

# The Church - Part 7

by Les Wheeldon

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*The church is to be a house of prayer, where we can offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, and we have living, direct, unveiled contact with God through the blood of Christ.*

**Duration:** 1:01:54

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Mark 11:17, Hebrews 9:1-9, Hebrews 9:11, Hebrews 9:14

**Topics:** "Church"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that the church is not a physical building or human bodies, but a gathering of saints in a place that is not of this creation. The focus is on the ministry of the church, particularly the service of God. The speaker references Mark 11:17, where it is written that God's house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations. The sermon also delves into Hebrews chapter 9, highlighting the importance of divine service and the role of believers as servants of God.

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## Transcript

Okay, we continue with our subject of the church and I want to talk tonight a little more about the ministry, which we started talking about last week. And I would like to read a verse, three verses, so you may not want to follow me reading them all, but I'm going to read and turn over the pages quickly. One verse from Mark 11, verse 17, where it says, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But you have made it a den of thieves.

And then in Peter it says, um, 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 5, You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. And then we turn to the book of Hebrews and we can turn to chapter 9 of the book of Hebrews, where we'll stay for one. Now, the church is a place of prayer, God's house of prayer.

Again, remember when we say that we're not referring to this building. This building is a building that we use for prayer, but it's not God's house of prayer. God's house of prayer is the church, and the church is His people, not the building.

We are God's house of prayer, and we are a holy priesthood, and we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. And so we really begin to look at the ministry if you like, the whole realm of prayer in the context of the church. The very reason for the existence of the church is that it is to be a house of prayer, and that we are to fulfill our spiritual everlasting priesthood.

Now, when we turn to this subject of prayer and the church and the house of God, we are immediately faced with a foundational truth about the church. And this is that in this respect of the priesthood and of the prayer ministry of the church, we are distinctly on what I would call New Covenant ground. So this is where I admire your name, the New Covenant Pentecostal Assembly or something like this.

I really think that's a very accurate description of a church, because the church is very distinctly New Covenant. It is New Covenant greatly in this sense that we are all in the priesthood. We are all in the priesthood.

Now, of course, this is the easy way of looking at it. We are all in the priesthood. But the question is, let's put it the other way around.

Are we all in the priesthood? Are we all priests? Because we could say, oh now we're all priests. Or rather we should put it the other way around and we say we should all be priests. And really the mark of our being in the body of Christ is that we have some awareness of the priesthood, some function in the priesthood.

Because there is now no difference between any person and another in the church. There is no laity in this sense. There is only one tribe.

We are of one tribe, if you like, and it's not Levi, it's Melchizedek. All right. But we'll come to this in a moment.

We are of an everlasting priesthood. We are of an everlasting priesthood and there is a priesthood that is everlasting. There is a priesthood that was for this earth and for this time alone and there is a priesthood that is everlasting.

And that's the subject of the book of Hebrews. So when we begin to look at this book of Hebrews, we are now going to look at the foundational purpose of the church that we should enter in to the priesthood that God has called us into. And also we should also realize fully the significance of the fact that we have a high priest over the house of God, which is Jesus Christ.

So we're on the subject of the priesthood. Now let me turn you then to chapter 9 and I want you to read with me the first eight verses of Hebrews. And so we're much more on the grounds of an exposition tonight, not just talking about the whole of scripture and the pictures of the church and so on.

We're now homing in on some very key passages and here's a passage in Hebrews chapter 9. And if you'll notice the word that's coming through in this chapter 9, one of the words that comes through is the word service. Service. Because we are servants of God and we are to serve God.

Let's read this chapter, first eight verses. Verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, the service of God. And it had a worldly sanctuary, that means a physical sanctuary, a place where God was served, a physical sanctuary.

And if you go to, uh, there'll be a physical sanctuary in Bratton or somewhere, there'll be an Anglican church, possibly also a Catholic church. And if you go into these churches you will find a place which is a sanctuary where you are forbidden to enter. Rather like the platform here, you better not go up that platform.

That's set aside, that's the sanctuary. Now I know that we may smile at that but it's interesting how many church buildings have carried over the idea of a sanctuary. So that there's a special place for the servants of God, apart and above, and again we have it here.

Which is actually, I don't know who designed the building, and it may have just been purely in his heart just to create a platform, or maybe he may have thought of the baptistry and saving space, I don't know what it is, but he did it in his service. Because he cut off the leaders from the people in some measure. And if such a thing were to be against the truth of God and were to be felt in the company of God's people, I would pay the price and have it changed.

If it were felt to be a problem, a divisive thing, I would pay the price and have it changed. Everything that cuts off and separates people from their ministers and so on, this is damaging to the central truth of God that that division has now been broken down. We're all priests.

It is amazing how churches get this, and you can go into some churches where there is a distinct element, a sense of being divided. The holy place and the common people. This is a great disservice to the truth of God.

Verse 2, For there was a tabernacle made, the first, wherein was the candlestick. This is now referring to the tabernacle of the Jews in the Old Testament that Moses gave them. And there was the court, the outer court, and the people could come to the door of the outer court and could there offer their sacrifices for the forgiveness of their sins.

And then they could look inside. I don't believe they were forbidden from entry into the outer court. I can't remember any particular injunction against it or any directions about it, but it's certainly true that the outer court, though it may have been accessible, was not really a place of ministry.

The people went there to the altar, which was just within the door, just inside the door, the first entrance, and that's all they went there for, to obtain forgiveness of sins. The people in the Old Testament obtained forgiveness of sins through the blood of bulls and goats. You can read that in Leviticus.

And again and again you repeat the fact that there was forgiveness granted to the people through the blood of bulls and goats. Forgiveness was a foundational element of the Old Testament. Their sins were forgiven through the blood of bulls and goats.

But then, beyond that, they looked inside. None of the common people could go through. The other tribes could not go in.

Only this tribe, Levi, but in and out of the tribe of Levi, only the sons of Aaron, who were priests, only they could actually penetrate into the sanctuary that was set there in the tent within the outer court. And there, there were two halves to the inner sanctuary, one the holy place and one the holiest of all. And in the holiest of all, it says here, sorry, in verse 2, it says the holy place, the first part, there was the candlestick, the table with the showbread, and that is called the holy place, the sanctuary.

And after the second veil, the tabernacle, which is called the holiest of all, which had the golden censer, it had this also of incense, with the clouds rising from it, and the Ark of the Covenant overlaid with gold, and in the Ark was the golden pot that had manna, Aaron's rod that budded was there, and the tables of the covenant with the Ten Commandments. These three objects were in the Ark, and over it the glorious heavenly beings, angels, cherubims of glory, shadowing the mercy, looking inward to the place where

someone would be enthroned. No seat particularly was therefore called the mercy seat, such as it's called the propitiation, the covering.

And the angels looked into the mercy seat, that's a translation, and there they gazed on one who sat there, invisible, of which we cannot now speak in detail. But when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second, when the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people.

So every year the high priest went in and offered for the sins of ignorance of the people, sins they knew that they could confess, sins they did not know they committed. All the sins of the people were forgiven once a year by this act of the high priest of going in and sprinkling blood on the mercy seat, on God, sprinkling blood seven times on the mercy seat. And then he went out again.

Verse 8. The Holy Ghost, this signifying that the way in to the holiest of all, was not yet made known manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing, which was a parable for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience. Now we'll pause there. You see, the Old Testament ministry was a parable, and every ministry is a parable.

In other words, all ministry is not just that which speaks, but that which declares by what it is. And the Old Testament ministry declared something, and what it declared was pretty discouraging. It declared that the way in was not made manifest, there's no way in, there's no way into God.

The Old Testament ministry declared that there was a falling short of direct fellowship and contact with God. Now the truth is that in our day, in this country, in the whole world, you will find churches that declare the same. In fact, I was just talking in the car with someone coming here who had been to different prayer meetings, one in one church and one in another church, and we're talking about the way one church, they read the prayers and various things, but the comment was made, they seem to be skirting around the whole matter and not coming to the heart of things.

And then another meeting where people are getting through to God. Now this is the difference. But you see, this is the difference that will divide us as churches, and if you like, in our own lives, as to whether we are those who have entered into the New Testament, or are we still in the Old.

If we have entered into the New Covenant with God, we are a church that declares that we have living, direct, unveiled contact with God. This is the prayer ministry. The prayer ministry is not that which is approaching God from distance.

This is Old Covenant. But that's to say, many churches declare that the way to God is not yet made manifest. What they're declaring is, it's not known by that church.

And the truth is that when you actually examine all the implications of not entering into the fullness of God's covenant, what we are actually doing is something almost, when you begin to examine it, awful in implications. Because what we declare by not entering in, and we're going to look at entering in in a moment, what we declare by not entering in while still believing in the blood of Jesus, what we are declaring is actually that the blood of Jesus actually is no different than the blood of bulls and goats. The blood of bulls and goats forgave my sin through God's mercy at the door of the tabernacle.

And then I went on out again and remained in my ignorance of God. When I needed forgiveness again, back I come. Again and again remembering my sin and my need of forgiveness.

That is the blood of bulls and goats. But the tragedy is that some Christian experience stops at that first declaration from the cross, Father forgive them. But that is not the entire work of the cross.

The blood of Jesus is sufficient for the forgiveness of my sins. And if that was all it was sufficient for, it would be no better than the blood of bulls and goats. I am not minimizing forgiveness.

God knows that forgiveness is vital for my heart. It's vital for every heart in this room. If you don't know it, you are absolutely lost in guilt and shame and you cannot approach God.

The way through is no way made manifest. But that is but the first declaration from the cross. It is not the heart of the work on the cross.

The cross takes me further in than that. And the church is to be a declaration of the power of God to bring me through to God. So this is the dangerous sad declaration in verse 8. The Holy Ghost is signifying.

But it is not the Holy Ghost signifying today that the way is closed. The Holy Ghost signified it through the picture of the tabernacle. The way is not yet made manifest.

He made it known you can't get through to God, he said. Service falls short. You can't hear God's voice.

You can't fellowship with God. You can't have God within you. You can't dwell in God.

That was a declaration of the Old Testament. But now let's read on from verse 10 further on down. Which stood only in, this is what the Old Testament was, it stood only in foods and drinks, diverse washings, different washings, carnal ordinances imposed on the old covenant people until the time of reformation.

The time of setting straight. But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands. That is to say not of this creation.

If you've got a King James, I hope you'll notice in these words, this is where notes will become very useful because you need to note these things. There are things in the translation which are woefully inadequate. You must know these things here.

It says here, not of this creation. We're not dealing with an entering into anything that is to do with a church building now. Nothing that man has made now.

Nor are we talking about human bodies now. We're talking about something greater than your body and my body. We're talking about a place, a ministry from a place that is not physical, not of this creation.

The centre of the gathering of the saints is a place that is not of this creation. That doesn't surprise you or quicken your heart to know more. You know, this is the wonder of it.

We are being invited to enter into a ministry and a place with God that is not of this creation. It doesn't matter whether you know, you're a young Christian, old Christian, or wherever you are, and the things of God this night. The truth is this.

God has opened the door through the blood of his Son for every person to enter through sheer grace, to go right through with God. Let me just at this point remind you that the Hebrews knew some of the things

of God. He was not writing to people ignorant of the Gospel.

They knew the Gospel. What they were in danger of doing was in going back in their Christian understanding to forms rather than reality. Dwelling in pictures, even pictures.

You know, this is the thing, when I think about the greatest danger of the churches is to fall into idolatry of Jesus Christ. What do I mean? You know the ideas, you worship the ideas, you know the cross, you worship the ideas, but the point is the ideas of the New Testament are not to be worshipped. It would be the worst form of idolatry in one sense, because they're most subtle.

You're not to worship the truth, you're to enter into it. You have to worship God. And the truth, this is the truth here.

This is the great danger that they could say, oh isn't that tremendous, isn't that wonderful, isn't that wonderful. But God is saying, yes, but what this is, is not just a book, it's declaring something there that is not a book. I can sit in my study and say, well God, if you're in my books, then you're not a God, you're an idol to me.

And if you're in my imagination, you're not a God, you're an idol. You, God, must be greater than me, greater than all my ideas about you, greater than some of my experience about you. I am not worshipping an idea, and I am not worshipping books.

I'm not looking for a new book. I'm not looking for another understanding. I'm not looking for another explanation, or a better word.

I'm looking for God himself in power, in reality, in me. And there is nothing on earth that can satisfy, no amount of religion, no matter how right the religion, can ever satisfy you. Only God can satisfy you.

You are to seek God. You are to enter into the communion and fellowship with God. There is no priesthood on the basis of ideas, there is only priesthood on the basis of direct experience with God himself.

And this is what the book is about, this is Hebrews. He wanted the people to understand the glory, that here's the way, it's open, you can come through to God. Now let's move on.

It's in verse, as we did again, Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say not of this creation, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in, once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Now here's this introduction to the blood of Christ. And the center of our priesthood and of our praying and the foundation of it all is the blood of Christ.

It's the blood of Christ. Now I realize, and I cannot, oh I cannot explain everything perfectly, all I can point you to is the truth and leave the mystery to you, because I can't, I wouldn't even try, the more a thing is explained and explained and explained, there's a point when it explains it away. You've got to know it in its mystery, it's the blood of Christ.

Now here's the truth, that Christ entered into the holy place, the holiest place, by his own blood. Did you see that? He entered by his own blood. Now you will immediately ask with me, well when was he out of the holiest? If he entered in, when did he leave it? I know my need of entering in because I knew the

power of sin, but when was he ever out of the holiest place? If he entered in by his own blood, then when did he ever leave it? And the answer is very simple, it's on the cross, when he was made sin.

When he was so identified with me, and all my sins, and my, all my shortcoming, my wickedness, my filth, my degeneration, my evil, he was so identified with me and everything about me in my sinful state, that he cried out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And that cry is the cry of the psalmist. You know it's the cry of the psalmist, don't you? The cry of the psalmist in Psalm 22. You know that it's the deepest cry of the psalmist, it's the greatest cry.

The psalmist cries other things, for example, he says, for example, Lord be not silent to me. He says, Lord hide not your face from me. He's searching out, he cannot find God, this is the psalmist, wondering where God is, how can he get through to God? And really it's the deepest agony of sin that it cannot find God.

It's the deepest agony of the Old Testament, that it could not get through to God. And I would say it's the deepest agony of the human heart, that it cannot find God. And here's Jesus, it says here in verse 11, verse 12, by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctify to the ceremonial purifying of the flesh, which it did. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, dead religious works, to serve the living God. We'll leave that there and we'll go on down to verse 22, talks about the sprinkling of the blood in the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.

Verse 22, and almost all things are by the law purged with blood. Without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifice than these.

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, he never did. Christ never entered into the heart of the temple. He entered always into the outer course, but he never went into the holiest place.

Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but he is entered into heaven itself. Now to appear before the face of God for us, that little word there, for us, being a key. Nor yet that he should offer himself often as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others, for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world.

But now once in the climax of the ages, different words in the Greek here, now once in the climax of the ages hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin to salvation. And now go on down into chapter 10, we'll just read a couple of verses here.

And verse 19, having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he has concentrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. All right, now let's try and get to the heart. What am I trying to say to you? What is the Bible trying to say to you? What is the Scripture calling us to? Well the answer is this, there is a place of ministry in prayer for every one of us.

It is not to be thought of in any way as a mere outward place of going through motions of prayer. It is an inward penetration into the very heart and centre of the ministry, in the direct presence of God. This is the whole purpose of the church.

The church exists to experience this, to declare it, and to serve God from this place. The church really has no New Testament function except from the holiest place of all. This is not a ministry of preaching, this is not a gift of the Spirit, we won't mention this last week, this is the foundational ministry.

It lasts on earth and it lasts for eternity. I'll preach on earth, I don't think I'll preach in heaven, I'm not too sure about that, I wouldn't mind it, but I don't think it'd be necessary. I don't think I have to preach on these things, and whatever happens, I'm sure we may have one or two, I have a wonderful session here and there with listening to Moses, all kinds of things, but one thing I know is that whatever I do in heaven, the great foundation of all eternal ministry is here in the holiest place of all.

And it starts on earth. Now what I'm saying is this, there is a place for us to come to in prayer. It's not just a place of, say, a deeper kind of prayer, it is a deeper kind of prayer, but it really is quite simply the unveiled presence of God, whereby God himself is impacting on all our lives, and this is the heart and centre and being of the church, to get in to the holiest of all.

Now let's go back to chapter 9 for a moment, and let me read a couple of things here which we've already read but not commented on. Chapter 9 verse 4, after the second veil, the tabernacle, which is called the holiest of all, which had the golden scent, clouds of incense, the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had food, the Aaron's rod that was fruitful and righteousness written. Notice those three things, food, fruitfulness and righteousness written.

Food, fruitfulness and righteousness written. They were all there within that place. You know that one of the things that I find very dangerous about the churches, you can see certain things that are temptations for the churches.

Here's a temptation, especially for the Englishman, the temptation is rationalism, and I'm not talking about the rationalism that says, you know, David Jenkins, there's no resurrection, I'm not talking about that. That's damned, that's thrice damned by any preacher to say that Jesus didn't rise from the dead in the face of the scriptures. He is thrice damned unless he repents, and I've no joy in saying that.

But there's another kind of rationalism that can explain the New Testament perfectly, but does not enter into it. And the New Testament was not written for our minds, it was written that we may enter in through faith. That's why it's going to come in chapter 11 into faith.

What use for you to understand what I'm saying and not to enter into it? We are not rationalists. I do not want to be a rationalist. Whatever I want to be, I want to be a person who experiences.

I want to know this. And this is why, let me tell you one of the dangers of rationalism, that rationalists will end up saying that Bible study is your spiritual food. You know there's even a little booklet, Daily Bread, I'm not criticising it.

Daily Bread, there's an element of truth in it, but let me warn you, the scriptures are not your daily bread. Take it back, quick, we didn't know. The scriptures are not your daily bread.

They are food. Christ said, I am the bread of life. He didn't say the Bible is the bread of life.

But if Christ is the bread of life, don't I get him through the Bible? That's the rationalist speaking again. To study, get more and more understanding, that's food. That is food for your mind.

It may build you up in your spirit as you enter in and believe it, but it is not the food of your soul, it is pointing you to the food. I am the bread of life. Fruit, fruitfulness and righteousness.

Where do these things lie? This is why you must realise you may be an impoverished soul, fainting for hunger, and you may be reading the scriptures and going through motions of prayer, thinking I'm not getting anywhere. Well the answer is because there is no food in Bible study and prayer. I'm shocking you to bits, I hope.

Not my intention to, but it's the truth, isn't it? We have to realise that food does not lie in my mind. That's Western man's rationalism. Food lies in God, and I have to get through to God.

My soul is nourished by the presence of God, and I have to find the presence of God. I can't be nourished simply by thinking about God. If my soul is going to become strong, I have to know him and find his presence and stay there.

There's only one place of spiritual food and it's called the holiest of all. Remember Jesus also said, a little further, taking that thought one step further, he said my meat is to do the will of my Father. He did not say my meat is to meditate on the Old Testament.

That doesn't mean to say he didn't know better than you and me. He knew the place of Scripture. Once you know the place of Scripture, you know it and you read it, but you do not exalt it and you do not idolise it.

This is again the danger of idolatry. Some churches you can almost feel that the pulpit is worshipped, and the Bible is in a glass case to be worshipped. You are to worship one that is God, and you are to discover his presence.

And this is now the whole dimension of the ministry of the priesthood. The priesthood is to come and to see there, a man is to see that I'm called not just to talk about God, I'm come to find him. I have to get through to him.

I have to get past the symbols, communion symbols as well, lovely though they are. I've got to get past them, the showbreads, all the things, all the symbols, I've got to get through to the place where Jesus has gone before me. You see Jesus entered into the holiest of all by his blood.

The veil is rent, it's torn, it's bloody. I must find that way in. I must let the blood of Christ be applied to my heart in a way that introduces me to the direct, life-giving, nourishing, fruit-bearing, righteous, imparting presence of God.

Glory. The church must minister from it. This is the place of prayer if you like.

This is the place of glory. It's the place, but it's the place of coming in. What use is prayer if it's prayer at God from outside? All covenant.

Prayer is entering in and communing, listening to. In this place, prayer becomes virtual prophecy. You know what God is going to do.

You are aware, you are in communion. How do you get there? Well, you begin, like all begin, outside. You begin at the door, as all must begin, and you go to that door which has the altar by that outer court.

You go there for the forgiveness of sins, and then as you go forward, you look at yourself unworthy. You know your guilt, your shame, all the things that disqualify you, everything that could hinder you from entering in. But God doesn't say you have to be perfect to come.

He promises to make you ready if you will come. It is in coming you will have your conscience washed. In coming, you will be made clean.

In coming, you will be brought through. Now, I could easily ask anybody who wants to go in, just indicate it to me, and we'll accept that tonight. Lovely, beautiful, there's another truth you've got.

Well, that's nonsense. This is not truth to be ticked. I've got that now.

This is truth to be to go before God, lay your life before God, and say to God, bring me in, bring me in. How long does it take you to get in there? What is it like when he brings you in? Well, the experience of every soul is different, but what I know is that when you're being brought in there, we can use other scriptural truths now and build up the picture of the flooding in of the Holy Ghost. That's one truth.

It's also the coming into the place of stillness where you are silenced and God is glorified, and you see it. It's a place of intercession where you begin to serve God for others. But whatever we describe it as, we've described it the flooding of the Holy Ghost, whatever we describe these things as, in the end what you've got to know is that you are being brought in to communion with God.

You're blessed if you know it in your own life. Even more blessed if there's a church, there's a unified drawing together with one heart to enter into these things as a body of people. We were meant to know these as a body.

In fact, the greatest glory of them is as a body. Because he's building a house of prayer, and that doesn't mean a lot of individual house. He's not bringing houses of prayer.

He's building a house of prayer, and it's there in the glory of the heavens. He's building a heavenly house. So what he's wanting to do is minister the way in.

Pour the blood on every life. There's no entrance in without the blood. What you have to see is the power of the blood to bring you through to God.

The power of the blood to bring you into direct fellowship and contact with God. The power of the blood to make you clean and bring the glory of the holiest of God into your very life and experience. That's the promise of the priesthood.

We are a holy priesthood. There can be no other. And what we think we could know, this is why when he was looking at the Hebrew letter, he looks at Melchizedek, he looks at various things there about the priesthood of Israel.

This is the priest, the priesthood that has an eternal offering. What does it have? Well it has one sacrifice really. That's Jesus Christ.

He's a sacrifice. I enter by his blood. What do I offer up to him? In order to enter into this priesthood, I'm going on the basis of the offering of Jesus for my sin.

But equally I'm going on the basis of the offering of myself to be cleansed. It's one thing to go on the basis of an offering to clean. It's another thing to go on the offering, the basis of the offering of myself to be made clean and fit to worship and live in that place.

When you begin to examine the things, the real life center of the priesthood and of the church, you begin to understand that worship can be conducted outside of the holiest of all, but it's not real worship. You can have all the songs and impressions and all the lovely things of worship in a form, in its foretaste, and not know that presence for yourself. That's why you know that you can look at worship developing that is an imitation.

How do you know it's an imitation? By this one fact, that the presence of God is unknown to the person. That's the way, that's how you know you worship. You do not worship because you sing songs.

I was saying to our brothers and sisters in Epsom, I get most worried when in the church people sing songs so much and pray so little. All they are doing is using the words of others to express what they experienced, but they have no expression themselves. You know, it's a wonderful thing when somebody comes out with a prayer in the church that is absolutely original, unique.

I'm not saying by that you should start examining each other's prayers. God knows which prayers are from where. We could imagine the greatest prayer in the world, it wouldn't make any difference.

But somebody who's in that place with God, they've sought Him, they've been through tears and frustrations and striving and this, and they come at last to see the power of the blood to bring them there. And they've come in, and they're there, and they can see the glory of God, and they see the presence of Jesus, and they sense it, and they pray out from that place. It's overflows.

The place of ministry in the church is from the holiest of all. The church gathers in the holiest place. It meets there.

It's big enough for millions, even though it's smallest. It's a place of ministry, and we're all there. And even though we're in the company of millions, we sense the nearness.

It's not like when you go to see Billy Graham at Wembley Stadium, you need a small figure down there, and you're up somewhere at the back, and you can say, that's Billy Graham. You can't tell whether it's Billy Graham or Peter Trevelyan. You can't tell any difference.

That's not the holiest of all. You enter in, and you're in the company of millions, but you're as close to God as any of them. And he's near to you, and reverential fear comes over you.

Holiness is your clothing there. Peace settles on you. Righteousness is established.

Fruitfulness comes now. Remember, we have not yet fully justified or satisfied the use of the word the service of God, because this is the place of service. You know that when you're there, one of the things you discover is that you're beginning to serve.

So the foundation of all service is intercession. It's prayer. So that some men who've been on training course on how to serve God have never served God in their lives, because they've never been taught how

to pray and intercede.

Enter the presence of God. You can go through life and seek to serve God, but the heart of it all is here. Now, practically, all I can say is that you must patiently seek the Lord.

Patently ask him to bring you in. Patently wait before him till your heart is conscious of him. The holiest of all was not meant to be a bible verse.

It was meant to be your conscious awareness of God. Read this one again. It's in verse 24 of chapter 9. Christ is not entered into the holy places of being with hands, right? Neither are you, which are the figures of the truth.

He is entered into heaven itself. You are too. Now to appear in the presence of God for us.

He's appearing there that you may appear there with him. That's the mystery of prayer. You're kneeling down somewhere or sitting somewhere and praying and you come into the presence of God and you're in heaven.

It is a heavenly ministry. It's a heavenly priesthood. There's a great high priest pouring out on you and he's bringing you in by his own blood into the very place where he himself is.

Christ brings us into the heavenless, heavenless, through his blood. Tell the theory purified the heavens. Verse 23.

He purified the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these at his own blood. How do you explain that? I don't know but I do know this, that the church is not a group that gathers on earth. It's a group that meets in the holiest place which is a heavenly place.

I know that really, this is why I said right at the beginning, in the beginning of our studies, I said fundamentally you cannot divide the church. You can't. Because the church meets in the holiest place of all.

It meets in heaven and you can no more divide God's church anywhere in reality than you could divide it there. Because every real church, and I'm talking about now the company of God's people, is a heavenly company. It is heavenly.

That isn't to say by that there aren't divisions, of course there are, but they reveal another element and dimension than that which I'm talking about. And I said we will talk about division and it's still to come. We will talk about division and its roots and its cures and all these things.

But the truth of the church is it is only one. There is only one church. It may have six branches in each locality.

It may have 15 in Bracknell for all I know. You are part of the church in Bracknell. You are not the church in Bracknell.

You are part of the church in Bracknell. But the truth is that in heaven there is but one church and we are part of the heavenly body. That's why it says later on in chapter 12, it says you are come to Mount Zion.

This is what he's saying. You've come through the veil. Verse 22 of chapter 12.

You are come to Mount Zion. To the city, that's the church, the city of the living God. I love these phrases.

I don't like serving a dead God or a former God or a God of the New Testament 2,000 years ago. Yes, I'm serving the God of the New Testament but not 2,000 years ago. I'm trying to put the clock back.

But if you understand me, bringing the clock forward as well. Do you understand what I'm saying? Yes. I want to go back into the present.

Understand me? Into the eternal. You are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. To an innumerable company of angels.

To the general assembly in church, the firstborn. Which are written in heaven. And to God the judge of all.

To the spirits of just men made perfect. To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. And to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Well, we'll stop our study there but let me just conclude by saying this. There is a way through into the transforming presence of God and you are to find it. It is through the blood.

It is through cleansing. It is through the offering up of the body of Jesus once for you. And the offering up of your life once, in that sense, to be cleansed and brought in.

You are to be consciously brought into the presence of God. You are to be transformed there. You are to be nourished there.

You are to be made fruitful there. You are to be made a worshipper there. Your worship is to flow from your spirit there.

Not just from your mind singing former songs. You are to break forth in worship and praise from what you directly experience of God. And that is the church we are made to be priests of the Most High God.

Amen. Let's pray.

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