordship of the king, the dominion of the king, it speaks of the will of the king being done because he extends his scepter from the throne, and he rules, he reigns, and on and on, you obviously are familiar with the throne. God said to Moses, see to it you make it exactly according to the pattern.

Now if Jesus Christ is going to dwell in us, and this is the home that he desires above all homes because he said, you know, the heavens and the heavens of heavens cannot contain me, and yet God dwells with the contrite and the broken and so on. But if he is going to dwell in your life and my life, he demands the throne. This is a non-negotiable.

We talked about that the first night. This is an issue that has to be settled. There's no way out.

You cannot say, well, God, listen, you're welcome. I've got a big house here, you know, you're welcome to any other place in the house, but let's get one thing straight, I'm the king of the castle. And you can have access to every other area of my life, but I want you to know this, that I'm going to call the shots.

It doesn't work that way. If Jesus Christ is going to have his rightful place, he has to have the throne. Most married men have a throne.

It's called a lazy boy. And they sit in that throne and extend their scepter, and they rule. And if they have children, especially children that have any sense at all, I'm talking about anybody over the age of five, and they are sitting on the throne when the king walks in, woe betide them if they continue to sit on that throne.

They know that's dad's chair, that's the king's chair, and they're going to just automatically, as the king approaches, hop off if they know what's good for them. Now we need, again, to understand seriously God's longing for the throne of your life. Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

See to it, Moses, you make it exactly according to the pattern. There was only one person really that seriously challenged the throne of God. His name was Lucifer, one of the created beings that God made.

Most theologians believe that he was right up there in the top hierarchy of God's government, one of the archangels along with Gabriel and Michael and so on. And one day he looked at the throne of God, and he says, you know, God, I want to take my throne, and I want to put it over your throne. In other words, from now on you're going to be subordinate to me.

I'm going to be in charge. I'm going to call the shots and so on. Of course, we know what happened to Lucifer.

He became the devil. It's a serious thing to threaten, if you like, the throne of God. And so if we're going to move again from visitation to habitation, he has to have his rightful place.

He wants to come and reign and rule in your life. He wants to be Lord of all. That little song, Jesus be the Lord of all the kingdoms of my heart, your financial kingdom, your emotional kingdom, your volitional kingdom, and so on and so forth.

All those kingdoms have to come under his kingdom. The next thing that John becomes aware of, we'll come back to the throne. Verse 8, and the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings are full of eyes around and within, and day and night they do not cease but to say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God the Almighty.

John now becomes aware that he is in a place of absolute holiness. What is holiness? Holiness really is spiritual health. One of the words for holiness has that connotation of health.

As Americans, we are obsessed with health, aren't we? I forget how many billions of dollars a year go into health-related products, whether it's running shoes, Nike, Adidas, or whatever it is your preference is, to popping vitamin pills, to exercise equipment, and so on. We spend billions of dollars, and the moment we get a pain that persists for any length of time, we're off to whoever we think we need to go to, the dentist, the chiropractor, the doctor, you know. We want that thing diagnosed.

We want some sort of treatment prescribed. We want to get rid of that thing because we know it may be life-threatening, and so let's say it happens during the camp here, and you wake up in the middle of the night with some sort of intense pain. You've never had it before, you know, radiating down your arm or something, and man, you know, first thing you do in the morning, you try and contact the doctor.

Let's say it's Monday morning. Call the doctor and say, I need to get an appointment, and she said, well, he's got a very busy schedule this week. We can see you Friday afternoon at four o'clock.

What do you do? We all do the same thing. Listen, if there's a cancellation, please notify me. Let me know.

We want to get in there. We want that thing, you know, some diagnosis. We want some sort of prescription.

We want to get on some sort of medication because we know that may be serious, and we want to get it treated. But when it comes to the sickness of sin, we never go to the great physician. We will allow bitterness and lust and pride and envy and anger and all these things to fester away within us, discord with another brother or sister or whatever, and it will go on for years, and we never go to the physician, and it is far more deadly than any physical sickness.

And holiness is simply spiritual health. As the old hymn says, nothing between my soul and the Savior. Being able to look God in the eye without having to drop your head.

I think all of us can remember when we were kids and dad would say to us, Johnny, look at me, you know. Did you beat up on, you know, your sister or whatever, you know. You know if you catch his eye, you're in trouble, and so your head drops.

And dad knows I'm not going to get anywhere until I can look at him. Once I look at him, he's going to either burst into tears or I'm going to know immediately, you know. But we should be able to look in the face of God again with a clear conscience.

Holiness of life. Notice something about this holiness. In verse 8 it says that these living creatures never cease by day or by night to say, holy, holy, holy.

In other words, there is a consistent state of holiness. It doesn't happen on a Sunday morning from 10 o'clock to 12 that all of a sudden the atmosphere changes and it gets, you know, very sort of pious and so on. No, it doesn't matter if you go into the presence of God at three o'clock on Friday afternoon, two o'clock on Monday morning, there is no change.

And God is looking for that in our own life. A consistency. Steve Hill, one of the things he used to thunder away at night after night in Pensacola, he would make a statement like this, if you can sit at home on a

Friday night and put a VCR or a DVD in your player and watch something that you could not watch with the rest of the congregation on a Sunday morning on a big screen without feeling embarrassed, you're not even saved.

In other words, God does not have a dual standard, one for the church and one for the privacy of your own home, whereby you can sort of lower the bar, lower the standard. Well, it's just me and my wife and a little bit of nudity, a little bit of cussing and swearing and so on. Well, that's okay, you know.

But if the pastor walked in or some of your friends walked in, you know, you'd be frantically trying to switch channels or turning red, hopefully, because I don't want them to know I watch that sort of stuff. You see, day or night, they do not cease but to say, holy, holy, holy. In the Old Testament, we have the story of Noah, and I'm sure you're familiar with it.

At the end of the period of rain, the 40 days, Noah has to determine whether it's safe to go outside of the ark. There are no portholes in the ark. The only light is

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