

The Dwelling Place of God John 2:18-22

Our text this evening is John chapter 2, verses 18 to 22. We're going to start from verse 13, just to pick up the whole context of the cleansing of the temple, reading through to verse 22. Our sermon text is from verses 18 to 22. Before the reading, we'll pray. Please join me in prayer.

Father in heaven, we pray that you would indeed bless your word to us. We seek not a word from man, nor the wisdom of men. We seek a word from God. We ask for the wisdom of God that comes from above by the power of your Holy Spirit. Please speak to us from your word. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Starting at verse 13 of John chapter 2: “¹³ The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem ¹⁴ In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. ¹⁵ And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, ‘Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.’ ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’

“¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, ‘What sign do you show us for doing these things?’ ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ ²⁰ The Jews then said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?’ ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.” Amen.

For those of us who were here last week, when we started to look at this passage and the incident in the temple leading up to the words that we look at tonight, you remember when we looked at the cleansing of the temple, we looked at the fact that Jesus was thoroughly enraged by the fact that in the temple was being conducted business for profit.

Furthermore, that profit was being made from worship. The Jewish people had to come to the temple to the major feasts, there to worship. That was part of being a Jew. They were required to turn up. And when they turned up, they had to pay a temple tax, or a temple payment to help maintain and run the religion. And that payment had to be made in a certain kind of money. So there were money-changers in the temple converting currency. But they were converting it at high rates, or rates very favorable to themselves. They were making money out of people's faith.

And then there were sellers of sheep and oxen. Now if you read your Old Testament law, you'd see that any Jewish family could come to the temple bringing the very best of their own livestock. As long as you chose a lamb or an oxen without spot or blemish, it was acceptable in the worship of the living God. But it seems that what was happening at this time was there was a bit of racket going on, because what would happen is you would bring your sacrificial animal into the temple, and there would be a Levite, a member of the priestly families, and he would look your animal over and say whether or not it was acceptable for worship.

And he'd say, "Hmm, you know, that lamb—it's not really up to scratch, Mate. I'm sorry, it's not really acceptable. I think it's a bit malformed, a bit misshapen. You better take that one away. But if you go to my brother Simeon the vendor over here, he will sell you a pre-approved lamb." So there was profit being made from the very sacrifices in the temple. The whole thing was being run as worldly racket.

Furthermore, we said another thing that may well have enraged Jesus was that this trade was happening in the Court of the Gentiles, which Jesus said in the synoptic gospels was a house of prayer for all the nations. And if you've read your Old Testament, you'll remember that not all the worshippers of God in the Old Testament were born of Israel. If you were a person who was not a Jew and you came to worship God at the times of the feasts and the sacrifices, you would worship in the Court of the Gentiles. And we came to the conclusion that Jesus was enraged, He was infuriated by the fact that the Court of Gentiles, where all the world was able to come and worship the living God, had just been turned into a marketplace.

It was as though the Jews were saying, "We're the upper class, you're the lower class. If you want to worship God, you do it in company with cattle and sheep, and good luck to you." And there was a wall when you went from the Court of the Gentiles further into the temple. You went into what was called the Court of the Women, and then you went further on into the temple complex. But at the gateway of that wall in the Court of the Gentiles were warning signs, which basically said, "Gentile, if you go any further, your death is your own problem. Come past this wall, you're going to die."

And so the Jews had this attitude that it really didn't matter what happened in the Court of the Gentiles. Jesus was enraged; He cleansed the temple; He made a whip and drove them out of the temple complex. This wasn't happening in the very sanctuary itself, this was happening in the courts of the temple that you would pass through to get to the temple, to the holy places.

We come then to verse 18: "¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, 'What sign do you show us for doing these things?'" The funny thing is in the gospels, Jesus showed many, many signs, but He never showed a sign to anyone who demanded it. You come to Jesus saying, "Show me that you are the Son of God, and I'll believe in you," and Jesus says, "I don't like your attitude, and I'm not that interested." It's as simple as that. You come to Jesus demanding a sign, and Jesus says, "I'm not a magician, and you haven't paid the price of a ticket to see me perform some supposed miracle just for you." They come demanding a sign.

Here's the thing—Jesus gives them an answer in verse 19. He gives them an answer that would be a sign. Let's read it, verse 19: "¹⁹ Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'" Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Verse 20: "²⁰ The Jews then said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?'"

Now in saying that—"It has taken forty-six years to build this temple"—what we need to realize is they are actually confirming their own guilt. Why do I say that? Well, the actual temple itself, the actual house of worship, had been finished around twenty years before. What was still under

construction were the Courts of the Gentiles and the whole extended temple complex. That actual temple that you would call “the house of the Lord,” the second temple that was constructed, the renovations and the rebuilding of that, was completed, as I said, around twenty years beforehand. But in saying, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days,” they were actually acknowledging that they were conducting business on holy ground. They were profiteering on ground where they ought not to be profiteering—religion for money.

You know, in a way, they’re the equivalent of the televangelists. You know the guy. His TV show finishes with a request for money. “You send us money, you’ll get ten times as much money. It’s seed money. And what’s more, you’ll be healed of all your diseases.” People send them their money. And I don’t understand why they send them their money, but people send them their money.

But Jesus is saying, “¹⁹ ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ ²⁰ The Jews then said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?’ ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body.” But He was speaking about the temple of His body. Now we get into a lot of things that we can understand and think about here.

First of all, this is the beginning of a pattern in the Gospel of John. We’ll have a quick look, do a quick walk-through and see this particular pattern in the Gospel of John. This particular pattern is that Jesus says something, and the people around Him think something else. Jesus says something, and the people misunderstand. Jesus says something that seems clear enough, and to those of us with hindsight and a bit of Bible knowledge, we understand exactly what He meant, but those who were hearing Him understood nothing.

So Jesus was speaking to them of the temple, or about the temple of His body. Now first of all, what’s the temple? The temple’s the place where God dwells. And if you remember back to John chapter 1, it says, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Jesus is saying that He is the dwelling place of God, that He is superseding the temple. But let’s have a look at this pattern of misunderstanding.

Look at John chapter 3, verses 3 and 4. Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, and it’s a very famous passage. But I wonder if you’ve ever noticed the pattern. “³ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’” Jesus is speaking of spiritual rebirth. He’s speaking of that which was prophesied in the Old Testament. In Jeremiah and in Ezekiel, for example, they spoke about being given a new heart, a new spirit being placed within you. And yet Nicodemus says, “Born again? What, am I supposed to become a baby all over again?”—misunderstanding.

Moving to John chapter 4, Jesus’ conversation with the woman at the well in Samaria. We’ll start reading at verse 10: “¹⁰ Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink,” you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.’ ¹¹ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?’”

Jesus is speaking of something different. He's speaking of the water that waters the nations, possibly the water that the book of Ezekiel finishes picturing, which flows out from the temple of God to all the nations. And she says, "You're speaking of living water, and that well is a deep hole in the ground, and you don't have a bucket. You don't have a bucket! What are you talking about, 'living water'?" He says something, they misunderstand.

Move forward into John chapter 5, verse 6 and 7. Now this is the lame man who's lying beside the pool called Bethesda. Let's look at verse 6: "⁶When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be healed?'" ⁷The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.'"

Jesus wasn't talking about getting him into the water. Jesus was talking about actually healing the man. He was saying, "Do you want to be healed? I'm here. I will heal you." The man says, "Drop me into the water." Jesus is talking about the power of God; the man is talking about the superstition of humanity, because it was believed apparently that the first person into that pool, after the water was stirred, was somehow or other going to be miraculously healed.

Move forward to chapter 6, verses 41 and 42. This is reminiscent of the lady at the well. "⁴¹So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.'" ⁴²They said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?' Jesus is speaking of a spiritual reality. He is the food from God that brings eternal life. And all they can say is, "Wasn't He registered in the temple as the son of Joseph and Mary? We know who His mother and father are. How could He have come down from heaven?" You see, Jesus is saying one thing—You know the old saying, He keeps pitching and they keep missing; he keeps bowling, they keep sweeping. They just don't connect. They're not getting it.

Move on to John chapter 7, verses 34 and 35. Jesus speaking: "³⁴'You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.'" ³⁵The Jews said to one another, 'Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?'" Now what's Jesus speaking of? He's speaking of entering into heaven. "You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come." He's saying that the Jews will continue blindly groping for a Messiah, and He's saying, "I'll be already in heaven, and you'll still have no idea." And they're saying, "What does He mean by that? Is He going to buy a ticket on a boat?" He keeps speaking, they keep missing the point.

Move on to John chapter 8, verses 21 and 22. Now this is in the midst of a debate with the Jews about who Jesus is and about who they are. Once again, He says something about going away. Verse 21: "²¹So he said to them again, 'I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.'" Once again, He's speaking of heaven, eternal life. "²²So the Jews said, 'Will he kill himself, since he says, "Where I am going, you cannot come"?' There, once again, they thought, "Well, He obviously wasn't talking about catching a boat. Is He talking about dying and going to a certain part of hell?" Because they actually had a

teaching that a suicide went to a particular part of hell. He pitches, they miss. He bowls, they swing, they miss.

Move on to John chapter 11. Even Jesus' disciples are guilty of this error of missing the meaning of what He says. This is after Jesus has received the news that Lazarus has died. John chapter 11, starting at verse 11. ¹¹“After saying these things, he said to them, ‘Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.’ ¹²The disciples said to him, ‘Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.’ ¹³Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep.” They keep missing.

Jesus keeps speaking, He keeps spreading the truth, He keeps speaking things that need to be interpreted in the light of Scripture and with the help of the Holy Spirit, and John wants us to see that people keep missing. They keep failing to receive the truth. Why does he want us to see that? Well, he actually gives the answer, if you go to John chapter 12. We'll start reading at the second half of verse 36:

³⁶“When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. ³⁷Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ ³⁹Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ⁴⁰‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.’”

So John's setting it up so that we actually come to understand something. There are a number of things that he wants us to understand. He wants us to understand, first of all, that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah. Isaiah prophesied that these things would happen. That part about blinding eyes and hardening their hearts, lest they see with their eyes and understand with their hearts—that comes from Isaiah chapter 6. And he's saying that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah.

The second thing he wants us to understand is that this is the work of the sovereign will of God. You see this in verse 40 where it's quoting Isaiah, “He has blinded their eyes.” Who blinded their eyes? The “He” is God. God has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. This is the work of God. Some see, some do not see. Some are granted light, some are not granted light. That's what John wants us to see, and that's the pattern that starts right back with Jesus speaking at the temple, saying, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days.” And they look at a building and say, “It's taken forty-six years to build. What are you talking about?”

Let's turn back to John chapter 2. It's very hard for us in our present day to really get the significance of what Jesus is saying when He said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up,” and then the significance in verse 21, where John tells us, “But he was speaking about the temple of his body.” It's very hard for us to understand the significance of this. Something that might give us more of an idea is if you imagine that we were a small city-state that happened to be a theocracy, and in a way, that's what we're speaking of. The temple and the government registry offices and everything were all combined into one.

You see, when you were born in the nation of Judah, your birth was registered at the temple, and everything that you did was centered around the temple. It was the department of birth, death, and marriage. It was everything. It was the place where you worshipped, it was the place where you came into the presence of God, it was the place where you received the blessing of the priesthood. It was the place you were said to deal with the living God Himself. When Jesus said He was speaking about the temple of His body, He was really saying something quite radical. As I've already said, Jesus was God incarnate. He was God wearing flesh. I should be careful as I say that. He was truly God and truly man, but He was incarnate—He was God and man.

Jesus is basically saying that the temple is just about finished. The complete construction of the whole temple complex was completed in 63 A.D., about thirty years after this conversation, and it only stood for seven years before it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. So for only seven years was this complete complex standing and in use before it was destroyed. Jesus spoke about the fact that He was the temple of God. These words were used against Him. These words were turned against Him. When He was accused, in the presence of the High Priest, what was the accusation? "He said he will destroy the temple." He spoke words against the temple. They twisted His words. They turned them against Him. "He said he would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days." And they laughed. They did not believe anything.

What's the importance, then, of Jesus saying that He's the temple, and that His body is the temple—the temple of His body? Well, once more, we need to look at all of Scripture. The church is called the body of Christ. The temple of the Lord is now the church, and it's not a building, and it's not a denomination, and it's not a particular meeting. It's not any of those things. It's the presence of God in His people. The gathering of the faithful is the presence of God, and it is the work of the temple of God in this earth.

Now there's a distinct theme running through Scripture regarding the presence of God. What happened in the Garden? What was the Garden? Well you could say that the Garden was, in a way, a temple—the Garden of Adam and Eve. It was the place they met God. It was the place that they were to build up and to strengthen, and Adam was instructed to expand its borders throughout all the earth. And in their temple, they actually had a religion to practice. They had two trees, two special trees, which signified their religion. They had the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and they had the tree of life.

Now there's nothing in the book of Genesis that indicates that those trees were some special, magical species. What it seems to be indicating is that those trees were the place where they practiced the obedience of their religion. They were worshippers of the living God, and there was the obedience of not eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and apparently there was the obedience of eating from the tree of life at the appropriate times.

Remember, when they sinned, what happened? They were not only denied access to the Garden, but one of the particular reasons they were denied access to the Garden, we're told, is that they were no longer allowed to eat from the tree of life. They were no longer allowed to worship in the very presence of God Himself.

So if the Garden is the place where God was living, dwelling, walking in the very presence of His people, and if you want to trace out that theme through Scripture, you find that God keeps coming into the presence of His people. In the tabernacle, in the wilderness, what was it? It was the presence of God with His people. And in Jerusalem, when Solomon built the temple according to the design that was given through King David, what was it? It was the presence of God with His people. And in the rebuilt temple—remember we looked at the book of Haggai not so long back—what was God’s promise to the people when they rebuilt their temple? He would dwell with them in His temple.

Well now we come into the New Testament and we find Jesus saying that He is the temple of the Lord. He is the temple. The temple of His body is the presence of God. And if you go forward through to the book of Revelation, where does it finish in the book of Revelation? Turn very quickly to Revelation chapter 21. We’ll start reading at verse 1, and there we’ll read a couple of verses and then drop down a little further. Starting at Revelation 21, verse 1:

“¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’”

Now just drop down to verse 22: “²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.” And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

You see there’s a theme that runs right from Genesis all the way through into the book of Revelation, that one of the very purposes of God, one of the very overriding and overarching missions of God, was that He would live and dwell with His people, in close fellowship with His people. His people would live and dwell in the presence of God, and know that they were in the presence of God.

So we can see what a terrible thing that sin in the Garden was. The eating of the fruit destroyed the fellowship and living in the presence of the living God. And all of Scripture, in a way, can be taken as a message telling us how God restores the people to living in His presence, as Adam and Eve lived in His presence before sin.

What are some important things about God’s presence? Why is it so important? Well, Exodus 33:16 tells us that God’s presence makes His people distinct. It makes His people separate, different. It makes His people unlike the nations around about. Exodus 33:16: “For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?” We are distinct. What’s God’s purpose in and through the church? We’re distinct. We’re told to be light, we’re told to be salt, we’re told to be different, we’re told to be a nation of love.

When speaking to Pontius Pilate, Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my people would be fighting.” They’d have swords, they’d have spears, they’d be fighting for control of territory. “No, my kingdom is not of this world.” We are to be a different people, a distinct people, made different and distinct by the presence of God—by the very presence of God.

Turn to Psalm 132. “A Song of Ascents,” is the title in my Bible. Starting at verse 1: “Remember, O LORD, in David’s favor, all the hardships he endured, ² how he swore to the LORD and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, ³ ‘I will not enter my house or get into my bed, ⁴ I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, ⁵ until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.’” Until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.

Now how much did the Psalmist know of the coming of the Messiah? How much did he understand that God’s dwelling place was to be with His redeemed people, people washed clean in the blood of the Lamb? I don’t know. It doesn’t tell us that. In the Old Testament, when they spoke of a dwelling place for the Lord, a place for God, it tended to be speaking of a place that was a sanctuary that was cut off from those around it, which was limited in access, which people couldn’t get into. But what we do know from the whole flow of Scripture is that God was planning that the dwelling place of the Lord would be the very presence of Jesus. It was not going to be a building. It was not going to be a cathedral.

You know, the whole idea of taking pilgrimage to some kind of holy site, holy land, holy place—it’s foolishness. It’s nonsense. Why is it nonsense? Well, have a look at Acts chapter 7. This is the deacon Stephen’s speech, or sermon that he preached when he was being examined for being a Christian, and he was accused of speaking against the law and against the nation of Israel. Drop down to verse 44. Stephen speaking:

“⁴⁴ ‘Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness,’”—Now what’s he speaking of there? He’s speaking of the place where Moses met with the presence of God.—“‘just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen. ⁴⁵ Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, ⁴⁶ who found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷ But it was Solomon who built a house for him.’”—verse 48—“‘Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says, ⁴⁹ ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? ⁵⁰ Did not my hand make all these things?’””

Stephen there is quoting Isaiah chapter 66, verses 1 and 2. “The Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says.” The Lord, in Isaiah chapter 66, laughs at the idea that a person could actually build a house that He dwells in. “What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? ⁵⁰ Did not my hand make all these things?” What God is saying is, Though I allow the people of Israel to build a temple, and though I bless that temple so that it could truly be said to be the temple of the Lord and the dwelling place of God, no temple contains God. That the temple holds God is just as likely as a shoe box can hold

God. It's the same idea. A temple? A building? Something made with human hands enclosing the God of all creation? "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the Lord in Jeremiah 23:23 and 24. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" Does God not fill all of creation?

Stephen spoke of the presence of God no longer being the temple of the Lord. Why do you think he was killed? Why do you think the Jews could not accept what he was saying? He was saying, "If you really want to be in the presence of God, give up on the temple. Give up on the sacrifice of lambs and oxen. Jesus has come to the earth! Jesus has been crucified and resurrected, and we are now in Christ, and we indeed are the temple. If you want a temple, if you want fellowship with the living God, put your faith in Christ." That was the message that Stephen was giving.

Hebrews chapter 8, verse 5, tells us that the temples upon the earth, the tabernacle, were but a shadow and a copy of the reality. The reality is that God does not dwell in a building made with human hands. God dwells in a people made by His Spirit. We took a reading from Ephesians chapter 2. What was the message of Apostle Paul? In Christ, all the peoples of the world were being drawn into one nation, one body, being made one living temple.

So my friends, this church here, and all the churches wherever the faithful are congregated—the temple of the Lord is there. The presence of God is there. It's not a church made by human hands, it's a supernatural thing. It's not a human thing. I mean, who could draw such a disparate people together and make them into one people under God? The church is the church, whether the church is African or Asian or Australian or American or English, you name it. The church is the church—one people under God, one dwelling place of God, one temple in God. The church has become the true and the living temple.

Let's go back into John chapter 2. Verse 21: ²¹ "But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken." And there we've got to ask a question. "They believed the Scripture." What Scripture? John doesn't tell us exactly what he's talking about. "They believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken."

I think we get a good clue as to what Scriptures the apostles were thinking of from the Apostle Peter in the book of Acts. Turn to Acts chapter 2. First of all, I think they were saying they believed all the Scriptures. I think the apostles had come to learn the direction of all Scripture, the purpose of all Scripture, was to point to Christ and the coming of Christ. Acts chapter 2, we'll read verses 24 to 28, which is Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, speaking of Jesus:

²⁴ "God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; ²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. ²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence."""

And look at what Peter says, verse 29: “²⁹ ‘Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.’”

So Peter is interpreting Psalm 16—particularly he quoted verses 8 to 11, a Psalm of David, written by David, David writing in a worshipful way, David writing indeed of his own life and his own faith, and his own deliverance by God. But Peter is saying, “Look. David spoke of something more than just David. David was speaking of the Son of David who was to come. David was speaking of Jesus.”

John says “they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.” Now remember, there was about forty days between the resurrection and the ascension of Christ, and John’s saying that after Jesus had risen from the dead, they were taught by Christ from the Scripture, in that time. They were instructed, they were built up, they were prepared for their mission as apostles. John is saying that they believed the Scripture; they came to understand that the prophecies of the Old Testament all find their fulfillment in Jesus. And when you read the New Testament, it’s amazing the references that keep getting built into the New Testament from out of the Old Testament concerning Jesus, and how Jesus was the fulfillment of all—of all that was predicted.

Turn for example to Hosea chapter 6. We’ll start reading at verse 1, and read the first two verses: “¹ ‘Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. ² After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.’” Now you can look at that and say that it doesn’t appear to be talking about the resurrection of Jesus, and I’ll agree with you.

On the surface, it doesn’t appear to be talking about the resurrection of Jesus, but let’s think about something. Let’s get a little bit of a pattern worked out in our mind here. Think about the gospels, think about the life of Jesus. What did it say about Jesus when the angel instructed Joseph to take the baby Jesus down into Egypt to protect Him from the persecution of King Herod? He quoted a prophet, and the prophet he quoted said, “From Egypt I have called my Son.” And then Jesus is brought back from Egypt into the Promised Land.

You see, Jesus is being identified as the true Israel, the true people of God. Israel exists in and by Christ. We exist in and by Christ. “After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up.” What’s Paul’s whole lengthy argument in First Corinthians chapter 15, when he speaks about the resurrection? Are we familiar enough with that to know it off the top of our head? What’s he saying in First Corinthians chapter 15? He’s saying, If Jesus wasn’t raised from the dead, we are of all people the most miserable—the most pathetic. The whole argument is that if Jesus is raised from the dead, we who are in Christ will enjoy that same resurrection. His resurrection is our resurrection, because we are in Christ.

Now I'll read it again, with the Apostle Paul's insight and with the thought that Jesus in the gospels is portrayed as the true Israel, the true Son of God. Verse 2 of Hosea chapter 6: "2 After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him." Who was raised up on the third day? Jesus. Who lives before God in Christ, raised up, as it were, from the death of sin? We do, in Christ. And so you see, the apostles could see the work of Christ in Scripture, in all different places.

Turn to the book of Isaiah chapter 25. We're going to read from verses 6 to 9, and it's an "On this mountain" prophecy. For those of you who aren't often with us in the mornings, there we've been going through the book of Isaiah, and in the book of Isaiah, one of the prophecies that God makes is, "On this mountain"—On this mountain, where God will meet with His people. That's way back earlier in the book, and here's another "On this mountain" prophecy. Let's read it:

"6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. 7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. 9 It will be said on that day, 'Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'"

I'm suggesting to you that this is speaking of the work of Christ. Why? Well look at that word there: "And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces." What's one of the promises in the book of Revelation? That Jesus will wipe away the tears of His people; that Jesus will wipe away the tears, or wash away the sadness, of His people. And here we have it promised.

And how is this going to happen? Verses 7 and 8: "7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces." He will swallow up death forever. Who? How? Well, we know now, don't we? We've got our New Testaments. We've got the words of the apostles. We know. In His resurrection, we are resurrected. By His resurrection, through His resurrection, we know justification.

Christ has defeated death. When He defeated death, it wasn't a tactical defeat. It wasn't that He sort of moved down the outside and went around it. He defeated it by going straight through it. A headlong charge into the gates of the enemy, He defeated death. He swallowed it up forever that we may live. In John chapter 11, we have the resurrection of Lazarus, and Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." I am the resurrection and the life.

The fulfillment of Scripture is to be found in Christ. It's easy to make a mistake and sort of look for the fulfillment of Scripture in the newspaper. My friends, look for it in Christ. Look for Christ. Christ our Lord, Christ our God, Christ our Saviour—the one who wipes every tear from our eyes, the one who has defeated death—in Him and in Him alone, we have life. All of the Scripture is about the Lord Jesus Christ.

All of the Scripture is pointing us to that day where, in the new heavens and the new earth, we dwell in the very presence of God. No stone temple required, no sacrifice of animals required. The blood of Jesus Christ has been shed, washing God's people clean from their sins, washing away all stains. The power of the Holy Spirit has been given, that we can rejoice in that resurrection life of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we can live before God as His people—eternal life.

The news in Revelation that no temple is required is really very good news. There's nothing between us and God. In the final state, in our final place, in the renewed heavens and earth, there is absolutely nothing between us and God. We live in His presence. He dries every tear from our eyes. There's no other intercessor. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. We're not in any way separate from God.

So the picture that we're getting from what Jesus had said in John chapter 2 is that all things will be fulfilled. The purposes of God will be completed. God's people will dwell in the presence of God, just as God intended from the beginning of all creation, just as God intended from the very start. Our God is a great God—glorious, mighty. His ways are almost beyond our knowing.

Imagine what we would know if we didn't have Scripture. We'd know nothing. He has a plan that's been in place from all eternity, and it's not to be denied. The Lord our God has a plan. It's fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the very presence of God among us, and in this we as His people should rejoice. And it starts very simply from conviction of sin, faith, and repentance. It's that simple.

Confession—is it so hard to confess, to honestly understand, that we are nothing in the sight of God, and that we are sinners, and we need the reconciliation that is given in Christ? It's that simple. And that is the doorway, the opening of eternity. Eternal life begins now for all who believe. Eternal life is now, for us. For we have been made new creations. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation—Second Corinthians chapter 5.

We have been made new creations already. We're still living in this earthly life, we're still living in the tent of flesh, as Scripture calls it. We're still living in jars of clay, but the day will come. His resurrection is our resurrection. We will be given bodies suitable to eternal life in the very presence of God. There we will worship God. We will serve God in all that we do, rejoicing. Why? Because Jesus Christ came to the earth, took upon Himself flesh, bore the sins of His people upon the cross, that they would be nailed to the cross and there remembered no more, that we could have eternal life as the people of God, through faith and repentance. We'll close there.

Father in heaven, we do thank you. Once again, words fail. We thank you and we praise you for the things that you have revealed to us in Scripture, for the precious gift of your word, for the precious gift of life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, I pray that you would awaken within us a hunger to know Christ and to know your word, and to serve Him. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.