

From Visitation to Habitation

by David Ravenhill

God desires to dwell with His people, creating an atmosphere of holiness and thanksgiving, and we must surrender throne rights and cooperate with the Holy Spirit to make this possible.

Duration: 28:40

Scripture: Exodus 25:8

Topics: "Worship And Holiness", "Gods Presence"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the transition from visitation to habitation with God, focusing on God's desire to dwell among His people. It explores the importance of creating an atmosphere, environment, and culture where God can thrive, highlighting the need to give God the throne of our lives, maintain holiness, offer thanksgiving, and engage in true worship regardless of circumstances.

Transcript

I want to speak to you this morning about the habitation of God. I have been convinced for a number of years that God is wanting to move the church from visitation to habitation. I believe that we have experienced some wonderful visitations.

I've been part of those visitations, Pensacola Revival, other moves of God and so on. But there is, I believe, a move coming where we are going to know the habitation of God. My wife and I are here just for a short period of time in your wonderful country, but we are visitors.

And after a few days, you will not see us any longer because we are visiting. But on the other hand, if we were to come and make our abode here, you would see us on a regular basis. And Jesus said in John 14, speaking of the Father, he says, we will come and we will make our abode in you.

And I believe God's longing is he wants to dwell with us. I want to use a few words interchangeably this morning. The word environment, the word culture, the word habitation, the word atmosphere.

All those words have got similarities to them. There's already an atmosphere in this room, a wonderful atmosphere, the presence of God. We could change the atmosphere.

We could turn out the lights. We could light a few candles, bring somebody up on a violin, and we could create a very romantic atmosphere. I believe God is wanting to dwell and looks for a certain atmosphere in which God dwells.

Then there's the word environment. Environment talks about the elements that are necessary for something to survive. And God is looking for a certain environment.

Certain elements have to be there for God to survive, or not survive, but thrive in our lives individually and corporately. There's the word habitation. The word habitation, according to the dictionary, means the usual place that someone or something lives.

The usual place that you find somebody. Do you want to locate your friend? There's the usual place. He's either at work or he's at his apartment or whatever.

And so there are certain places where he dwells. God dwells in certain places. That's his habitation, the usual place that God has found.

And then there is the word culture. Culture of course is the way we are brought up, the values that we have, the things that we like, the things we don't like. You have a totally different culture than my culture.

I've learned to appreciate your culture. In your culture, when you go into somebody's home, you take off your shoes and you go barefoot or put on some slippers or whatever. In America, we don't do that.

It doesn't matter if they just put down brand new carpet and we've got mud on our shoes, we just sort of walk in. You know, who cares? You know, they'll clean it later. Culture.

Now if you take the word culture and you spiritualize it, it becomes the word ways. Teach me your ways, Hooker. God says, my culture is different than your culture.

What I value, you don't value. What I don't value, you do value. So teach me your ways.

Turn with me if you will this morning to Exodus as we begin, Exodus chapter 25 and then we will go over into the New Testament in a few minutes. This chapter begins with God speaking to Moses and I think it's important here that we understand this is not Moses at the end of 40 days of prayer and fasting begging God to come down. He's not sort of twisting God's arm and saying, God, it's about time you paid us a visit.

We haven't seen you for a while. You will know we need you to come and so on. No, this is God taking the initiative.

This is God coming to Moses and he says to Moses in verse 8, I want you to construct a sanctuary for me that I may dwell among you. In verse 8, we have God's desire or God's request. I believe that's an eternal request.

I believe God is the ultimate father and like any father, he wants to be with his family. He wants to be with his children and he says, I don't want to just come and visit you. I want to dwell among you.

He doesn't say to Moses, book me a hotel. I'm going to be passing through. It's been a while since I've been here in Singapore.

My goodness, you're married now. You were just a little kid last time I saw you. Those are your children.

I can't believe it. Boy, I've got to come a little bit more often. No, God says, listen, I want to dwell among you.

I'm not a circuit riding preacher. I don't sort of just go, you know, from place to place, dropping down every once in a while, you know, giving him a few goosebumps and moving on. No, he says, I want to dwell.

I want this to be my home. I want you to get used to my presence. I want to live here.

I want you to live in my presence. I want to live in your presence. So, build me a house that I may dwell among you.

Verse 8, then, we have God's request or God's desire, and then verse 9, we have God's demands or God's requirements. According to all that I will show you, as to the pattern of the tabernacle, the pattern of all the furniture, just so you shall construct it. If I were to use a good Irish expression, God is finicky, he's fussy, he's particular about where he dwells.

Moses, build me a house, that's my desire, that's my request. But Moses, I've got demands also. Build it according to this pattern.

These are my requirements. I will not dwell anywhere. It has to be made exactly the way I tell you.

And of course, we know the story, there's something like 60 chapters devoted to the building of the tabernacle. God took Moses up into the mountain, and the cloud came to obscure him from the eyes of the people. I personally believe that when he was up on that mountain, another cloud sort of parted, and he was brought into the presence of God.

And I believe God said, Moses, look around. This is where I live. This is my eternal dwelling place.

I want you to imbibe of this spirit. I want you to absorb, again, this atmosphere, this environment. This is a place where I dwell.

And what I want you to do, Moses, I want you to replicate this on earth. I want to have the same conditions on earth that I'm used to in heaven. So Moses built it exactly according to the pattern.

Now I can't prove, of course, that that cloud opened and Moses was brought in, but according to the book of Hebrews, the earthly tabernacle was a copy of the true tabernacle, which is in heaven. In other words, it had all the components, all the elements that God needs, if you like. And so we need to understand something about God, that God is an unchanging God.

God is not a God that says, well, this is the 20th century, you know, in the Old Testament I used to be uptight and I used to be very particular and fussy and so on and so forth. But, you know, I've sort of mellowed out a little bit now in the new covenant, and things aren't quite as important, you know, I mean, it doesn't have to be quite as holy as it used to be. It doesn't have to be quite.

No, no, God says, I am the Lord and I change now. With God there's no variableness, there's no shadow of turning, you know, I think a lot of Christians think that those 400 years of silence between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant was when God got born again, you know, that in the Old Testament He's always sort of, you know, uptight, ready to give you a backhand at the slightest little mistake and so on. Now, the New Testament, He's had this amazing conversion experience, took Him 400 years, and now He's sort of mellowed, no, I am the Lord and I change now.

God still has, I believe, an eternal longing to dwell with His people. To dwell with us. We will come, we will make our abode, Ephesians says we are growing corporately into the habitation of God, the dwelling place

of God in the Spirit.

Now, you can tell a lot about a person by visiting their home. You can tell the very moment you walk in whether they're rich or poor, whether they're clean or unclean, whether they have children or no children, whether they're sloppy or neat, the type of furniture they like and so on, I mean, a home reveals a tremendous amount about a person, isn't that right? But you see, this is where they dwell. This is where this person lives and I can tell what they're like, whether they're clean or unclean, whether they're sloppy or tidy, whether everything is very, you know, beautifully placed and so on, all of that reflects the type of individual.

Turn with me to Revelation then because we want to visit the house of God now, the dwelling place of God. Revelation chapter 4, and here we have John, he is invited into God's dwelling place in verse 1, after these things I looked and behold, a door was standing open in heaven. Most houses have doors, that's the way you gain entrance.

Heaven has got a door, I'm sure it's figurative, but nevertheless, the door opens. There is a voice that says, John, come on in, welcome. And John steps through the doorway into the presence of God.

In verse 2, immediately he says, I was in the Spirit and behold, a throne was standing in heaven and one sitting on the throne. Now before John can describe anything else, he said, the moment that door opened and the moment I crossed the threshold, I was in the throne room. The very first thing that captured my attention, the very first thing that caught my attention there was the throne and there was one sitting on the throne.

Now what is the throne? Throne is the seat of government, the seat of power, the place of authority, the place of dominion, the place of lordship, the place of kingship. Again it is the place of judgment. All of those things are represented by the throne.

It's the place of supremacy, the place of authority, the place where the king reigns and rules. It is the very center of everything that represents God's government, isn't that right? And the thing about the throne is John said that there was one sitting on the throne. Moses was told, see to it that you make it exactly according to this pattern.

And the first thing that we need to understand about having God come and dwell within us, if we are going to cultivate an environment, an atmosphere, a habitation, we have to give God the throne. There is no negotiation here. This is not something that is open for discussion.

I think the greatest obstacle to revival in our lives individually, in our own lives corporately, the greatest obstacle to reaching the nations of the earth is this very issue of throne rights. Who is going to have the throne? Am I going to maintain control of my life? Am I going to maintain control of my money? Control of my time? Control of whatever it is? Am I the king of the castle? Or am I prepared to surrender the throne and allow Jesus Christ to come and reign and rule over every facet of my life, over my emotions, over my volition, over my will? Am I prepared for Him to dominate my life where I can bow gladly to His lordship, to His kingship? This is a major issue, isn't it? You see, wherever we go in the Word of God, Revelation chapter 4 really is to me like a condensed version of the Bible in many ways. Swear not by heaven, it is the throne of God.

Heaven is your throne, the earth is thy footstool. Isaiah said, I saw the Lord high and lifted up, sitting upon His throne. You see, the usual place that someone or something is found is the definition of habitation.

And the only place that God is found is on the throne. You never find an empty throne anywhere in the Scriptures, old covenant, new covenant. The throne is always occupied.

That is where God sits. It's the place of rulership, the place of kingship, the place of lordship. And if you and I are going to become the habitation of God, we have to surrender throne rights to Him.

And it is the hardest thing, I believe. But it is absolutely imperative. It is not something, again, that we can negotiate.

Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? Have you abandoned the throne? And you see, God no longer dwells in temples made with hands. But He still wants the throne of your life. And so this is one of those elements, if you like, one of those components that is absolutely essential if we are to understand the ways of God.

If we are to understand the fact that God wants to come make His abode in us. Let's move on. The next thing John becomes aware of is in verse 8, in the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings and their eyes 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 has stepped into a holy place. You see, wherever you find God in the Bible, again, the usual place that God is found, the only place that God is found is in a holy place. It doesn't matter whether you're Moses on the backside of the desert walking along one day looking after your father-in-law's sheep and all of a sudden you see a burning bush.

And it wasn't the fact that the bush was burning that caught his attention, it was the fact that it was not consumed. In other words, it didn't just burst into flames and 30 seconds later it's gone, it kept on burning. And he thought, that's strange that it would keep burning that long, these things normally just last a few seconds and he went over and as he got within a certain range, the Spirit of God says, Moses, take your shoes off your feet.

The place you stand is holy ground. Or whether it's going into the house of God, you go through the outer court and the holy place and into the holy of holies, God is always found in a holy place. It's Isaiah goes into the house of God and the seraphim are crying out, holy, holy, holy.

That's where God dwells. Now, what is holiness? Holiness is simply spiritual health. If I were to give it a very simple definition, spiritual health is an old hymn that says nothing between my soul and the Savior.

That's holiness where you can look God in the eye without having to drop your head in embarrassment or shame. Paul says, I exercise myself to maintain a conscience void of offense between God and man. I can look God in the eye without having to drop my head in embarrassment or feeling guilty about something.

And holiness, again, is spiritual health. It's walking in the light as he is in the light. In the Old Testament, we have the story of Noah.

At the end of that period of time, Noah has to determine when the rains had ceased, if it was dry enough to open the door and let out all the animals and so on. The only light that is coming in is divine light. The light

was, the window was in the roof, seemingly there were no portholes, he couldn't look out and say, you know, it stopped raining now for five days and the ground is beginning to crack, it's dry, it should be okay to go out.

No, he doesn't know. And so he releases a raven. The raven flew around, but the problem with a raven is it's an unclean bird.

And a raven will settle on any sort of debris, any sort of carcass, maybe some bloated carcass floating on the surface of the deep. And Noah could not determine that the waters had settled or abated. And so he waits and then he releases a dove.

And the Bible says when he released the dove, the dove flew around, but it says, but there was no resting place for the sole of her feet. And so Noah took the dove back in, waited for seven days, released the dove again. And at the end of seven days, the dove came back with a freshly picked olive branch in a beak.

And Noah knew that the waters had settled. You see, the dove and the raven are two different sort of characters. The dove will not settle where the raven will settle.

The dove, of course, is a type of the Holy Spirit. It's the first mention, the very first clear mention of the dove being a type of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of God will not rest where the raven will rest.

And we need to understand that it is the Spirit of God that dwells within us. We were to be theological, it is not Jesus that lives in you. I know we say that to children.

Jesus is standing at the door and knocking, you know, if you open the door, Jesus wants to come into your heart. Well, technically, Jesus is at the right hand of the Father. He has a body like yours and mine now, a resurrected body, of course, but it is the Spirit of God that dwells within us.

Our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, and it is that same Holy Spirit that is so easily grieved and so sensitive. And we need to understand, He wants to come. He wants to make His abode in us, the Spirit of God Himself.

But He won't settle anywhere. Why? Because He is the Holy Spirit of God. You know, I think God sometimes is invited into some strange places.

He says, this is not what I expected. This is so contrary to my home, the attitude is wrong, there's sin going on, and so on. Now, God is patient, thank God for that.

And as long as we cooperate with the Spirit of God, He will highlight things, clean this up and do that. And as long as we respond, obviously, that's His job to lead us and guide us. But once we begin resisting the call of God, then we begin to grieve the Spirit of God, we begin to quench the Spirit of God when we're no longer walking in cooperation with Him.

And so, we need to understand that God dwells in a holy place. The next thing we find is in verse 9, and when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sits on the throne, to Him that lives forever and ever, John now becomes aware that he is in a place of thanksgiving, where they glorify God, they honor Him. I remember Jack Hayford many, many years ago when I was in New Zealand, I turned on the radio one night and Jack Hayford was on there every single day in New Zealand on the radio station.

There was only one Christian radio station, I believe that's still the case. But Jack Hayford took a little portion of Scripture and the Scripture he took was this, is this not the carpenter of Nazareth, referring to Jesus. And as only Jack Hayford can, he underscored the word, the carpenter.

He said, I believe in Nazareth, there were many carpenters. He said, but if you wanted a job done, maybe you wanted to refurbish your kitchen or add an addition to the house or something, and you made inquiries and you said, listen, would you, could you recommend a carpenter? The last time I had somebody do something, he wasn't very good, he didn't do a very good job and the trim is beginning to come off and so on, you know, could you recommend a carpenter? And he said, without exception, they would say, the carpenter of Nazareth is Jesus. And then he went on to say, you should be the schoolteacher of Singapore, the plumber, the mechanic, the lawyer, the this, the that, because in whatever you do, in word or deed, do all to the glory of God.

And in heaven, everything glorifies Him. Long before Jesus ever did a miracle, the Father says, I'm pleased with you, my son. This is my beloved son, I'm pleased with you.

But let me move on to this area of thanksgiving, because this is an area that I believe God is a real stickler on. Again, this is not open to negotiation. We enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.

God inhabits the praise of His people. That is the atmosphere that God dwells in. God said to the children of Israel, because you did not serve the Lord your God with gratitude for all of the abundance of the things that He gave you, therefore you will serve your enemies.

In other words, God says, if you don't appreciate the way I treat you, if you don't appreciate my goodness, I daily load you with benefits, the psalmist says. You every morning, your mercies, and great is your faithfulness. But He said, if you don't appreciate that, I'll let you serve the enemy for a while.

And then, in comparison, maybe you'll begin to appreciate me. When the enemy has given you a rough time, when the enemy has stripped you and used you and abused you and everything else, then you'll come back and you'll appreciate your father's house. Sounds like a father, doesn't it, who is disciplined in a child.

You know, God is a disciplinarian too, isn't He? He said to the children of Israel, lo, these ten times you've murmured against me, therefore you will not go in to the promised land. One of the reasons they never made it into the promised land. Oh, and not just because of immorality, that was one of the things, and so on, but murmuring was one of the things that kept them out.

And God says, if you are going to complain, I think when we get to heaven, there'll be a big sign over the main entrance, no whiners in here, you know. Change your attitude or stay outside, you know, you're not going to corrupt. I dwell in an atmosphere of thanksgiving.

Romans 1, when they knew God, they honored Him not as God, neither were they grateful or thankful, therefore God gave them over to a reprobate mind. All has to do with thanksgiving, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. So John now understands, you see, wherever you go in the word of God, all these things apply.

God is always on the throne. He's always in a place of absolute holiness, and He's always surrounded with thanksgiving. Again, the psalmist understood it, we enter in, we better bring with us thanksgiving.

That's why we have our worship time. It is to create an atmosphere for God to come and dwell within us. And then the last thing is worship.

Verse 10, and the 24 elders will fall down before Him that sits on the throne and will worship Him. My father used to define it this way, prayer is preoccupation with our needs, praise is preoccupation with our blessings, and worship is preoccupation with God alone. You see, prayer is a preoccupation with my needs, God heal me, God protect me, God bless me, God restore me, God whatever it is, and praise is thank you for healing me, thank you for restoring me, thank you for blessing me, thank you for providing this, thank you for and so on.

But worship is a preoccupation with God regardless of my circumstances. His worship never changes. And the greatest acts of worship in the Word of God were never in association with music.

I know that's hard for some of us to swallow, that doesn't mean of course that you can't have worship and music together, but the greatest acts of worship, the first time worship is ever mentioned in the Word of God, it's mentioned in the life of Abraham. And Abraham of course has been challenged by God time after time to give up certain things, he had to give up his family, give up his relatives, give up his country, and so on. He passes all of those tests with flying colors, and then when he's an old man, a hundred years of age, of course he has a son by the name of Isaac, that child of promise.

As the boy grows, there's this incredible bond between father and son, they are inseparable. One day as they're walking along, I think God looked down and momentarily becomes jealous, and he thinks, you know, Abraham loves that boy more than I've ever seen a father love a son. In fact, I know that he loves me more than his mother and father because he was willing to leave them.

I know he loves me more than the old homestead because he was willing to leave that. He loves me more than his particular culture and country because he was willing to leave that. But I'm not sure he loves me more than he loves that boy.

So he says, Abraham, we need to talk. I want you to take your son, your only son, Isaac, I want you to put him on the altar. And the Bible says Abraham rose early in the morning.

Oh, I would have slept in. I would have taken a sleeping tablet, I would have pulled the blinds, I would forget to set the alarm, I'd have done whatever I could to postpone the inevitable, but no, Abraham rose early that morning. He saddles the donkey, he gets some wood, he gets some of his servants, they go on a three-day journey.

When he comes to Mount Moriah, God says, this is the place, and he turns to his servants and said, you, you guys hang out here for a while. I and the lad will go yonder and we will worship. There's no music, there's no choir, no string instruments, just radical obedience.

And Abraham was willing to take extravagant love, the love of that boy. In fact, God says to him, I want you to take your son, your only son, whom thou lovest. And then when he puts him on the altar and he's ready to plunge that knife in, God says, okay, stop.

Now I know that you love me. Because you've withheld, because you've not withheld your son, your only son, and God doesn't add any longer, whom thou lovest. Because Abraham has proved his love for God surpassed the love of Isaac.

That's worship. I don't know what your Isaac is this morning, but we all have an Isaac. Now notice as we close, something about this worship.

Verse 10, and the 24 elders will fall down before him who sits on the throne and will worship him. Whatever's on the throne is what you worship. Let me say that again, whatever is on the throne of your life is the object of your worship.

That thing that you have withheld from God, God says, listen, I want you to give me a everything. You say, God, you can have all of this, but you can't have this. I'm going to withhold that.

This is the object of your worship right here. That thing that you withhold from God. It may be a boyfriend, it may be a girlfriend, it may be some other area of your life.

You see, you worship whatever is on the throne. And if we are going to understand the habitation of God, the dwelling place of God, not only corporately, but especially individually, these components have to be in place. These elements have to be in place.

Again, we can't negotiate, they're not changeable. He has to have the throne. He's the king of kings and the Lord of lords.

He's the great king. He reigns over the affairs of men. He's sovereign, but he's also a holy God and he dwells in a holy place.

He's God that's worthy of our worship, worthy of our thanksgiving. All of these things are absolutely essential. Moses make it exactly according to the plan.

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