

Text: Exod. 26:1-14, 36:8-19

Title: The roof of God's dwelling-place

Time: 9/4/2022 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: Building a home can be an arduous task. We have been renting to a family that is building a home, and the builders they have contracted have not always built according to specification. My friend has told me about walls not plum and water appearing in places water should not be in a new house.

In these passages of Exodus, we are reading about the building of God's home on earth. The word translated *tabernacle* in verse one is a noun that comes from the Hebrew verb meaning *to dwell*, or *to be at home*. The tabernacle is God's dwelling place, the structure in which God would be at home among His people.

As exciting as it may be for a young family to build a new home, that project pales in comparison to what we read about here - the building of God's home on earth. In our study of this project, we have come to the first components of the structure of God's dwelling-place, the curtains and coverings that would form the roof of the structure.

There are three sets of these: (1) the innermost curtains made of finely twisted Egyptian linen, multicolored with cherubim, comprised of ten pieces measuring 28 cubits by 4 cubits. Two sets of five pieces each were sown together, and then joined by purple loops and gold clasps (vv. 1-6).

(2) Next came the curtain of goat's hair, probably black in color (vv. 7-13). This was far plainer. Its fabric strips were a bit longer than the inner curtains, 30 cubits instead of 28;

they numbered eleven instead of ten – a set of five and a set of six; and the sets were joined together by brass clasps instead of gold ones.

(3) Finally, over the top of these came a protective layer of skins, the dimensions of which we are not given (v. 14). We know that rams' skins were used, and our KJV Bible also mentions badger skins. The word translated *badger* occurs only in two contexts in our Old Testaments, so we do not really know if it refers to another animal or another color of ram's skin. Red was used for ram's skins, and this other covering may have been merely a different color from that.

So why study the roof of this home of the Lord? The answer, of course, is that God designed the roof of His home, just like His furniture, to teach us spiritual truth. The Supreme Court building is like that. It was designed and built to teach Americans truths about what it means to be a citizen under our nation's laws.

So, we study the roof of God's dwelling place to learn truth that God wants us to know as citizens of His kingdom. As we examine it, we are helped by two key passages in our New Testaments to look specifically for truths about Christ and His churches. The passage that tells us to look for Christ in the tabernacle is John 1:14 – "The Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus tabernacled. When God's eternal Son became a man, the incarnation of Christ, He gave God a home on earth the way the tabernacle did.

But we are also to look for truth related to churches like ours in the tabernacle. The church is the body of Christ and in that sense inseparable from Him. The New Testament

passage that encourages us to see correspondence between local churches and the tabernacle is 1 Tim. 3:14-15, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Did you notice the phrase *house of God*? That is another name for the tabernacle, God's dwelling-place. Paul refers to pillars and grounds as he writes here of the mission of the local church, which were a part of the tabernacle's courtyard. Correspondence exists between the tabernacle and us as members of the Lord's local church.

This morning I want us to interpret the symbolism of these curtains in terms of two simple truths about our Savior and His churches.

I. The curtains teach us that our Savior is worthy of the churches' worship (vv. 1-6).

Illustration: You may remember the statues that are part of the gable above the front entrance of the Supreme Court building, what is called the West Pediment. Lady Liberty is enthroned in the middle, flanked by depictions of Order on her right and Authority on her left. The meaning of this symbolism is that the rule of law with equal justice for every citizen is critical to the maintenance of a free people.

Application: The symbolism of the tabernacle depicts a throne room. What we have here is not the rule of man's law, but of God himself. God is on the throne, so this throne room is a place of worship.

We saw that throne when we studied the ark of the covenant. It was flanked by bowing cherubim. The curtains

have these cherubim displayed in the fabric of the inner curtain in three colors: blue, purple, and scarlet (v. 1).

Blue reminds us of heaven. We worship our Savior because He is heavenly. John 3:13, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." John 3:31, "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all." Worship means taking our eyes off earthly things long enough to pay our respects to the one who is in heaven because He is above all. Do we worship the One above all?

Purple reminds us of royalty. We worship our Savior because He is our King. He was born in the king's city, Bethlehem, the city of His father King David. Wisemen came asking for Him, "Where is He who is born King of the Jews?" His disciples recognized His royalty: "Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49). Even Pilate, the crooked politician who condemned Him to crucifixion, could not deny His royalty: "But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King?" (John 19:15). As Jesus hung dying on the cross, He did so under Pilate's sign: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (v. 19). When the Jews objected, Pilate retorted, "What I have written I have written." Those who recognize the royalty of the Savior must not betray Him like Pilate. We must worship Him and obey Him as our King. Do we?

Scarlet reminds us of bloodshed. Jesus was the King who came from heaven to die for our sins. The red ram's skins certainly remind us of this as well (v. 14). And it was through this death that Jesus was ultimately exalted. Perhaps these skins were both red and bright yellow, depicting both the death and the resurrection of Christ. Phil. 2:5-11,

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

So, the Savior is worthy of our worship because He is from heaven, He is King, and He died and arose again to save us from our sins. What this means for us as a local church this morning is that we must see ourselves as gathered in Jesus’s presence to worship Him as our heavenly King and risen Savior. Jesus has promised that where two or three are gathered in His name as a local church, there He is in their midst (Matt. 18:20). We are the house of God. Jesus is here. Are we here to worship Him?

Many are missing from local church worship assemblies like ours this Lord’s Day morning, which brings us to the second lesson from the curtains of the tabernacle.

II. The curtains teach us that the worthiness of our Savior for worship is not easily seen from the outside (vv. 7-14).

Illustration: I can legitimately say that I have worked as a professional painter. What I mean by that is that I have painted houses and walls all the same color, and I have been paid an hourly rate to do so. You need some know-how to do that, but not a lot of talent or skill. Rembrandt also was a professional painter, but in an entirely different

sense – same label but much different skill level, and much different market value when the job is complete.

Application: The contrast between my painting and Rembrandt's paintings mirrors the difference between the curtain of fine-twisted multicolored Egyptian linen with cherubim artwork, and the black goat's hair curtain covering it. Although the skins were over the roof to protect the structure from the elements, it was really this goat's hair curtain that was designed to completely cover the glory of the inner curtain. Because of this goat's hair tarp, the glorious inner curtain could not have been viewed directly from the outside. It could only be seen on the inside of God's house.

Jesus was like this in His humanity. His glory was not easily seen from a distance. He took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He had no form or comeliness that others would desire Him (Isaiah 53).

Those on the outside could not see the glory of blue in Jesus, that He was from heaven: John 6:41-42, "The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?"

Those on the outside could not see the purple in Jesus, "The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). Nor could they appreciate the significance of the scarlet red: "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him" (Matt. 27:42). Can you see the inside curtain? Or are you still on the outside, unable to see Jesus's glory from within through the eyes of faith?

A final contrast for us to consider this morning is the difference between gold clasps and brass clasps. The inner curtain, which was not visible from the outside, was held together by gold clasps. I believe that symbolizes the truth, unseen to the human eye, that we as believers are bonded together with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Gold with no wood is deity without humanity in the tabernacle. The wonderful truth of the inner curtain is that our unity as a redeemed people is held together by the Holy Spirit who indwells all who are saved. Numbering fifty, the gold clasps remind us of Pentecost, and they teach us that we are one not only with New Testament believers, but joined to Old Testament believers as well through the power of the Holy Spirit.

But what can we make of the lesser glory of the brass clasps holding together the curtains of goat's hair? These are visible from the outside, and though not as glorious, they nevertheless correspond to what is on the inside in their number and function. Brass is connected to death in the brass altar of sacrifice. The outside world can see that Jesus died between the Old and New Testament eras. The world believes that his death was a tragic mistake, but we who can see the gold inside know His death was the future hope of the Old Testament believer and the memorialized remembrance of the New Testament believer. We understand that "He gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

As the visible people of God, we have this in common with Israel of the Old Testament, that we are just brass and goat's hair. But to the degree our brass and goats hair correspond to the glory of our Savior, the world can get a glimpse of Him by looking at us.

Conclusion: Our Savior is worthy of worship as the King of heaven and the risen Savior. That is the glory of the curtains, but this glory is not easily seen from the outside.

Can you see Christ's glory? If not, Paul may be able to tell you why: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:3-7). Do not let the god of this world blind you. Turn from your sin, and make Jesus Christ to be your heavenly King and risen Savior.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*