

**HEAVEN:**  
**The Place of Everlasting Paradise!**

Message 7

Scripture: Psalm 84

INTRO: In our last message we took a closer look at John 14:1-4. We suggested that we might learn some of what believers do in heaven after they die, but before they are resurrected if we could find out exactly where they go. Well, from John 14 we learned that believers go to a place prepared for them by Jesus at His Father's house.

I suggested to you in the last message that Jesus' Father's house in heaven is a place of unbelievable splendor. The temple Solomon built will have been indescribably beautiful. The temple Herod built was a building of extraordinary beauty. John 2:20 tells us it took 46 years to build Herod's temple and the Jews of that time said that he who has not seen it has never seen a real building. If such be the case of a building that is only a replica of the one in heaven, what do you suppose the one in heaven looks like? It is the government building of the universe!

So I ask you this morning, have I stretched you too far? Is what I have told you beyond your ability to process and consider? When I began this series I thought I was ready enough to begin. But when I began to see the importance of understanding the earthly temple, and that it was but a copy of the real temple which is in heaven, these studies took a new turn for me and I have had to study the temple in an entirely new light.

I want to tell you that the temple in heaven had a beginning. The city in heaven, in which the temple is, was itself built. So it too, had a beginning. Hebrews 11:10 says God is the builder and maker of this city. Hebrews 9:11 says that the temple in heaven was not made with hands, like the one on earth. No, God made it. I believe God made this city after man sinned, because He knew death would now take place and this was to be the residence of the righteous dead until the resurrection.

And He made the real temple, which is still in heaven, for the purpose of dealing with sin and to make a way for sinful man to continue to communicate with Him. Here in this temple, where He dwells, the place that is Jesus' Father's house, sin is expiated and here man finds

fellowship with God. And after studying this temple, of which the earthly tabernacle and the later temple were only replicas, I began to look at this temple in a new light.

Now we are not told what all happens in the temple in heaven, but I believe we may learn a lot of that from what God prescribed was to happen in the earthly temple. We studied this years ago in a Bible study and it took us, I believe, over a year to get a little understanding of it. We cannot begin to study what happened there in this series, and so I want to give you one ordinary day in the courts of the Lord. From here you can entertain your mind with thoughts and ponder what heaven MIGHT be like and what Christians do there after they die but before they are resurrected.

h. What do believers do in Paradise? (cont'd)

Now, you understand that it was the tribe of Levi that served in the temple. While on earth, the Lord Jesus never entered the temple proper. He was of the tribe of Judah. You see, originally God had chosen the firstborn of every Jewish woman to be His servant for this work. There is no certainty why that was changed to the tribe of Levi, but it is speculated that it may be because when Israel failed God at Mount Sinai, it was the tribe of Levi that stood with Moses (Ex. 32).

However that may be, God chose the Levites to serve in His house, the temple. And to serve in the temple, the Levites were examined by the Sanhedrin to see if they were without blemish and fit to serve. This examination of the priests was a constant occupation of the Sanhedrin. And when they had an examination day and no prospective priest was found without blemish they would declare, "Blessed be the Holy One! Blessed be He! For no blemish has been found amongst the descendents of Aaron. And blessed is He who has chosen Aaron and his offspring to stand in service before the Lord, in the holiest places" (pg. 20; Midot 5,4).

Now the priests who served in the temple were divided into 24 shifts and they came from all over Israel. You see, the Levites cities were established among the other 11 tribes. And in every 24 weeks these priests would serve one week. On that week, they would come to Jerusalem and live in Jesus' Father's house, in the dwelling places made especially for that purpose.

This morning we want to look at one normal day in the temple. We are not looking at the feast days when thousands upon thousands of Jews would come from all over the world to worship. We have not time this morning. We will look at one normal day.

It is long before daylight when the day of the priest begins. You see, these 24 shifts were further divided into six clans. And one clan would serve one day and another the next, and so on for six days. But on the seventh day, the Sabbath, all six clans would serve.

Now, there was nothing more special to the priest, than to be given the opportunity to serve. And because there were so very many priests, in order for each priest to get a chance to serve, they had special lotteries each day to determine which persons in the clan that was serving that day would serve. Four separate lotteries were held every day. And so, throughout the day, the courts of Jesus' Father's house were filled with priests, waiting to see if they would be given the opportunity to serve.

And now, while it is still dark outside, all the priests who were eligible for the lotteries would purify themselves at the mikvah, a special pool of naturally collected water. This was a baptism, an immersion for purification even for a priest who was certain he had not become defiled.

Now the priest would make his way to the Chamber of the Hewn Stone where the lotteries

took place. They would stand in a circle. A number higher than the number of priests present was chosen and each priest would then raise a finger, since the Bible forbids the counting of people (Ex. 30:12). Then the counting began until the agreed on number was reached, and there was your first selected priest for the first lottery.

The priests were then divided into two separate columns. This was the dawn patrol. Their job was to make sure everything was in order for the daily temple service. They had to make sure nothing was out of place and that the 93 sacred vessels were all in their proper place and ready for the Divine service.

Since it was still dark, a torchbearer led the way, but if it was the Sabbath day, then their way was lit by candles. The place each of these two columns would check was all pre ordered and they kept going until they met each other at the Chamber of the Meal Offering Preparation. Here the High Priest's daily meal offerings were kneaded and baked. And if everything was in order, these priests then greeted each other with these words, "Peace! All is peaceful!" Now several of the priests would stay here and begin to prepare the High Priest's meal offering.

We are considering the first lottery of the day. This lottery determined which priest would carry out the removal of the ashes from the altar of sacrifice. This is the altar, I believe, under which John saw the souls that were beheaded for their testimony in Revelation 6 that we have already seen.

This altar is on top of Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered Isaac. In Jesus' day it is 16 feet high and 52 feet square on top. On top were three separate piles of wood. On the largest the sacrifices were burned. The second provided the coals for the incense altar which is inside the sanctuary. The third was the perpetual fire. This fire never went out (Lev.

6:13). If you read about 'strange fire' in the OT, it is fire that did not come from here. The ashes of these fires were carried outside the temple to a place known as the 'place of the ashes'.

[Redo: The priest that removed the ashes then first had to wash his hands and feet before he touched the silver shovel. Then clothed in his white linen clothing he filled the shovel with the ashes, carried the ashes beside the altar, changed into regular clothing, and then carried the ashes to 'the place of the ashes'.

If I understood right the priest then sanctifies his hands and feet and takes the silver shovel with some coals and makes his way into the tent of meeting, the tabernacle part. No one could go with him as he entered the Lord's house. It was still dark at this time and he made his way by the light of the fire of the altar. When he reached the laver, which held the water and stood directly before the Lord's house, he lowered it by a specially designed pulley into the well for water.

When he had purified himself, he took the silver shovel and went back up the high altar of sacrifice. He now took some ashes and carried them to the place of ashes. It was then that the other priests began to prepare the wood for the morning sacrifice.]

When the ashes had been raked and new wood had been placed and lit, these priests descended from the altar of sacrifice and returned to the Chamber of Hewn Stone for the second lottery.

Now the priests stand in a circle once more for the second lottery. The priests that were chosen by lottery would now go to the Lord's house. They came prepared with the vessels they would need to carry out their tasks. This was a basket that held about 5 ½ liters, an oil container made of gold and two keys. The keys were brought to the gatekeeper on duty.

The gate keeper then opened the door to the right which entered the antechamber to the Lord's house and then into the holy sanctuary itself. When he reached the great gates, he removed the dead bolt and locks and opened the gates wide. This was a very significant act because the morning sacrifice, which was about to begin, could not begin until these doors had been opened.

The overseer then said, "Let one go up to a high place in the temple to see whether the time has arrived to offer the morning sacrifice." When the watchman cried, "The day has dawned!" the priests awaited for a second announcement which said, "The entire eastern horizon is illuminated!" Then one from below would call up, "Does the glow extend all the way to Hebron?" When the watchman said it did, the proper time for the daily sacrifice had arrived.

Now the priests who had been chosen by lot for the sacrifice were instructed, "Bring a lamb from the Chamber of Lambs!" This chamber had six lambs without blemish at all times for the daily sacrifice. Now a lamb, which had already passed inspection once, was checked again by torchlight. The lamb was now given a drink from a golden vessel. This made it easier to remove its skin. The priests now went to get the 93 vessels of gold and silver they would need to complete the daily sacrifices.

Now the priest who had won first place in the second lottery, and with that the right to slaughter the lamb, led it to the court, north of the altar. He was followed by six other priests who would take the parts up the ramp to the altar of sacrifice. The place they took the lamb was especially equipped with metal rings in to hold the animal. There were eight small stone columns with wooden blocks on top fitted with rings for removing the skin. There were also marble tables for preparing the sacrifice.

Then the priest who had been chosen to remove the incense altar's ashes entered the sanctuary and made his way into the holy place. Then standing before the altar, he first removed the ashes from the incense altar into the palms of his hands and put them in the basket. When just a few ashes were left he used a small brush to sweep them into the basket. He left this basket on the floor to be removed later.

Then the priest who had been chosen to look after the seven branch candlestick removed the used wicks and left over oil in the individual lamps; placed the new wicks and replenished the oil for each light. To reach these lamps he had to ascend three marble steps which had significance as well.

Now the sacrifice was slaughtered and the six priests chosen by lot now carried the sacrifice up the ramp to the altar of sacrifice. A seventh priest brought the fine flour for the meal offering and an eighth priest brought the High Priest's personal meal offering up the altar. This offering was 1/10 of an ephah and made 12 loaves. There is much to say about this offering for which we do not have time.

Finally the last priest in this lottery had the task of bringing about a quart of wine which would later be poured on the altar for the morning libation which accompanied the daily sacrifice.

For this second lottery 13 priests had been used. And now, having finished their part, they go back to the Chamber of Hewn Stone to recite the morning prayers. Here they prayed the "Hear O Israel" prayer with its blessing. Then they recited the 10 commandments. When this was finished, the priests would raise their hands and deliver the priestly blessings on the congregation which had gathered by now. However, on the Sabbath, the outgoing priests would greet the incoming ones like this: "May

He who causes His Name to dwell in this House, cause love, brotherhood, peace and friendship to dwell among you."

Now comes the third lottery. This would determine who would officiate at the incense offering. According to the Jews, this was the most acceptable part of the temple service in the eyes of God. Every priest, I am sure, wished this lot to fall on them. This service was influential in subduing evil. It aided God's mercy and benevolence in the world. And here, brothers and sisters, I have no doubt is the picture of the importance of prayer in the house of God! If there is any place the modern church is weak, it is in prayer. We have, at present, in a house setting the best and most effective prayer meeting I have ever attended. Just a over a week ago we had the sweetest prayer meeting I have ever attended. Oh, this is a very hard hour. We have had many hard hours. We have prayed for the same things until it seemed nothing would ever happen. But then one day it does. And if those who attend feel like I feel, we are realizing more and more how weak we are in prayer!

I want you to turn with me, with regard to this altar to a NT passage of Scripture (read Luke 1:5-10). Now you know the rest of the story. You see, only once in a priest's life, could he ever serve in this very important part of the service. Zecharias would never serve at this altar again, but he and Elizebeth would bring into this world the forerunner of the Messiah!

We have now reached the fourth and final lottery for the daily sacrifice. Once more the priests go to the Chamber of Hewn Stone and once more they are chosen by lot. The priest chosen to place the offering on the fire now did so. He would then pour out the libation. He would then prepare the special vessels for the incense; a large golden spoon and a vessel filled to the brim with incense placed inside another vessel to avoid spillage.



The priest assigned to gather coals for the inner altar now took the silver shovel and climbed to the top of the high altar and gathered some of the coals. Once he descended with these coals he transferred them into the golden shovel and with this he carried them into the Lord's house for the incense offering. Now the priest chosen to do the incense would make his way to the Lord's house with the one who carried the shovel. But before they arrived at the altar one of them would take a vessel called the *magrepha* and throw it on the floor. This was a signal for three things.

When the priests outside heard this sound, they knew the priests inside were about to prostrate themselves before the Divine Presence, God Almighty! They then ran to bow down with them. Second, when the Levites heard this sound, they knew the Levite choir was about to enter the court and stand upon the platform to begin the service of the daily song. They too ran to join their brothers.

And when the official in charge of the Israelites who represented all the people heard it, he separated all the priests who had become defiled in some way and stood them all together at the Eastern Gate. Here all could see they were impure and no one would suspect they had any other reason for not participating in the service.

The two priests then went up the 12 steps and into the sanctuary, the Lord's house. Here the first priest took care of the coals so the incense would burn evenly. He then picked up the shovel with ashes he had left there earlier, and then prostrated himself. Then he left the sanctuary. His task was finished. The second priest then took care of the candles and the old wicks and other waste. He then prostrated himself and also left the sanctuary.

It was now that the priest chosen by lot to burn the incense entered with an assistant. He took the smaller vessel filled with incense and handed it to his assistant who then placed some of the incense on the priest's palms. This incense was flammable and had to be sprinkled just right. When the priest who handled the incense was given the signal from the overseer, he began to sprinkle the incense and the whole chamber was filled with a cloud of incense smoke. This priest then prostrated himself and also left the sanctuary. Only once in his life-time would he get the opportunity to do this service.

Then the priests who had attended this part of the service went out, put their vessels down and extended their hands and gave the priestly blessing: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Num. 6:24-26).

[Add if time allows: One of the very important functions of the Levites was music. I think I could stress and say it was very, very important in the temple services. There were Levites assigned to this task and that is all they did. You can find that in the Bible. Every day they would sing and play their instruments. This took place in the courts of the Lord's house. I wonder, are you getting a picture of the real temple in heaven?

Each day, they sang the song for that day. On Sunday, commemorating the first day of creation, they sang Psalm 24, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." On Monday, Psalm 48. It was the day the waters were divided. On Tuesday they sang Psalm 82; on Wednesday, Psalm 94. On Thursday they sang Psalm 81, and on Friday Psalm 93. On the Sabbath they sang Psalm 92, and Here, there may be a picture of the millennium as the thousand year Sabbath of rest. On their feast days, many other songs were sung.

Last fall, when we were in Israel we learned a very interesting thing. We were at the Temple Mount Institute, where the instruments for the tribulational temple are being made. And the young lady who explained the institute to us told us something about past Israeli music that gripped my soul in a very deep way. She said that the one harp has 22 strings, and these 22 strings correspond to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and that this alphabet gives the sounds of 22 notes. They are now learning to play the Psalms according to these notes! That has opened a whole new field of thought for me and I stand amazed anew at God's Word. What will the future yet bring?]

And so this morning, we have spent one day in the Lord's house. This is a regular day and is very minor compared to the feast days, and there were seven feasts in the first seven months of the religious year.

CONCL: And now, in conclusion, we have looked briefly at one day's service in the temple which is but a copy of the real. I have not described at all the various kinds of sacrifices, the special days, the Sabbath; the gatekeepers tasks; the task of the choir and singers who sang a special song commemorating each of the seven days of creation week; nor the tasks of the separate priests and Levites, nor their clothing, not the clothing of the High Priest, nor each of the utensils. We have looked only very briefly at one day in the courts of the Lord in His house on earth. The real temple is in heaven. It was made by God Himself. It is here, Jesus said He went to prepare a place for us. What do you think happens here? What kind of service do you think happens there every day? You see, here is the place where sin actually gets dealt with day by day!

Maybe this week you want to study the tabernacle or temple or Hebrews 7-10 or Revelation 4-6 and see what you think people do in heaven before the resurrection. I encourage you to read Psalm 84 in light of this message. You see, Jesus said in John 14, "In My Father's house are many rooms." It is to these rooms which He is preparing that He promises to take believers. Van Rayn says in his meditations on John, "The temple in Jerusalem was a type of

the Father's house in glory. A number of rooms in the Temple were for the priests to occupy while they served their courses in the Temple ritual. These were their abodes during their course of worship. It is to these abodes our Lord refers in John 14." And I add that it is to these abodes Jesus will take His Church.

"How lovely *is* Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God... For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness."

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know."