

# Habitation or Visitation?

by David Ravenhill

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*The speaker challenges the traditional view of communion as a mechanical ordinance, and instead presents it as a time of spiritual warfare and a declaration of God's supremacy over all powers of darkness.*

**Duration:** 1:02:30

**Scripture:** Genesis 22:1-2, Psalm 68:19, Lamentations 3:22-23, Mark 6:3, Romans 1:21, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Thessalonians 5:18

**Topics:** "Presence of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by discussing the significance of the earthly tabernacle as a representation of God's dwelling place throughout eternity. He then uses the analogy of visiting someone's home to illustrate how we can learn about a person by observing their living space. The speaker describes a hypothetical scenario of visiting a friend's house and being able to discern details about their family and lifestyle. Drawing from this analogy, the speaker transitions to Revelation chapter 4, where he explores the concept of entering into God's house. He emphasizes that this chapter provides profound insights into the nature and character of God.

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## Transcript

Let me just share something before I get into the message that I will put as a suggestion to you, and that is regarding communion. All my life I was raised, obviously, in a Christian home and went to church, and over the years been in numerous churches. You know, some have it every week, some have it once a month, and so on.

But it's always bothered me a little bit that it was treated almost like a sort of a P.S. at the end of the letter. You know, everybody being served, pass out the emblems, okay, brother back there, somebody over here needs to be served, and then brother so-and-so, would you pray for the bread, and sister so-and-so, would you pray for the cup, and sort of down the hatch and out the door, and it was just sort of treated like a mechanical thing. And the last church I passed at, I really became challenged about communion because the only ordinance that God left us really in the New Testament apart from marriage is baptism on the Lord's table.

Those are the only two things, and you think there's got to be something more significant. If Jesus said, you know, do this as often as you do this, and remember it's me. And so I started studying, and I got into a revelation there where it says, behold, I stand at the door and knock, and I want to come in and sup with

you.

And I realized that, you know, the evening meal in the natural was the time where the family got together. There was no television going on. There was no radio.

The night cometh when no man can work. There was no electric lights. And so they would sit around the table, and it was a prolonged sort of family sharing time basically where maybe the head of the house would, you know, he's just come back from Memphis or something, and he gives the latest news, and, you know, it was sort of the newspaper, and how are you doing, and how was school today, or, you know, something about the farm.

But it was a time of fellowship. And I said, when you have a meal, you don't sit the way you're sitting now. No matter how big a family you have, you don't sit looking at the person's head in front of you.

You sit around the table. And the best table, of course, is a round table because that way everybody's equal, and you can see the family. And so I would go down to the auditorium, and I would take the chairs, and I would put them in two semicircles.

And we'd have maybe a couple of hundred people at max that would come. And I did it on a Wednesday night instead of Sunday morning because the church was a little too big at that stage. And we would put the emblems in the middle and a microphone on either end.

We'd dim the lights a little bit, sometimes bring in a stand lamp to create a sort of more homey, relaxed atmosphere rather than the typical church atmosphere where everybody tends to freeze. And then I would say, if you're visiting, this is not our usual Wednesday night teaching service. This is what we call family time.

And we only have one rule, and that is no preaching. Because you always get some young guy or gal or whatever that thinks they're going to show up the pastor by hugging the microphone. And I said, this is a time where we encourage you, let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Each one has a psalm, a hymn, a spiritual song. And so we would have maybe 10 or 15 minutes of worship, and it would all be centered around the cross and the blood and just the death of Christ. And then we would open it up, the microphones, and we'd say keep it to five minutes or less, but share what God is doing in your life.

Maybe it's a scripture that God has quickened to you. Maybe it's a problem you're going through that God has dealt with you on. Maybe it's a little passage from my utmost for the highest, whatever it is.

Maybe you wrote a poem. Maybe you want to teach us a new song, whatever it is. But we want to hear what God is doing in your life.

And people would line up at those two microphones. We'd literally - there was never a meeting where I didn't have to shut it down and say, okay, one more here, one more at that end. The young people would come in.

And then after the final one, we'd just leave the table as it was. Very seldom do we ever pass out communion. And we'd say, when you feel ready, come up with your family and partake.

Now we had about 30 single mothers there and students and so on. And we'd say, listen, when you come up and you break bread with your family, invite one other single person to come into your sort of family circle, if you like, and then break bread together and pray as a family. And so the meeting would close with these little pockets of believers all over the auditorium praying for each other and breaking bread.

And I have to say it was my favorite meeting. We only did about every six weeks. I think if I passed it again, I don't know how I would do it if the church was too big on a Sunday morning.

But certainly in your setting, we've got such a divide, and there has been in the body of Christ for so long, between the laity and the clergy. And yet the church, which is His body, I am not the body of Christ. I'm a member, but so are you, and members in particular.

And we need to hear what God is doing. And I used to call it the dipstick of the church for me as a pastor because you always misjudge somebody. Maybe they don't dress the way you think is appropriate or whatever, and you already write them off before they even open their mouth.

We're all guilty of that. And maybe that same individual would stand up and share what God is doing in their life, and I would have to repent on the spot and say, my goodness, that person is way more spiritual than I am, and God's obviously speaking to them. But it was a great time of sharing.

Sometimes a theme would come out. Somebody would share about God's been dealing with me about unforgiveness, and the next person would say, well, that's interesting. That's something that I've been battling lately and so on.

And before you know it, there's a whole theme that would come out that would happen many times. But it was just a great time of letting the church really be the church instead of the setting where we're just looking at the person in front of you and say, you know, they dyed their hair a different color this week, or this guy needs a haircut, or whatever. We're looking at one another's heads.

So let me just suggest to you that that, because I think your communion at least is a little better than the quick P.S. But I think there's something about communion. Let me share this. It's coming back to me now.

A friend of mine from years ago, a prophetic brother, said that God spoke to him once and said, the highest form of spiritual warfare is the communion. And I think there's a tremendous amount of revelation we still have to have about communion. But you recall, if I can just take you back for a moment into Exodus 12, which is the first communion, obviously the Passover.

And one of the things that God promised during that, if you like, first communion, verse 12, I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and I will strike down all the firstborn of the land of Egypt, both of men and of beasts, and against all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgment. I am the Lord. So one of the things that happened with the very first Passover, God declaring his supremacy over all the gods of Egypt.

And let's face it, those were principalities and powers. Because when Moses threw down his rod, it became a serpent, but it was no big deal because the Egyptians were able to do the same. In other words, they were operating in a tremendously powerful demonic realm.

But God says, I'm going to show you that I am the Lord. And of course, in the final communion, if you like, the final Passover, Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us, the Bible says he stripped Satan and made an open show of him. And so when we take these emblems, we are declaring a major, the most

major victory that was ever accomplished.

And we've got to take it with that realization. And sometimes when we just sort of do it, it becomes mechanical. But if we can honestly say, listen, what this represents, what these emblems represent is the ultimate triumph over all the powers of darkness.

And we can celebrate this feast. The first Passover, again, Miriam grabbed the tambourine. I mean, it was a celebration.

It really was. The other thing is, my father republished an old book many, many years ago called Christ's Paralyzed Church X-Ray. Crazy old, long title like they used to have in the old.

But this guy was an expert in Greek and Hebrew. And what he says about communion is interesting. I've never tried to document it, and I'm not an expert when it comes to Greek and Hebrew.

But he takes 1 Corinthians there where it says, For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, because you don't discern the Lord's body. And he said the word discern means to differentiate between. You discern, you know, it's like a jury.

Did this man, you know, kill his wife or is he innocent? You know, we've got to discern. You know, we weigh the evidence. No, I think he's guilty.

No, I don't, you know. And so he says, because we don't discern the difference between what the cup represents and what the bread represents, for this cause many of you are sick. And he said the cup we recognize, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, you know, that cleanses from all sin.

But he says the body, this is my body, by my stripes you're healed. And because we fail to make a distinction between the two, now this is what he brings out in the Greek, because we fail to distinguish, for this cause many are weak and sickly. In other words, you're not appropriating what I've done.

You appropriate cleansing, but you don't appropriate healing. And so if that's true, and, you know, I'm taking a Greek expert on that, but then, you know, there's even more significance in our times together. This doing remembrance of me.

And we bring Christ back into, you know, in the real place of centrality, remembering what He did. He triumphed over all the powers of darkness. He triumphed over sin, sickness, and so on.

And this is why he said, listen, do this. As often as you, you know, as often as you do this, you just show the Lord's death until He comes. So, you know, I just thought I'd share that with you, and maybe God will give you even more revelation.

But I've always felt it's one of those ordinances that is treated so mechanically, I guess. And there's revelation yet to be revealed, I believe, on it. And that's a little taste of it.

But I do think it was, you know, it was a time where it was followed by a meal. It was part of a meal. You've already got that in place, because, you know, the rich guys were always hogging down the stuff where the slaves couldn't get the food.

They were getting drunk. And, you know, there was a bit of a schmuzzle going on there in the Corinthian church. But, you know, we're a far cry from that.

But it was a time where the family, the church, got together and had a meal. But that was sort of the crowning part of the meal was the Lord's table. So, anyway, I thought I'd just share that with you.

Turn with me to Exodus, if you will, chapter 25. I want to begin in the Old Testament, and we'll jump into the New Testament here in a moment. I want to talk to you about the habitation of God.

The habitation of God. I have felt for many, many years that God is wanting to take the church from visitation to habitation. I have been a part of some of the visitations.

I was a part of the Pensacola revival, and it was a visitation. It was a five-year visitation, but it was a visitation. But I believe there's one step beyond visitation, like I say, and it's habitation.

I am visiting you here in Bondsedale. I don't know if I got it right. Anyway, but I spent the night down the road here in Bottlesville.

I was in a hotel, so I was a visitor. Now, if that hotel said to me, listen, you're one of the best guests we've ever had, and we want to donate that suite to you, and we'd love you to move here, and that becomes my permanent habitat, then that room would change. Right now, I don't have the right to change it because I'm a visitor.

But the moment that room becomes mine and it's my habitat, then I'm going to make it conducive to my personality. It's going to reflect my personality, the way I decorate it, the pictures I put on the wall, the way I arrange the furniture, and so on and so forth. And I believe God wants to take us from visitation to habitation.

In other words, He promised in John 14, we will come and we will make our abode in you. In other words, we shouldn't have to constantly run to some hot spot to get topped up, spiritually speaking. He wants to come and dwell within us.

And here in Exodus chapter 25, He's expressing that desire to Moses. In verse 8, He says, I want you to construct a house for me, a sanctuary, that I may dwell among you. In other words, that's the longing on the heart of God.

This is God initiating this. This is not Moses at the end of 40 days of prayer and fasting, twisting God's arm and saying, God, we really want you. Won't you please consider coming and living amongst us? This is God saying to Moses, I want to live amongst you.

After all, He's a father. And like any father, and He's the ultimate father, He wants to be with His family. God is no exception.

And so in verse 8, God expresses His desire. This is the desire of God. I believe it's an eternal desire because God never changes.

And if you like, instead of the word desire, it's God's request. God's desire or God's request. Now, if verse 8 is eternal, and I believe it is, He wants to dwell with us, then so is verse 9. Verse 9 says, according to all that I'm going to show you, as to the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of the furniture, just so you shall construct it.

So in verse 8, you've got God's desire. In verse 9, you've got God's demands. In verse 8, you've got God's request.

In verse 9, you've got God's requirements. What we learn in verse 9 is that God is finicky, to use a good Irish expression. He's fussy.

He's particular. He said, listen, I won't dwell anywhere. I want to dwell with you.

That's my desire. But in order to fulfill my desire, I want the house built according to my plans. And I'm going to give you in the 64 chapters devoted to the house of God, the tabernacles, we call it in the Old Testament, where God went into minute detail as to the type of house that He wanted, the type of furniture He wanted, the color scheme He wanted, where the furniture was to be placed, and all of that, God was incredibly particular.

Now, I believe that what happened is when God called Moses up the mountain and gave him the plan of the tabernacle, obviously a cloud came down. The children of Israel could not see Him there for 40 days or whatever. And I believe on the other side of that cloud, my feeling is another cloud opened, and Moses was brought into the dwelling place of God.

Because God said, listen, Moses, this is where I live. Now what I want you to do, Moses, I want you to sort of replicate this on earth. I want these same sort of conditions here in heaven that I've spent eternity in, I want that replicated on earth.

Now I can almost prove that to you because the book of Hebrews says that the true tabernacle, or the earthly tabernacle, was a copy of the true tabernacle which is in heaven. It was a copy. In Acts it says that Moses made it according to what he was shown on the mount.

In other words, he saw it. It wasn't a blueprint that sort of suddenly materialized in front of him. God obviously gave him a revelation.

And so the earthly tabernacle contained the basic essence, if you like, of what God has been living in throughout all of eternity. And so what I want to look at now is, if you turn with me to Revelation 4, let's look at God's house. Because you can tell a lot about a person by visiting their home.

This is where people get nervous when I've been in their home. And Jeremy is renting a house there, and he's got a bunch of kids. But if Jeremy was out of the house, and the kids were all out of the house, his wife was out of the house, and Jeremy said to me, listen, take my keys and I'll be home in an hour.

I want you just to relax. We're going to give you a meal in a little while or whatever, but here's the keys, make yourself home. The moment I walk into that house, I can tell a lot about Jeremy, even though I've never met him.

I can look at the toys. I can tell neat, tidy, clean, unclean, boys, girls. All you've got to do is look around.

You can go into anybody's home. The moment you cross the threshold, especially if they've lived there for any length of time, you can tell the type of person that lives there. Again, whether they're clean or sloppy, whether they're rich or poor, what type of furniture they like.

You look at the artwork, whether it's modern art or real art. All of that tells you about the person. You can look at the type of furnishings.

If you come in through the garage and there's jet skis and golf clubs and fishing rods, you know that somebody in the family loves fishing or playing golf. All you've got to do is be in that house where that

person dwells, and the house itself tells you about the person. I remember being in Florida a number of years ago, and the church called a week or so before I got there and said, listen, brother, you're coming down here.

The secretary said, in a couple of weeks. We were wondering rather than book a hotel for you, if you would mind staying in somebody's condo. We have a gentleman in the church that has a condo, and he doesn't use it very often.

It would give you a little bit more room. You're going to be with us for three days or whatever it was. I said, sure, that's fine.

The pastor picked me up at the airport, drove me to this apartment complex. The moment I stepped through the door, I knew it was single. There were no curtains.

There was a couple of speakers about twice the size of these ones on either side of the monstrous television. There was a coffee table with four-wheeler magazines and dirt bikes and magazines and so on stacked there. Everything about it was masculine, everything about that place.

I knew I wasn't married. I knew there were no kids or no kids' toys or anything, no little frilly things. The refrigerator was absolutely bare and so on and so forth.

So I knew what sort of a place it was just by being in the house. Now, Revelation 4, we enter into the house of God, and this is what I want to look at with you because this is, to me, one of the greatest chapters on the sort of nature and character of God is revealed here as we step into the house of God. John, as you know, is on the Isle of Patmos.

He's in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and this is what he describes. Verse 1, After these things I looked, and behold, a door was standing open in heaven. So like any house, you know, God's house has got a door.

I'm sure it's figuratively speaking. And he says a voice like the sound of a trumpet speaking to me said, Come up here, and I will show you what will take place after these things. So John, the door of heaven opens.

There's a voice inside that basically says, John, welcome, come on in. Verse 2, Immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and one sitting on the throne. So the very first thing that John becomes conscious of, he crosses that threshold from sort of earth to heaven.

He is now in the eternal dwelling place of God. If you and I died this moment, this is what we would see basically. And the first thing that he is captivated by is the throne of God.

And on that throne, God Himself is seated. He said there was one sitting on the throne. There's no help wanted sign.

There's no vacancy apply within. Now the throne obviously speaks of dominion, speaks of a king, of a kingdom, speaks of a place of supremacy, a place of authority. It's from the throne that God stretches out, or the king stretches out his scepter and says rule, and so on.

It's a place of headship, lordship, you know, everything that we associate with a king. I know as Americans we have a difficult time, you know, thinking of a kingdom, although this is the closest presidency to a kingdom you could get. But Frank and I know a little differently there in being a British background.

You know, we have a monarchy and we know what the throne is about and so on. But, you know, it's the seat of power. It's the seat of authority.

It's the place of supremacy. It's the very center, the very core of a kingdom. And what we need to recognize is that if God is going to take His place and dwell in us, because when we go from the old covenant to the new covenant, God no longer dwells in temples made with hands.

He now dwells in this house, whose house we are, Hebrews says. And He wants the same conditions. If we're going to go from visitation to habitation, God says, listen, if I'm going to abide in you, I want the same conditions that I'm used to.

And the very first thing that has to be settled and possibly one of the hardest things to settle in the Christian life is who is going to have the throne of my life. Am I prepared to surrender the throne? Which means to put God in absolutely every area of my life, in control of every area of my life. The thing I battled with as a young believer, in fact I wasn't a believer, but the reason I didn't become a believer until I was 18 years of age, even though I was raised in a God-fearing home.

My father was a hellfire preacher. I knew there was a hell. I knew I was going there.

There's no question about that. There were nights when I could not sleep, thinking if I die tonight, I'm going to hell. I mean, that was very, very real to me.

And I wanted more than anything else to have peace with God. I wanted Jesus Christ as my Savior. But I also wanted it on my terms.

I did not want His Lordship. I just simply wanted Him as my Savior, because that way He ministers to my needs. But when He becomes Lord, then I have to minister to His needs, and I wasn't prepared for that.

Long story short, at the age of 18, I came forward in a meeting, surrendered my life to God. And I say that I believe there's a difference. I think the average church, hopefully this is not an average church, in the average church I would say 80% of the people have given their sins to God, but less than 20%, maybe even 10%, have given their life to God.

There's a big difference. And at the age of 18, I gave my life to God. I wanted to go into the field of graphics.

That was what I enjoyed doing. That was my passion. And I knew somehow that if I gave my life to Christ, He may have another plan than what my plan was.

And I waged war, if you like, from the age of 14 when I became conscious of my need of Christ to the age of 18. It was over this very thing. Who is going to have the throne of my life? And this is the hardest thing, I think, to settle.

Am I prepared to give God His rightful place? He's a king. Every place you see God in the Bible, He is reigning. You know, I saw the Lord high and lifted up.

Why? Sitting on His throne. Heaven is His throne. The earth is His footstool.

He is a king. Not only a king, the king of all kings. And the audacity of the church to say, listen, you're welcome in my house.

You can sit anywhere, but not here. This is my house. I'm in control.

Now, most homes, you know, the king has a throne. In fact, we have a little factory in Siloam Springs where those thrones are made. It's the Lazy Boy factory.

And the king sits there with his scepter. And he says, honey, bring me another Coke. If the kids are old enough, Johnny, bring me a Coke.

You know, the king is watching the program. And woe betide any kid that is sitting on the throne when the king comes in. Isn't that right? You know, we know, hey, that's dad's chair.

You know, I can sit here when he's not around. But boy, the moment dad comes in, kids, you know, sort of scatter. Would to God we had that same attitude, if you like, towards the king of kings.

This is God's place. And am I prepared to abdicate the throne? Am I prepared to get off the throne and say, God, take Your rightful place. Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

So that's the first thing he becomes aware of. Let's drop down to verse 8. The four living creatures, each of them having six wings full of eyes around and within, and day and night they do not cease but to say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. John now becomes aware that he's stepped into a place of absolute holiness.

Twice holy, God's way of, you know, hammering home, if you like, the point that God is a holy God. And as a holy God, He demands holiness. This house is a house of holiness.

And therefore, if He is going to abide in this house, the holy God cannot stand anything that is unholy. And so He immediately sets to work to bring us and conform us into that image where we begin to love what God loves and hate the things that God hates. The word holy, one of the root meanings of one word simply is health.

Spiritual health is holiness. There's an old hymn that says, nothing between my soul and the Savior. You know, when you're a kid and you do something wrong, and mom says, David, did you do it? I say, no, mom, it was Paul.

You know, whatever, you know, we passed the buck. And she said, well, I'll leave that to dad. When he comes home, I'll let him settle it.

Dad comes home, David, did you do? And as long as your head is down, you're fine. You can seemingly, you know, it's a lot easier to lie with your head down. And then dad says, look at me, David.

And you know, you cannot look him in the eye and lie, you know. Nothing between my soul and the Savior. You know, if your head has to drop, you know you're not in the right place with God type thing.

And God wants to bring us to that place where, you know, we are a holy people. Be holy as I am holy. Spiritual health.

You know, would to God we were concerned about our spiritual body as we are about our physical body. You know, you get a twinge of pain that lasts for a few days and lets over a weekend. Monday morning comes, you're not feeling very good.

First thing you're going to do, call the doctor and you want to figure out what's going on. You know, why do I have this pain? I've never had it in this part of my body before and it seems to come and go. It's a strange feeling.

And we want that thing diagnosed. We want the doctor to give us some sort of medication or operation or whatever it is to get rid of it. And, you know, we call Monday morning and the receptionist says, well, boy, he's got a very busy... You know, you can hear the pages turn.

He's got a busy week ahead already. But listen, we've got an opening on Friday morning. And you think, this is Monday morning.

I've tolerated this pain for two days. Now they're asking me to wait another, you know, three or four days. And so you say, listen, if you get a cancellation, would you please call me? Or, if it's bad enough, we head off to the emergency room to get it taken care of.

And yet, when it comes to the sickness of sin, we will go for months if not years, you know, with lust and pride and anger and bitterness and resentment and so on, and never go to the great physician and say, God, I need a spiritual operation. I need some spiritual medication. I need the blood of Jesus Christ just to take this thing out of my life once and for all.

You know, to break this spiritual fever that rages in my body, so to speak. And so holiness is absolutely essential. In the Old Testament, you've got the story of Noah.

You remember Noah at the end of the... if I calculate it right, from the beginning to the end is nine months, which is interesting. But he finally has to figure out, you know, is it safe to go outside the ark? And the only light, from what I can understand, the light came from above. There were no portholes in the side.

He couldn't look out and say, you know, it stopped raining now for the last four days and the ground is drying up and the waters have receded. You know, any day now we'll be able to go out. He couldn't determine any of that, so he releases a raven.

And the raven is an unclean bird. The problem with a raven is it will settle on any sort of environment, whether it's a bloated carcass, you know, full of maggots or whatever floating on the surface of the deep. It feels at home anywhere.

It's an unclean bird. And it says Noah could not determine whether the waters had abated or not. And then he releases a dove.

The dove flies around. The dove comes back. And it says there was no resting place for the sole of her feet.

He waits. A period of time, is it a week? He lets the dove out again. Towards the end of the day, the dove comes back.

She's got a freshly picked olive leaf in her beak. And Noah knows. The waters have receded.

This is fresh life now springing forth, not some slimy leaf that's been buried or floating on the surface of the deep air. This is fresh life. It's dry outside.

We can open the door and we can go out. It's interesting. That's the first mention of the dove, which is a type of the Holy Spirit.

You see, the dove will not settle where the raven will settle. And the Holy Spirit will not settle where any spirit of the world will settle. The most common phrase for an evil spirit in the New Testament is an unclean spirit.

The most common phrase for the Holy Spirit is the holy spirit. Holy spirit, unclean spirit. If I have an unclean spirit, you would expect me to do unclean things.

If I have a spirit of anger, you expect me to get angry. If I have a spirit of lust, you expect me to lust. If I have a spirit of pride, you expect me to go around with my nose up in the air, whatever.

If I have the Holy Spirit, it should manifest itself in a holy life. And so the dove, again, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, the dove would not settle where the raven would settle. My wife and I, I mentioned this morning, lived in New Zealand for 15 years and raised our kids there, at least the older two.

The youngest one was 12 when we came back to the States. But the others graduated from high school, one from college, and another one was in sort of a college at the time. But on vacation time, it was always a dilemma that we faced as to where to go.

We didn't have any aunts or uncles, no grandparents. They were all in the States. And so we always struggled, and they have a different school year than we do in the States.

They have sort of two-week blocks throughout the year. And so we were wondering where we would take them on this particular holiday that was coming up, and somebody recommended a place about two or three hours' drive from where the church was and where we were living. And it was down sort of a gravel road out in the middle of nowhere and beautiful towering mountains on either side and a river going through.

And they said, there's this cabin that you can rent. It's just an idyllic spot and blah, blah, blah. So we booked it sight unseen, put the kids in the car.

They were much younger then and packed a, you know, a week's supply of things and finally found this gravel road winding in. Sure enough, these gorgeous mountains came to this river and pulled in at the farmhouse. And what happens in New Zealand, you know, New Zealand is a sheep country.

There's about 40 or 50 million sheep and at lambing time, you know, 75 to 100 million, something like that. I mean, there's sheep everywhere. And if a farmer dies or retires, he will put his house or farm up for sale and normally the adjacent farm will buy it and expand their operation.

And so what happens is, you know, they buy the adjacent property. They end up with an extra farmhouse and if it's in good shape, rather than tear it down, they will make it available and there's a bureau you can call and you can go on these farm holidays. And this was one of those farm holidays that you could book the place for a week or a month or whatever.

So we pulled into the farmhouse. The lady gave us the keys. She said, you just stay on the road there.

The very next house you come to is the place, you know. We pulled into this gravel driveway, this little cabin of a place. The moment I walked through the door, I knew we'd made a mistake.

The place was absolutely filthy. I mean, I'm talking about filthy. And spring's coming up, you know, through one of the chairs and so on.

We went into the bedroom, which was the only bedroom with a double bed and my wife looked at the mattress and said, darling, I will not sleep on that. And it was a multicolored mattress, but not when it came out of the factory. And anyway, I convinced her that, you know, we could put some newspaper down, which we did and then we had some blankets that were there and then we put our sheet over all of that, you know, and we were tired.

We got the kids settled and I thought, this is not exactly what we expected. The kitchen was literally full of empty alcoholic bottles. Whatever they were, brandy, you know, vodka, something just stacked around the bottom.

I thought, my goodness, you know, who's been living in this place? But I thought, you know, the surroundings are beautiful. We'll be able to go for walks. There's a river there.

We can fish. Kids can swim and blah, blah, So went to bed, woke up in the morning to the pitter patter of rain and the old houses in New Zealand, in fact a lot of them have got just corrugated roof and so, you know, it got louder and louder. By the time I woke up, you know, it was just sort of torrential rain.

Long story short, four days of solid rain. We could not get out of that house and every time I sat down in one of those chairs, you know, I just thought, ew, you know, there was just something about it and I was raised on a farm and, you know, I slept in banana sheds and grass huts in Fiji and YWAM and, you know, I've roughed it, you know, but there was just something about that place. It was not conducive for a family to be there to relax and finally, after four days, I looked at my wife and she looked at me and said, let's go home and we cut our vacation short, I don't know, by, you know, four or five days, dropped the key off and said to the lady, the weather's terrible, we don't want to complain about the facility and got home and I felt like the Pope, you know, I could get down and kiss the ground, you know, my wife tends to be a bit of a perfectionist and, you know, the place was immaculate, you could eat off the floor and I remember going into the living room and sitting down and, I'm at home, this is where I belong, you know, this is my house, it's decorated, I feel at home, you know, I think that's the way God wants to feel.

He wants to say, this is my house, this is my house, you know, I've had time to work on it, I've had time to adapt it, I've had time to change it, let's face it, the moment we get saved, the Bible talks about the washing of regeneration. It's instant. It doesn't matter if you're Al Capone or, you know, whoever, you can be the worst possible criminal in the world, but the moment you repent, instantly you're redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

But it talks about the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. That is a process, isn't it? But ultimately, God wants to renew a still place and as long as we cooperate, obviously, He's happy and that's the job of the Holy Spirit to highlight things and, you know, come up with a honeydew list for God type thing, okay, I'll take care of that guardian, I'll take care of this, you know. But He wants to conform us to His image.

He wants to make this house His home. And, like I say, the first thing is the throne. The second thing He's looking for is holiness in our life.

Absolute holiness. And, we can't, you know, there's no way around it. Wherever God is found in the Bible, He's always found in the holy place.

Moses on the backside of the desert looking after his father-in-law's sheep and all of a sudden the Spirit of God says to him, Moses, you know, the burning bush, he's heading over that direction, the Spirit of God says, take your shoes off your feet, the place you're standing is holy ground. Joshua outside Jericho, remove your sandals, you're on holy ground. Go into the temple or the tabernacle, through the outer court, what, into the holy of holies.

God is always in a place of absolute holiness and that's why He demands holiness in your life and my life. The next thing we come to is in verse 9 and it says, the living creatures will give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sits on the throne. In other words, now John becomes aware not only that this is a holy place, but also it is a place where everything is glorifying and honoring and magnifying the Lord.

Now we could separate those things, you know, give glory, the Bible says, whatever you do, in word or deed, do all to the glory of God. I remember listening to Jack Hayford many, many years ago, driving along the road one night in New Zealand and Jack Hayford took a little scripture. It was from the gospel where it says, is this not the carpenter of Nazareth? And as only Jack Hayford can, he emphasized the word the.

He said, I believe in Nazareth there could have been many carpenters. But he said, if you wanted a good job done, you know, you go on the local Angie's List and the name that would pop up repeatedly would be Jesus of Nazareth. He was the carpenter of Nazareth.

And I remember Jack Hayford saying, listen, you should be the plumber of Bottlesville, the school teacher, the doctor, the this, the that, you know, because whatever you do, in word or deed, do it to the glory of God. But then, let me just pause here for a moment on this whole matter of thanksgiving. It seems to me that God is a real stickler when it comes to thanksgiving.

In other words, He does not like whiners. We know that for a fact. One of the reasons the children of Israel never made it across the finish line, so to speak, was lo, these ten times you've murmured against me.

God hates murmuring. He hates complaining as though somehow God didn't do a good enough job and who am I to blame Him and so on. But we enter into His gates with what? Thanksgiving.

David got that from somewhere. In other words, here, he had a revelation of the dwelling place of God that it's full of thanksgiving. God inhabits the praises of His people.

It's His habitation. And by revelation or whatever way, David understood, God, you're a God that loves music going on constantly, so to speak. In other words, in your house, there is this constant adoration, this constant thanksgiving that is going on continually.

And the same thing should be true in our own lives. Romans 1, when they knew God, they honored Him not as God, neither were they thankful. God gave them over to a reprobate mind.

I mean, thanksgiving is so important. Everything gives thanks. And it's something we've got to cultivate.

If you're not that sort of an individual, begin to change. You know, wake up in the morning. You every morning bring Your mercies and great is Your faith on us.

Lord, You daily load us with benefits. You know, when we consider our lifestyle in America, you know, compared to so many countries around the world, we are, you know, multi, multimillionaires as far as blessings are concerned. You know, you go into a supermarket, you know, you have a problem choosing which cereal to take because you've got a wall that long, you know, of cereals.

You know, you go to Africa and they've got the same sort of gruel day after day, year after year. You know, I mean, if we can't, in other words, if we can't praise God in America, there's no place on earth you can praise God. You know, we live in a land of bounty.

Sure, there's problems and so on, but Thanksgiving is so important. And you can attract the presence of God with Thanksgiving. That's what worship is really all about.

It's not just wasting time before the preacher gets up to preach the message, you know. It's a time where we give back to God that which, you know, honors Him and magnifies Him. Paul and Silas singing there in prison, all of a sudden, God says, that sounds like home.

Prison doors open. At least God comes on the scene, you know. In other words, we can attract the presence of God.

I remember buying my parents' home a number of years ago in East Texas out in the little tin shed that my dad had. There was an old hummingbird feeder. And I got it and washed it, you know, with red flowers and cleaned it up, put a concoction of honey and a little bit of, you know, hot water in it and hung it up outside.

I had not seen a hummingbird all year. Within about three hours, you know, there's a few hummingbirds. The next day, I counted, I think it was 12 hummingbirds vying for that thing, you know.

In other words, they were attracted to the colors and no doubt the scent, I guess, of how they operate. I don't know. But God is attracted to our praises.

He inhabits the praises of His people. And whether it's corporately or individually, we've got to learn. We enter into His gates with thanksgiving.

We come into His house with thanksgiving. And it's something that we've just got to begin to do. You know, I can't, I'm tone deaf when it comes to singing and I didn't know that until those that sing on key told me.

But anyway, somebody heard me singing years ago and said I was a prison singer. And I made the mistake of saying, what is a prison singer? They said somebody who's behind a few bars and missing the key. So that's me.

I'm left-handed to boot. So, you know, I'm not exactly gifted when it comes to music. But I love writing songs and I've got a whole stack of them at home and my wife plays the piano and sings.

But she, it comes out monotone so she gets frustrated and I get frustrated. So, you know, we just had to make peace and they just pile up. But, you know, when I get to heaven, I'm going to make up for lost time.

But I can at least glorify the Lord. The Bible says make a joyful sound. It may not be on pitch, but by the time it gets to heaven, I'm sure God, you know, just as I heard them speak in tongues and their own language, I think by the time God hears it, you know, the pitch comes right.

But we've got to learn to magnify the Lord, don't we? It's so important. This is God's house that we have revealed here. This is the dwelling place of God as John saw it.

And I don't think it's ever changed. All right, the last one. Verse 10, and the 24 elders will fall down before Him that sits on the throne and will worship Him.

Now John becomes aware not only is he in a place of thanksgiving and praise, but he is in a place of worship. And my father used to say that prayer is preoccupation with your needs. Praise is preoccupation with your blessings.

And worship is preoccupation with God alone. In other words, most of our prayers is, you know, God bless me, God heal me, God protect me, God provide for me, whatever. And then our praise is, Lord, thank you for healing me, thank you for providing for me.

But worship is just preoccupation with God regardless of our circumstances. And my dad used to say as he traveled, he'd many times been to a seminary or Bible school and he said, I always look through the curriculum. And he said, I've looked through dozens of curriculums across the United States.

He said, I've yet to find a course on worship. And then he'd be very quick to add, plenty of courses on music. Plenty of courses on music.

And there's all the difference in the world really, not that the two can't operate together, they can, but the greatest acts of worship in the Word of God were never in association with music. Now again, that doesn't mean that you can't worship with music. Obviously, you can't.

But it also means that music is not necessary in order to worship. Because when we think of worship, we always associate it, and most people do, associate it with music. No, it's a hard attitude, isn't it? And there's an old law called the law of first mention or the law of beginnings.

A lot of the old expositors used it when something is mentioned for the very first time in the Bible. It establishes sort of a precedent that gives us insight as to how that theme is used all the way through the rest of the Word of God. And the three greatest acts of worship I think in the Bible, the first one is the first mention, and it's Abraham.

Abraham who God has tested over and over again and he's passed with flying colors. Then he has a son and there's this special bond between father and son. I mean, they're inseparable.

And God looks at Abraham one day and I'm sure in the mind of God He says, you know, this man has obeyed Me explicitly in everything I've asked. He loves Me more than his mother and father because he was willing to leave them behind. He loves Me more than his country because he was willing to leave the country.

He loves Me more than the old farm there because he was willing to leave the homestead. But I'm not sure he loves Me more than he loves this boy. And He says to Abraham, Abraham, I want you to take your son, your only son, whom thou lovest.

And He underscores, I know how much you love this boy and I want you to put him on the altar. And the Bible says Abraham rose early in the morning. That in itself is just sort of pregnant with meaning.

You know, if it had been, David, I want you to take one of your girls and put them on the altar, I'd have taken a couple of Tylenol PM that night and pulled the blankets over my head, forget to set the alarm clock and try to postpone the inevitable. But Abraham gets up early in the morning, saddles his donkey, takes some servants with him, some wood, takes his son. They go on a three-day journey.

You know the story. Come to Mount Moriah. And then God says, okay, this is the place.

Abraham turns to his servants. He says, you guys sort of hang out here for a while. I and the lad will go yonder and we will worship.

There's no music. There's no choirs. There's no string instruments.

And he takes that boy, puts him on the altar, and he's ready to plunge in that knife. That's the first mention of worship in the Bible. Worship is according to Webster's Dictionary.

And Webster, from what I know, whether he was born again the way we would know it or not, I don't know. Somebody came up to me after a meeting once and said that Webster was a very weak child. The rest of the family worked on the farm or something, but Webster couldn't do an awful lot, and so he stayed at home sort of mummy's boy.

But he learned to read, and what he learned to read was the Bible. And then eventually he gave us the dictionary, and many of the definitions are based on Bible words and so on. This is his definition of worship.

This is the 1828 edition. To honor with extravagant love and extreme submission. That's the way he defines worship.

To honor with extravagant love. As the old hymn writer says, we're the whole realm of nature, mind. That we're an offering far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. Extravagant and then extreme submission. Take your only son and be willing to kill him.

And Abraham picks up that knife and God says, okay, stop. Now I know that you love me or you fear me. Because you've not withheld your son, your only son, and he doesn't add any longer, whom thou lovest.

Because he knows that Abraham loves God far more than that boy. That is the first time that worship is ever mentioned. It's that extreme love and loyalty to God that will take and put anything on the altar that God asks us for.

Extreme submission, extravagant love. The next one is, I think, in the life of David. David, of course, is the man that we get much of our understanding of music from.

Davidic worship and the whole charismatic movement in one sense is based around an understanding of David's tabernacle, the praise and the worship and so on. And David was a fanatic. There's one time when he's bringing back the Ark and you know that here he is sort of doing cartwheels down Main Street.

And his wife's looking out the window embarrassed to death. You know that story. But I think David's greatest act of worship came after one of his greatest sins, his sin with Bathsheba.

And she has a child or they have a child between them. And that child is fine for a week. I'm sure like any parents, they anticipated the arrival of that baby.

And when the baby arrived, they're thrilled, absolutely thrilled at this beautiful little child. And then God strikes that baby. And David disappears, begins to pray, no doubt fast and pray.

And at the end of seven days, he's notified that the child is dead. And David, the Bible says, he gets up off his face, he goes and he washes himself, puts on new garments, comes back into the presence of God, and the Bible says he worshiped. There's no mention of a choir, no mention of musical instruments, just David on his face before God.

His circumstances are terrible here. He's just lost a child. But God's worship has not changed.

God has not changed. He's still King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and so on. David's circumstances are terrible at that time.

But he acknowledges again, God's right. I could have mounted a great defense. I'm convinced I could have gone into the presence of God and said, God, this is not fair.

What about Psalm 51? I acknowledge my sin. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

God, You're the one that says, no longer will you use this problem in Israel. The fathers have eaten sour grapes. The children's teeth are set on edge.

This is my sin. You've taken the life of an innocent child. What about my cleansing? I thought You'd cleanse me, wash me with hyssop.

I thought that was all over. I could have got before God, got angry and mounted a good defense. David doesn't do any of that.

He just gets on his face acknowledging, shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Can the clay say to the pot of wine? And he worships. And then the last great act of worship I think is in the life of Job. And you know the story about Job.

We're introduced to him there in Job 1. Honest, upright, God-fearing man, this multimillionaire, this man of great impeccable character and so on and so forth. And then the devil comes to turn in his report card, however all of that works. I'm not sure.

The way I like to think of it is the devil's just about ready to leave. God says, by the way, hold on a minute. Devil, come back in here.

The devil steps back in and God says, you see that man way back there? And the devil looks and he says, yeah, who is he? God says, you don't recognize him? I don't recognize him at all. I mean I spend my life going back and forth over the face of the earth looking to see who I can devour, but how come I've missed that guy? Boy, he sure looks happy though. Big smile on God's face.

God said, he is happy. Yeah, but who is it? You mean you really don't recognize him? Devil says, no. I don't recognize him at all.

God says, good. That's Job. You're kidding.

That's Job? No. Man, are you sure that's Job? God says, yeah. Man, he really does look happy.

God says, yeah. He's my workmanship. I picked him up off your scrap heap when he was foul-mouthed, shooting drugs, beating his wife and kids, not paying his bills around town.

Hold on a minute. What Bible are you reading from? This one? Are you looking at me? See, my Bible says there's none righteous. No, not one.

Job was a product of the grace of God somewhere. He wasn't created perfect. He wasn't created honest, upright, God-fearing.

Somewhere he had an encounter with God. We may not be told about it, but we know this based on the rest of the Scriptures. There is none righteous.

No, not one. And we're all a product of the grace of God. And I think the devil looked and he says, you know, if that's Job, something's happened to him.

God says, yeah. I redeemed him. I picked him up.

The beggar took him out. The beggar out of the dunghill made him a prince with God. The devil says, you know, the reason I haven't seen him, you've had a hedge around about him.

He's been off limits. That's why I haven't seen him. God says, yeah, that's right.

He says, well, God, I'll prove to you that he's a phony because when I corrupt, I absolutely corrupt. And God says, you don't get it. When I cleanse, I absolutely cleanse.

He says, no. He says, you made him a multimillionaire and all of that is just a facade. If you take away that fence, I'll prove to you that I can corrupt and nobody can change that corruption.

God says, okay, the deal's on. One rule, you can't take his life. The devil says, okay.

And the next day, Job buries ten kids, seven sons and three daughters. Blow number one. And according to Job chapter 1, they were grown up.

They had their own homes, remember, because the homes were destroyed. Job used to rise up early lest his sons had sinned. And so there in that funeral parlor or whatever they had, you've got wives grieving the loss of a husband.

You've got husbands grieving the loss of a wife. You've got children grieving the loss of a mommy or daddy. Ten.

Can you imagine? And then blow number two. Again, he is covered in boils from the top of his head to the sole of his feet, just driving him crazy, itching and can't sleep, can't do anything. He sees a little bit of pottery.

He's sitting on a pile of ashes. Why does a multimillionaire sit on an ash heap? Because I believe that was all that was left of his mansion. The same fires and winds and so on that gutted his son's homes, gutted his mansion.

And all he's got left is just a pile. Everything's been taken from him. And he sees that little piece of pottery and he thinks, thank God, that survived the fire.

That was one of my wife's favorite little pieces. He picks it up only to find out it's just a broken piece of pottery. And he takes that thing and he begins to try and get some relief by scratching himself with it.

And his wife says, darling, just curse God and it will all be over and die. And the Bible says Job worshipped. To me, it's got to be the greatest act of worship that I see in the Bible.

There's no choir, no stringed instruments, just a man honoring God because God, You're the judge of all the earth and I can never call into question Your judgment, Your righteousness, Your justice. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? And around the throne of God, there is worship because God never changes. Our circumstances may change, but God never changes.

Let me close with this. Let me take you back to verse 10. The 24 elders will fall down before Him that sits on the throne and will worship Him who lives forever and ever.

We worship whatever's on the throne. In other words, if Jesus Christ does not have His rightful place, whatever has taken His place is the thing that you worship. God said to Abraham, because you have not withheld, the thing that you withhold from God is the thing that you worship.

God, you can have all of this, but don't touch my boyfriend. Don't touch my girlfriend. Don't touch my reputation.

Don't touch my money. Whatever it is, the thing that you withhold is the object of your worship. If Jesus Christ is not supreme, if He is not in control, there is another God that you worship.

And if we honestly want to know the presence of God in a way that maybe few really do, the habitation of God, the awareness, the consciousness of God's presence, He says make it according to the pattern. Moses, make sure you make it according to the pattern. This is my house.

I'm particular about where I dwell. And He's just as particular today as He was way back then because He never changes. And He gives us the grace again to be conformed to His image, but there are certain things that we have to do.

And it begins by giving God the throne, absolute surrender. And for many people, letting go is a fearful thing because we talk about control freaks. You know, God, can't I control the money? Can't I control this? Can't I? No.

All to Jesus I surrender. All to Him I freely give. And that's where it begins.

And then God created me a clean heart. Lord, I want You to dwell in a holy place. But also, Lord, I want to be a thankful person, a grateful person.

But more than anything else, teach me to worship. Regardless of my circumstances, what I go through, Your worship never ever changes. Let's just close in prayer.

Father, again we stand in awe, Lord, if You would, to think that right now if we could take the wings of the morning and dwell where You dwell, that, Lord, this is what we would see. We'd see a throne and one sitting on the throne. We'd see You surrounded by those four and twenty elders incessantly crying out,

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.

Father, we'd see that endless chorus of thanksgiving and honor. Lord, also those that worship You, casting their crowns before You. Father, bring us to an understanding of what it means, Lord, to move from a place of visitation to a place of habitation.

Where, Lord, we become vessels that, Lord, bear the very presence of God. Lord, Your Word says we have this treasure in an earthen vessel. So, Lord, open the eyes of our understanding.

Give us insight as to what You want, Lord, Your requirements. We believe, Lord, You're still longing to dwell among us. That's Your heart.

That's the cry of Your heart, Lord. Even though we cry out for it, Lord, long before there were any God chasers, we thank You there was a God that was a chaser. But, Lord, You chased us.

And You're still chasing us. You're still wanting, Lord, to dwell among us. And Father, we welcome You in our midst.

We really do. Even this afternoon, Lord, we welcome You. We say, Lord, come, make Your abode in us as You promised that You would.

Father, take all the debris and all the things that are not what You want in our life, Lord. Bring those things to the surface, Lord. We ask that, Lord, You would just cleanse us and renew us.

Father, conform us again to Your image. We want to be the dwelling place of the Most High. Lord, we think of the psalmist so many years ago.

The Lord wanted to know about this. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? The Lord wanted to know what are the requirements? How can I dwell where You dwell? How can I come and ascend and go into Your house? And Father, here You've given us the answer. And we pray, God, that You would give us now the grace to, Lord, bring ourselves by Your grace into that place where we can truly know You and experience You, Lord.

Have Your way, we pray. Maybe we just take a moment if you want to just shoot a prayer up to the Lord, whether you voice it or whether it's just an internal cry. Maybe some of you say, Lord, I've not been faithful when it comes to thanksgiving.

I've been more of a whiner, a complainer, a grumbler. I'm always looking at the glass that's half empty instead of half full. Father, change that.

Lord, I want to truly know what it is to in everything give thanks and for everything give thanks. Lord, I've never really learned to worship You the way I should. Lord, there's areas in my life that I know are not pleasing to You.

Lord, I want You to come and dwell in a holy vessel, not because of anything that I do, but Lord, because of what You've done and what You've made available, the blood of Jesus Christ that can cleanse me, present me faultless before You. Maybe some of you have never given Him the throne. You say, Lord, I want to begin by saying, Lord, come.

Reign in me. Jesus, be the Lord of all, the kingdoms of my heart. Take control.

Let me know the joy of surrender. Let's just take a moment and then I'll turn the meeting over to Pastor Brian.

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