

Talk – Arkeology

Notes to Reader/Student

This talk was written for a live congregation and was preached to Trinity City – 5 & 7pm Church on Sunday 30th March 2014. It is detailed here in longhand as if to be preached and so some of the sentences and points may not come across as complete sentences because of rhetorical nuances. Included you will also see the talk outline and the visuals (which appeared on a screen behind the preacher).

I hope you enjoy reading this sermon as much as I enjoyed preparing it. And I hope it will supplement your understanding of the place of the Tabernacle in the life of God's people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken D' followed by a stylized flourish.

Ken D Noakes

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TALK Outline

Part A – Camping with God

‘Spiritual Things’

‘Camping with God’

Exodus 40:1-38

Part B – The Tabernacle

1 Corinthians 3:9-16

Part C – Meeting with God

What we need to hear...

Where is God’s Glory displayed today?

TALK

Part A – Camping with God

‘Spiritual Things’

- The world we live in is very different to the world that our parents grew up in
- It would be unusual today to walk through a shopping mall and not come across a shop which sold products promoting a ‘New Age Spirituality’
 - they are the shops selling crystals,
or offering tarot card readings,
or burning incense
and have sitar music playing.
- They are shops that promote inner wellbeing
and the pursuit of happiness.
- I think the presence of these shops are the outward display of a society that is quite interested in ‘Spiritual things’
 - although the ‘spiritual things’ that are of interest are quite different to the spiritual things that our parents may have been into.
- There is a longing in our society to ‘know God’
and the fact that so many of these ‘spirituality’ shops have evolved over the last 20 years bears testimony to people’s wish to know something greater than themselves which still makes them feel good about themselves.
- I had a conversation with a visitor here at Trinity a couple of months back who was telling me about how to really ‘know’ God.
For them it was simple ‘Just pray’.
Pray and you will know God.
- Whilst I agree that praying to God is a wonderful and biblical thing to do – I could not help but think that there was so much more to ‘knowing God’ than simply praying to him.
- As we read the Bible we *meet* God in a way that should inform,
and challenge,
and excite,
and overwhelm,
and convict us.
As we read the Bible we *meet* God.
- Starting at the beginning in Genesis 1-2 we find Adam and Eve in the garden enjoying an intimate relationship with God.
 - It is God who has created Adam and Eve and all the world around them.
 - It is God who looks at all that he has made and calls it ‘good’
 - And the picture - is of God walking in garden with them (c.f. 3:8).
- It doesn’t take long for that picture to come undone and in Genesis 3 Adam and Eve reject God and are banished from that intimate relationship.

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- The rest of the Bible seems to be a journey where God sets out to recapture that intimate relationship.
 - And our experience of the world and relationships seems to unveil our longing and desire
 - to be known and be loved
 - even if it might be from the very inward looking new age movement.
 - I wonder if that simply just reveals our desire to be known and loved and longed for by God.
- To have that intimate relationship that was once there in the garden.

‘Camping with God’

- Tonight we finish off our series in the Book of Exodus.
- And in this final and large section of Exodus we find the Israelites, the Old Testament people of God,
 - camping in the wilderness enroute to the promised land.
- Specifically we are going to look at the significance of something called ‘the tabernacle’.
- If you are just joining us I recommend going the website and downloading the sermons for a listen – you have missed some exciting stuff.
 - We have seen Israel grow to be a numerous nation – but under slavery in Egypt.
 - We’ve met the great man Moses,
 - We read about the drama of the 10 plagues against Egypt
 - water to blood,
 - frogs,
 - gnats,
 - flies,
 - the death of livestock,
 - boils,
 - hail,
 - locusts,
 - darkness across the land,
 - and then finally the last plague the death of the firstborns from every household.
 - Israel finally fled Egypt and they passed through the Red Sea with walls of water on each side.
 - And they gathered at the base of Mt Sinai and it is there where in thunder and lightening the 10 commandments are handed down.
- Exodus is an exciting book – well most of it!
 - The second part Exodus from Chapter 25 may not come across quite as exciting – it seems to get bogged down in the design and building of the tabernacle and all the pieces to go with it.
 - But since about a quarter of the book of Exodus is about this Tabernacle

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we have to ask - what it is that God is trying to teach us by including so much seemingly boring detail about the Tabernacle?!

- Well - it is about God
who wants to be connected to his people
– he wants to dwell with his people.
Exodus 25:8 – introduces this for us right at the start of the section concerning the Tabernacle .
God is speaking to Moses and he says:

" have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you. (Ex 25:8-9 NIV)

- What follows in Chapters 25-31 are detailed instructions
for the Ark of the Covenant,
the Tabernacle and all its finery,
the Altar,
the priests garments
and the taxes to ensure the people pay for the
building.
And then from Chapters 35-40 we read about the actual building of the tabernacle.
- Let's read the final act from the last chapter of Exodus where we see the Tabernacle erected.

[Congregation member to read: Exodus 40:1-38 (NIV)]

Part B – The Tabernacle

Prayer

*Dear Lord and Father,
We sit under your word*

– as students who have much to learn.

Inform us, challenge us, change us as we get to know more about what you have done for Israel and in turn for us today.

Help us to understand more about your tabernacle and why you requested its construction in such a particular way.

Help us to understand how we might dwell alongside you in faith.

In Jesus name AMEN.

- The first thing I want us to do is spend a little time on the Tabernacle itself
- The tabernacle is a dwelling for *God's glory* – 40:17...

So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year. ¹⁸ When Moses set up the tabernacle, he put the bases in place, erected the frames, inserted the crossbars and set up the posts. ¹⁹ Then he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering over the tent, as the LORD commanded him.

- The tabernacle was rectangle and contained a series of curtains and frames.
- It may have looked something like this. [PPT - below].
- It was about 44 meters long by about 22.5 meters wide.
- Imagine 4 tennis courts placed side by side.
- It was divided up into different areas
 - – so if you can imagine two of the tennis courts being the outer court and two the inner court.
- Under strict conditions the people of Israel could enter the outer court but the inner court was the place where only the priests could go.



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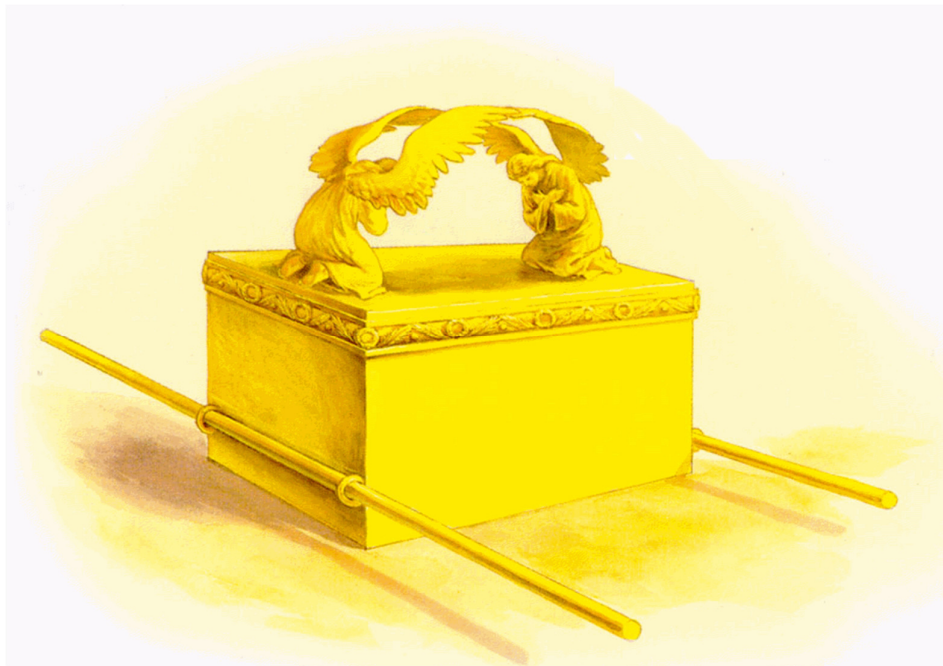
- The tent coverings were made of blue and scarlet and purple yarns and fine twined linen.
- Over the top of the sanctuary the tent cloth was made of rams skin.
- The pillars (or fence posts), the bases and pegs were made of bronze and the hooks and pillar heads were made of silver.
- It was a sight to behold.
- It was detailed and particular and expensive.
- It was the way God wanted it.
- The point is that it was a holy place where God would be happy to dwell.

- Moses sets up this tabernacle as God instructed and the interesting thing is that he sets it up from the inside out
 - from the inner, most holy place
to the outer fence posts.

- Look at Verse 20

[Moses] took the Testimony and placed it in the ark, attached the poles to the ark and put the atonement cover over it. ²¹ Then he brought the ark into the tabernacle and hung the shielding curtain and shielded the ark of the Testimony, as the LORD commanded him.

- One of the first things that he puts into the tabernacle is the Ark of the Covenant
 - Again a picture might help [PPT – below]
- This ark is described in great detail in Chapters 25 and 37
 - it was made of acacia wood
 - and it was overlayed with pure gold both inside and out
 - and it is so precious you couldn't touch it
 - – instead the Israelites would have to carry it using the poles inserted through rings at its feet.
 - And on its lid sat two cherubim
 - with wings spread out above them
 - and they too were covered in gold.
- And inside was placed the words of testimony
 - the 10 commandments and the covenant code
 - God perfect standards that the people of Israel were to live by.
- And the ark of the covenant once placed in the tabernacle was veiled by a screen
 - a separation within the inner court.
 - This is the first of three separations that we will see within the tabernacle boundaries.



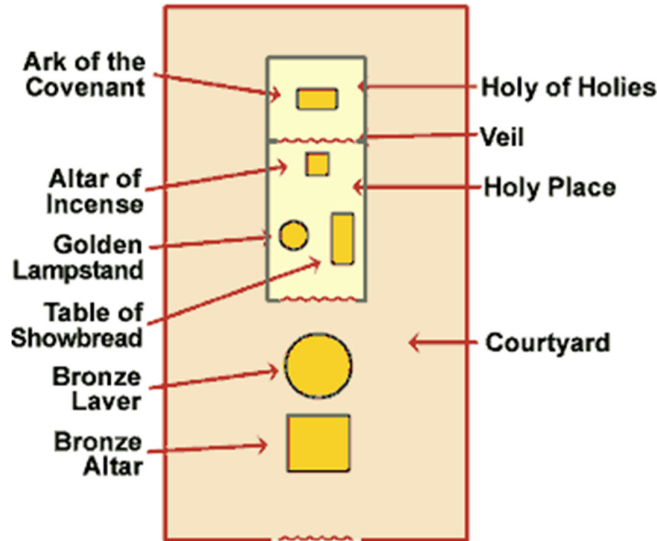
- And from that inner court we take a step out – still within the inner tent but now one step removed – verse 22...

Moses placed the table in the Tent of Meeting on the north side of the tabernacle outside the curtain ²³ and set out the bread on it before the LORD, as the LORD commanded him. ²⁴ He placed the lampstand in the Tent of Meeting opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle ²⁵ and set up the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD commanded him. ²⁶ Moses placed the gold altar in the Tent of Meeting in front of the curtain ²⁷ and burned fragrant incense on it, as the LORD commanded him. ²⁸ Then he put up the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle.

- Again you may be helped again by a diagram
 - this time a floor plan of the furniture in the tabernacle

[PPT - picture of the floor plan of the inner sanctuary – below]
- Moses sets up the table (of showbread) on the north side.
 - The table was also covered in gold.
 - And arranged on it were the loaves of bread
 - the offering for the tribes of Israel.
- Opposite the table on the south side he placed the lamp stand
 - with its seven candles,
 - the number of perfection
 - it too covered in gold.
- Finally he placed the golden altar in front of the veil
 - and burned fragrant incense on it
 - a sweet aroma pleasing to the Lord.
- All this he did '*as the Lord commanded [him]*'
- To separate this section off from the outer court – a second veil or screen was placed at the door.

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- There are degrees of separation that are built into the layout of the tabernacle.
- In this inner section you may have noted that everything was coated in gold
 - which alongside the bronze and silver fittings and the blue, purple and scarlet yarns would have been magnificent
 - a sight or room fit only for a king.
- To help us understand the significance of the veil and the separations it may be helpful to think of the US President Barack Obama!
 - We have seen him on TV and know his face,
 - but we hardly have access to him.
 - But there are those who do,
 - at the White House his staff and advisors would have some degree of access to him
 - much more than we would
 - but even then there are some restrictions
 - they may not have ready access to the Oval office (for example).
 - But his chief of staff and his invited guests and close officials would have access to him in the Oval Office
 - having access to that office is a sign that you have a very close connection to him.
 - Yet even then there are restrictions
 - as only Michelle Obama his wife would know
 - as she has access to the presidential bedroom.
- There are degrees of separation built into the layout of the tabernacle that are significant.
- In the inner inner sanctuary of the tabernacle only the high priest had access once a year when he entered to make atonement for the sins of Israel.
 - It is separated by a veil.
- There is then the inner sanctuary which only the priests can enter

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- it too is separated by a veil.
- And then there is the outer court which only the priestly tribe of Israel were welcome to enter.
 - It is separated by a gate.
- Then of course outside the fence there is Israel
 - who can clearly see in but who cannot walk freely into the tabernacle boundaries.
- Each level of separation shows the level of relationship which one has with God.
- As we move into the outer court Moses sets up another altar – verse 29

²⁹ [Moses] set the altar of burnt offering near the entrance to the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, and offered on it burnt offerings and grain offerings, as the LORD commanded him. ³⁰ He placed the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar and put water in it for washing, ³¹ and Moses and Aaron and his sons used it to wash their hands and feet. ³² They washed whenever they entered the Tent of Meeting or approached the altar, as the LORD commanded Moses. ³³ Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work.

- This altar is made of bronze not gold
 - probably because the gold would not withstand the heat of the burnt offerings made on it.
 - It is here where the regular and daily offerings of Israel were to be made.
- Then set between the altar and the tent of meeting is the basin (laver)
 - also in bronze where Moses and Aaron and the priests would wash before entering into the tent and the inner sanctuary.
- And of course around the whole site are the court posts
 - set up with a screen at the gate of the court.
- And do you notice that when all was set up – the text notes verse 33 that ‘*Moses finished all the work*’
- As we have read through this section – 7 times we have heard it said that all was done ‘*as the Lord commanded Moses*’ (40:19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32)
 - and then when it was all complete ‘*Moses finished the work*’ (40:33).
- I wonder whether we are meant to think back to the Garden of Eden
 - to when God created the world
 - for each day of creation
 - *God said* and it was so
 - and then at the end of his creating,
 - we read that ‘*God finished his work*’ (Gen 2:2).

PAUSE

- Two things should come to mind for us concerning the tabernacle.
- The first is beauty
 - it was a structure that was built with purpose
 - and it was awesome
 - because all the things that were placed in and around it were beautiful
 - it was a place fit for a king.

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- It was meant to be a place where the people could glance in at the beauty of God.
- A place where God could *dwell* with his people.
- And the second thing to come to mind is the barriers.
 - The barriers that separated Israel from God.
 - It almost as if God was teasing them or us.
 - How could they meet this holy God?
- Let's read on – 40:34

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; ³⁷ but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out-- until the day it lifted. ³⁸ So the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.

- After Moses had finished building the tabernacle
 - the glory of the Lord covered the whole place
 - such that not even Moses was able to enter.
- And the reason why Moses could not enter was because he was not the priest
 - that was the honour of Aaron
 - back in verse 12 we see that Aaron was set aside and dressed with holy garments
 - they were garments made of the same colors and materials as the tent itself.
 - Aaron was anointed and consecrated to serve God as priest
 - he was to be the mediator between God and his people Israel.
 - The barriers still applied
 - which was why Aaron would have to be washed and would make sacrifices and be consecrated so that he was ready to come into the presence of the Lord.
- All this was arranged by God so that Israel would be free to dwell with him.
- This is a God who wants to dwell with his people.
- But we must also realize that this people could not just waltz on up and wander into his presence – they needed to be prepared.
- Moses was not able to enter into the tabernacle because the glory of the Lord was so great.
- As we read further on in the Old Testament
 - we find out that the tabernacle became the temple
 - still the place where the people could meet with God
 - but they would have to come prepared.

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- The tabernacle and the temple were not built to box God in
but to show the people how glorious and amazing God is.
- It was beautiful
but the barriers meant that to dwell with God
– you needed to come prepared.

PAUSE

- Well before we go any further, let's take a moment to reflect on what we have heard
– let's sing.

[Song – Holy Holy Holy]

[Congregation member to read: 1 Corinthians 3:9-16 (NIV)]

Part C – Meeting with God

- Well we have considered Exodus 40
and we have seen the beauty
yet the barriers of God that the Tabernacle represents.
The glory and the mightiness of God.
- The question I now want us to quickly answer is:
How can we experience that glory of God with us?
- We do not have the tabernacle or the tent of meeting today,
and although we meet in an old and established historical building
– there does not seem to be any barriers that restrict us from
moving around.
 - But where is God?
 - How is it that he dwells with us?
 - Where is his glory?
- Friends what is different for us is that his glory is Jesus.
- Jesus said *'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days'* (John 2:19)
– a challenge that he was reminded of at his trial when being questioned by
the high priest (Mt 26:61).
 - Jesus knew he was the way through the barriers to God.
- In John 1 – *'the word became flesh and made his dwelling (his tabernacle) among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father. (Jn 1:14)* – that is Jesus.
- The glory of the Lord that filled the tabernacle
such that Moses could not enter
is now walking in the man Jesus.

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- Jesus is the tabernacle
 and the high priest who is able to enter the inner inner sanctuary,
 and he is the sacrifice
 and the basin
 and the table
 and the covenant...
 – Jesus is the dwelling of God on earth.
- Jesus is not just God, but the beauty of God
 – and the one who bulldozers his way through the barriers to God.
- And when Jesus was nailed to our cross – to die,
 he died as the final sacrifice for the sins of those who had put him there.
 - He died for our sins so that we could dwell (tabernacle) with God.
 - And his final words as recorded in John 19 were '*It is finished*' (Jn 19:30)
 Remember it was Moses who *finished* the work of God when he set up the tabernacle.

PAUSE

What we need to hear...

- This is what we need to hear
 - this is more than a spiritual experience
 - this is a relationship.
- This is not the gospel according to the new Age Movement
 - where there are many ways to God.
- This is not a gospel that is supposed to make us feel good about ourselves.
- But it is a gospel which is beautiful
 - because it speaks of the extraordinary length that God has gone to dwell (to tabernacle) with us.
- And it is a gospel where the only barrier to God is actually a gate
 - it is Jesus the high priest to God.
- At the last Australian census (2011) about 80 percent of Australia recognized that there was a higher power than themselves – whatever they would call god.
 - Maybe what we need to hear as a nation
 - is not that the God of the Bible is mighty and great and a higher power than ourselves,
 - maybe we need to hear that Jesus is the only way to that God.
- The message you might need to hear from the Bible
 - is not give us your money,
 - or abstain from this or that
 - it is that Jesus is the only way to be with the God you believe in.
- Dwelling with God is dwelling with Jesus

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– have we lost sight of what Jesus has done?
It is not just about the cross but about Jesus the man who is the way to God.

PAUSE

Where is God's Glory displayed today?

- But if we stopped here tonight – we would miss a very important point.
- Where is God's glory displayed today?
 - The answer is his church.
- 1 Cor 3:16 says – *'you yourselves are God's temple and ... God's Spirit lives in you'*
- You are like a - mini tabernacle of God!
- The world is supposed to see in you – God.
- Christians should be a spiritual house, a tabernacle on display.
- And so where is God's glory displayed?
 - well he should be visible right now, right here
 - in his people who are supposed to reflect the beauty of God.
 - So that when others see the way we relate
 - they should gasp and think how pure and glorious God is.
 - But we should note – that this is costly – like it was for the construction of the tabernacle.
- And so we need to work hard to ensure the tabernacle (our lives) are right
 - just the way God would like.
 - That means for some that we may need to use our time wisely,
or the gifts we have more freely,
or the money we have more generously
 - to the glory of God.
- And here is a test
 - if someone was to walk in from the street and watch you
 - would they get a glimpse of God? OR
 - would they get a glimpse of someone
 - who gossips
 - or swears
 - or bitches
 - or is selfish
 - or is self-absorbed.
- We need to pray that we as a church – shine the glory of God

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and that we do all we can to ensure
that others can truly see the beauty of God dwelling in us
– so that hopefully they too will be prepared to
meet with God through Jesus.